

The Disjunctive Hybrid Theory of Prudential Value: an inclusive approach to the good life

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I argue that all extant theories of prudential value are either a) *enumeratively* deficient, in that they are unable to accommodate everything that, intuitively, is a basic constituent of prudential value, b) *explanatorily* deficient, in that they are at least sometimes unable to offer a plausible story about what *makes* a given thing prudentially valuable, or c) both. In response to the unsatisfactory state of the literature, I present my own account, the *Disjunctive Hybrid Theory* or DHT. DHT answers to and remedies each of the above inadequacies in a way that no other approach can. This account has the following general structure:

Disjunctive Hybrid Theory (DHT): Thing x is basically good for person P if and only if x is *either* a) cared about (sufficiently and in the right way) by P, b) a bearer of (the right kind of) attitude-independent value, or c) both.

Although it follows other recent accounts in combining elements from objective and subjective theories, DHT is a hybrid theory of a quite new kind. This is because it denies both *subjective necessity* (the constraint that, if thing x is to be basically good for person P, P must have some pro-attitude toward x) and *objective necessity* (the constraint that, if thing x is to be basically good for person P, x must have some attitude-independent value). I argue that the rejection of both necessity claims is called for if we are to move beyond the enumerative and explanatory limitations of existing accounts.

I begin by outlining the general structure of DHT. I then argue, against various recent authors, that desire-satisfactionism remains the most appealing subjectivist approach to prudential value, in that it is best able to capture the central subjectivist insight. This insight is that *a person can confer prudential value upon things by caring about them (sufficiently and in the right way)*. The subjectivist strand of DHT will thus be a version of desire-satisfactionism, which must be interpreted in line with what I call the *object*, as opposed to the *combo*, view. I move on to further motivate and develop the second, objectivist strand of DHT. This part of the theory involves a commitment to robustly attitude-independent prudential goods. I close by addressing some puzzles for the theory, and considering some of its more specific applications.

Resumé

Dans cette thèse, je soutiens que toutes les théories de bien-être [theories of prudential value] existantes sont soit a) insatisfaisantes sur le plan énumératif, en ce qu'elles sont incapables de concilier tout ce qui, intuitivement, est un composant de base de bien-être ; soit b) insatisfaisantes sur le plan explicatif, en ce qu'elles sont, au moins à l'occasion, incapables de fournir une explication plausible quant à ce qui *confère* à une chose donnée sa valeur de bien-être; ou encore c) ces deux options. Afin de remédier à cet état peu satisfaisant de la littérature, je présente ma propre approche : la théorie hybride disjonctive (ou THD). La THD répond à chacun des problèmes décrits plus haut et y remédie mieux que toute autre approche. La structure générale de cette théorie est la suivante :

Théorie Hybride Disjonctive (THD) : Un certain objet ou état de choses x est bon pour une quelconque personne P si et seulement si x est soit a) un objet de préoccupation suffisante (et qui le soit de manière adéquate) par P , soit b) porteur d'une valeur indépendante de l'état d'esprit de P [*attitude-independent value*] ; ou encore c) ces deux options.

Bien qu'elle s'inscrive dans la continuité d'autres approches récentes en combinant des éléments tirés de théories objectives et subjectives, la THD est une théorie hybride d'un genre plutôt nouveau. Ceci est dû au fait qu'elle rejette à la fois la *nécessité subjective* (la contrainte selon laquelle une personne P doit avoir une attitude favorable envers une chose x pour que x soit fondamentalement bonne pour P) et la *nécessité objective* (la contrainte selon laquelle une chose x doit avoir une valeur indépendamment de l'état d'esprit d'une personne P pour que x soit fondamentalement bonne pour P). Je soutiens que le rejet de ces deux affirmations relatives à la nécessité est requis pour dépasser les limites énumérative et explicative des approches déjà existantes.

Je commence par exposer les grandes lignes de la structure générale de la THD. Je poursuis en montrant, contre plusieurs auteur-e-s contemporain-e-s, que *la théorie désidérative* demeure l'approche subjectiviste la plus intéressante pour la valeur de bien-être, en ce qu'elle est l'approche la plus apte à saisir ce que j'identifie comme l'intuition subjectiviste centrale. Cette intuition est la suivante : en *se préoccupant de* quelque chose suffisamment et d'une manière adéquate, une personne peut conférer une valeur à cette chose sur le plan du bien-être. Le volet subjectiviste de la THD consistera donc en une forme de la théorie désidérative qui doit également, comme je le montrerai, être interprété en conformité avec ce que j'appelle la conception de *l'objet*, par opposition à celle dite du *combo*. Je justifie et développe ensuite le second volet, objectiviste celui-là, de la THD. Ce volet de la théorie implique un engagement envers des valeurs de bien-être qui sont résolument indépendantes de l'état d'esprit. Je conclus en abordant des problèmes supplémentaires soulevés par la théorie et en examinant certaines de ses applications particulières.

Dedication

For Grandpa, Oma and Tucker.

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Introduction

My first exposure to the vast philosophical literature on well-being or (as I will most often call it) *prudential value* came more than a decade ago, when I was an undergraduate.¹ My initial, untutored response to this literature took the form of a distinct sense that, while each of the extant theories (hedonism, desire-satisfactionism, objective list accounts, perfectionism, and various hybrid approaches) seemed to capture some part of the truth about the good life, they all left something important out. The hedonists were surely right in thinking that pleasure is good for people if anything is. Desire-satisfactionists, on the other hand, seemed to place a much-needed emphasis on the role that what a person *cares about* plays in determining her own good. The objective list theorists' claim that there are certain things that are good for any person, regardless of whether that person has any positive attitude towards them, could also muster formidable intuitions in its favour. One apparent weakness of the objective list account, that it does nothing to explain *why* the things that are on the list are good for people, lent considerable intuitive appeal to perfectionism, which also posits such attitude-independent goods but purports to ground them in deeper facts about human nature. Extant hybrid theories, according to which something must meet both a subjective condition (such as being enjoyed or desired) and an objective value condition if it is to be good for a person, inherited a fair amount of plausibility from the independent appeal of both subjective and objective accounts.

¹ Prudential value is that kind of value which adheres to those things that *make someone's life (or some period of her life) go better for her*. I generally prefer the term 'prudential value' to others such as 'well-being' or 'welfare', because it wears on its sleeve the fact that it is a term of art. It is therefore less liable to give rise to confusions or equivocations based on the varied, sometimes conflicting, folk usages of the latter terms. However, anything I say about prudential value could equally well be said about well-being or welfare *as most philosophers understand these terms*, and for ease of expression I will sometimes employ this latter terminology myself.

What is it, then, that each of the above theories intuitively leaves out? The answer to this question is, of course, different in each case. Hedonism seems impossible to square with common judgments to the effect that factors that do not enter one's experience at all can, nonetheless, make a difference to how well off one is.² Desire-satisfactionism, in grounding *all* prudential value in desire, disregards the apparent fact that some things are more worth desiring than others. The objective list theory and perfectionism, by contrast, in making *all* values attitude-independent, fail to give sufficient weight to what a person cares about. Finally, extant hybrid theories, which introduce both a subjective and an objective criterion but require that *both conditions* be satisfied, succumb to the objection that the satisfaction of *either* the subjective or the objective condition is intuitively sufficient for prudential value (at least in many cases).

The larger point underlying these criticisms is that none of the extant accounts proves capable of combining and reconciling two distinct insights, both of which, I argue, are indispensable if a theory of prudential value is to be *sufficiently inclusive*. The first is what I will call the *subjectivist insight*. This insight, which will serve for us as a lodestone throughout this dissertation, is that *a person can confer prudential value upon things by caring about them (sufficiently and in the right way)*.³ Any theory that does not somehow accommodate the subjectivist insight is bound to come up short in two distinct respects, which in turn correspond to two distinct questions that a theory of prudential value must address. First, such a theory will

² The famous experience machine thought experiment from Nozick (1974, pp. 42-3) taps into intuitions of this sort, but less fanciful illustrations abound. See for instance the discussion of the deceived spouse in Sumner (1996, p.157). As Hawkins (2014, pp.211-2) helpfully points out, there are at least two ways to understand the lesson of such examples. They may be taken to suggest that "*mind-independent events* count when it comes to assessing my well-being, whether I know about them or not", or that we should place "value on knowledge, i.e. on the obtaining of a certain relation between events on the mind". The important thing to note here is that these two views are equally incompatible with hedonism. I ultimately argue that we should accept both of Hawkins' theses.

³ Cf. Sobel (2016, p.1): "Subjectivism maintains that things have value because we value them. Caring about stuff makes stuff matter."

fail at the *enumerative* or extensional level, in that it will not be able to properly identify the basic constituents of prudential value. Second, the theory will fail at the *explanatory* level, in that it will not be able to offer a plausible story about *why* all the things that are prudentially valuable are so.

The second, objectivist, insight is that certain things have *attitude-independent* prudential value, which is to say that they are good for any person, whether or not they are the object of any pro-attitude on that person's part. Intuitively, these goods include certain interpersonal bonds (friendships, familial attachments, romantic love), virtue, achievement, knowledge, autonomy, and pleasure. And again, theories that fail to accommodate the objectivist insight will prove to be inadequate on two fronts. First, even when they agree that the above items are prudentially valuable (as is likely to be so in most cases, given the way that our desires tend to track what we see as valuable), they give the wrong explanation of why this is the case. Second, in certain cases (namely those in which one of the above items is present in a person's life but they have no pro-attitude towards it), such theories will deliver the implausible verdict that these things are not good for the person.

In what follows, I attempt to remedy the unsatisfactory state of the current literature by articulating and defending a new account of prudential value, which I dub the *disjunctive hybrid theory* or DHT. DHT is a *hybrid* theory in that it combines elements from both traditional objective and traditional subjective accounts. It is a *disjunctive* theory in that, unlike extant hybrid approaches, it does not impose either a subjective or an objective criterion as a necessary condition that a thing must satisfy if it is to be prudentially valuable. Rather, it maintains that *at least one* of these criteria must be met, but adds that the satisfaction of *either* the subjective or the objective condition is sufficient for a thing's being prudentially valuable.

To elaborate, DHT maintains that some of the things that are good for a person are so precisely because the person cares about these things (sufficiently and in the right way). In such cases, the source of the prudential value is the person's pro-attitude, which is sufficient by itself to make its object good for the person. This, in rough outline, is the distinctively subjectivist strand of DHT. The reader will note that, so far, it is just a restatement of what we above identified as the subjectivist insight. The theory does not stop there. It also states that other things are good for a person independently of whether the person has any pro-attitude towards them. This is, again in rough outline, the objectivist strand of DHT, and amounts to a reaffirmation of the second, objectivist insight. Insofar as the theory combines these two strands, it preserves both the subjectivist and the objectivist insights.

The resulting account has the following general structure:

Disjunctive Hybrid Theory (DHT): Thing *x* is basically good for person *P* if and only if *x* is *either* a) cared about (sufficiently and in the right way) by *P*, b) a bearer of (the right kind of) attitude-independent value, or c) both.⁴

Although hybrid theories are by now quite well represented in the literature on prudential value, no hybrid theory of this *disjunctive* kind has yet been developed or defended. Of course, both of its disjuncts require considerable filling out if DHT is to amount to a plausible and informative account of prudential value. So far, the stated content of each strand serves merely as a guarantor of the disjunctive hybrid theorist's commitment to the subjectivist and objectivist insights, respectively. This is a fitting starting point, given that our motivation for developing a

⁴ The parenthetical clauses are important. This is because a) very different accounts are possible of what is involved in caring about something in the prudentially relevant sense (for plausibly, not all instances of caring about something are prudentially relevant), and b) very different kinds of attitude-independent value might be appealed to in attributing prudential value to a thing (for plausibly, not all kinds of attitude-independent value are prudentially relevant). I discuss these matters at some length below, the former in Chapters 2 and 3, the latter in Chapter 4.

hybrid theory with this kind of structure was that only an account drawn along such lines could simultaneously embrace these two distinct insights about prudential value. Yet it also leaves the details of the account drastically underspecified, and even leaves open the question of whether any *plausible* theory of this kind can be developed. Much of this dissertation will therefore be devoted to the task of elaborating the two strands of the disjunctive hybrid approach, in such a way as to maximize the independent appeal of each strand, as well as that of DHT considered as a whole. I will show that, provided we are careful about how we formulate it, DHT is as plausible as any competing account of prudential value. Indeed, in at least one significant respect, it has the edge over all extant theories. If, as I will argue, theorists of prudential value ought to be especially concerned to avoid what I call the *under-inclusiveness objection*, DHT thereby becomes the most appealing theory on the market.

In Chapter 1, I provide an initial sketch of DHT, illustrating how it fills a lacuna in the existing literature on prudential value. I further motivate the account, by bringing out both how pressing the under-inclusiveness objection is, and how DHT is uniquely positioned to evade it. In the course of this discussion, I show how our new approach sheds light on several distinctions that are current in the literature on prudential value, namely between subjectivism and objectivism, enumeration and explanation, and monism and pluralism.

In Chapter 2, I begin to flesh out the subjectivist strand of DHT. I argue that the best way to capture the subjectivist insight is to hold that (at least some of) a person's desires confer value upon their objects. This puts me at odds with Dale Dorsey, who has recently argued that the attitudes that subjectivists should focus on are beliefs rather than desires, as well as with Valerie Tiberius and Jason Raibley, who have argued separately that subjectivism's concern should be with value-fulfillment rather than desire-satisfaction. I show that Dorsey's view is extensionally

implausible, in that it proves to be under-inclusive in many cases and over-inclusive in others. I also argue that, depending on what is packed into the notion of value-fulfillment, the latter approach is either compatible with the best version of desire-satisfactionism, or itself under-inclusive. The upshot of our discussion is that the subjectivist strand of DHT should take its cue from the venerable tradition of desire-satisfactionism, rather than from either of these more recent subjectivist proposals.

Chapter 3 further develops the subjectivist strand of DHT. I argue that, if our theory is to preserve the subjectivist insight, it must adopt what I call the *object view* of desire-satisfactionism, as opposed to the *combo view*. Although these interpretations are often not distinguished in the literature (and even when they are, they are often thought not to differ significantly), I show that which reading of desire-satisfactionism we adopt is a factor of crucial importance. It is also critical that we provide a plausible account of *which* desires matter for well-being. In this connection, I argue that we should not impose any idealizing, procedural constraints on the desires we take to be prudentially relevant, nor should we place a substantive value constraint on the objects of these desires. However, the adoption of an *identification constraint*, which accords prudential relevance only to those desires that are sufficiently stable, enduring, and integrated into a person's self-conception, can be justified by the subjectivist insight itself. Moreover, this last move, when set alongside DHT's commitment to attitude-independent goods, allows our theory to deal satisfactorily with the infamous *scope problem* for desire-satisfactionism. Finally, I address certain issues surrounding the *time* of benefit and harm that arise for any theorist of prudential value who thinks desire-satisfactionism is at least part of the truth.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to further motivate and develop the second, objectivist strand of DHT. I argue that there is, alongside the subjectivist insight, an objectivist insight that any sufficiently inclusive theory of prudential value must incorporate. I first show that the recognition that there are at least some attitude-independent goods is necessary to avoid certain damning objections to subjectivism. I then argue that it is only by allowing that such goods require *no subjective sanction* to benefit a person, either in the form of desire or enjoyment, that the hybrid theorist can evade the under-inclusiveness objection. I also consider how, if at all, we can explain the attitude-independent value of these items. I maintain that a *locative account*, which understands attitude-independent prudential value via an appeal to goodness *simpliciter*, is more plausible than a *perfectionist* account. Whether it is also preferable to a *primitivist* approach, which admits of no such explanation, is an issue I am unable to settle.

In Chapter 5, I address some outstanding issues for DHT. The theory as developed in the earlier chapters took a novel approach to the question of what is *good* for people and why. However, it did not yet tell us anything about what is prudentially *bad*. I here consider what the most plausible disjunctive hybrid approach to *ill-being* should look like. When DHT is supplemented in this way, interesting consequences follow. Most significantly, it turns out that the same thing can simultaneously be a basic constituent of prudential value and a basic constituent of prudential disvalue. I argue that, however odd this may at first sound, when correctly understood it is a plausible result and thus not a strike against DHT. This brings us to the issue of how to make trade-offs between attitude-dependent and attitude-independent prudential (dis)value, and between the various attitude-independent prudential goods and bads. I argue that we cannot expect any general weighing principles here, but must evaluate such matters on a case by case basis. I consider the objection that the lack of a precise metric for

making such comparisons renders our account anti-theoretical and therefore unappealing. While I grant that, *ceteris paribus*, theoretical simplicity is a virtue, the truth about prudential value may just be a complicated one, and theorists must allow for this. I round off this discussion by applying DHT to two ongoing debates, concerning the well-being of animals other than adult humans, and the relationship between well-being and meaning in life.

My rough undergraduate's sense that the accounts of well-being that have hitherto been proposed are all in certain ways under-inclusive is one that I have never lost. The dissertation before you can thus be read as the culmination of a philosophical journey that began all those years ago. It is an exercise in theory construction, the aim of which is to put forward a theory of prudential value that, for whatever other faults it may have, does not fall victim to this *under-inclusiveness objection*. Even if the reader remains unconvinced that DHT is plausible, let alone preferable to all extant theories, I hope they find something illuminating in the attempt.

Chapter 1 - Introducing the Disjunctive Hybrid Theory

1.1 - Introduction

In this first chapter, I begin by laying out some of my central axiological assumptions. I then outline the structure of hybrid theories of prudential value in general, and of the disjunctive hybrid theory in particular. This allows me to situate the disjunctive hybrid theory (hereafter DHT) within the current literature on prudential value, as well as to bring out its distinctive appeal. The main advantage I claim for my account is that it has the potential to be more *inclusive* than any of the alternatives. DHT is uniquely capable of embracing all the things that intuitively form part of a person's good, while also providing plausible explanations of why these things are good. I argue that we have compelling reasons to strive to construct a theory that is maximally inclusive in this way.

Part of what is novel about the account being developed in these pages is that it is not just a hybrid theory but a *pluralistic* one (it will become clearer below why hybridism and pluralism are here taken to be separate commitments). Drawing on a distinction that several authors have recently made between enumerative and explanatory theories of well-being, I identify two sorts of questions that we might expect a theory of prudential value to answer, the *enumerative question* and the *explanatory question*.¹ I show that each of these is susceptible of both monistic and pluralistic answers, on a plausible understanding of these two terms. However, in much of the existing literature it is assumed that, with respect to the explanatory question, one must either offer a *monistic* answer or concede that there is *no* answer. One of the subsidiary goals of this

¹ Crisp (2006, pp.102-3) introduces this distinction. It is also discussed and put to work by Fletcher (2013) and Woodard (2013). Lin (2017) argues that such a distinction is not useful for classifying theories of well-being. I discuss and respond to his argument in section 1.5.

dissertation is to establish that this assumption is unwarranted. DHT is pluralistic with respect to explanation as well as enumeration. What is more, this deep pluralism confers its own advantages upon the theory.

This chapter has two main aims; to establish the general framework of DHT, and to show that it has at least one significant advantage over more familiar accounts. In the remainder of this dissertation I will spell out our approach in more detail, further clarifying its structure and its unique virtues. I hope, finally, to convince the reader not only that DHT deserves to be treated as a live option and discussed as a competitor to extant theories of prudential value, but also that we are justified in preferring it to all the alternatives.

1.2 - Axiological Preliminaries

It is necessary, first, to clarify the basic value-theoretic framework within which I am operating. Throughout this dissertation, I will generally treat the *bearers* of prudential value as states of affairs. States of affairs, strictly speaking, are those entities referred to by “that”-clauses, for example the state of affairs *that Francine is taking pleasure in a beautiful sunset*. This should be kept before the reader’s mind. If I sometimes talk in a looser way about the prudential value-bearers, this is simply for ease of expression.

There is a substantial body of philosophical literature addressing what kind of entities we should take value-bearers in general (and prudential value-bearers in particular) to be. I do not intend to take a side on this issue. For my purposes, I see no harm in speaking as if the proper bearers of prudential value are states of affairs, if only because this is the closest thing to a default position in the literature on prudential value. However, should the reader prefer to conceive of the prudential value-bearers in some other way, the claims that I am making can be quite easily translated without impacting the arguments.

Whereas some prudentially valuable states of affairs have their value only derivatively, others have *basic* or non-derivative prudential value. These last are what I will call the *basic constituents of prudential value*. The value that they possess, moreover, is a kind of *final* or non-instrumental value. Although the notion of final value is a familiar one in recent axiology, final prudential value is comparatively under-discussed. To be finally valuable is, roughly, to be valuable *in itself* or *for its own sake*. To be finally *prudentially* valuable for some person P, then, is to be good *for P* in itself or for its own sake. A first condition on something's being a basic constituent of prudential value, then, is that it be finally prudentially valuable. A second condition is that it does not derive its final value from the final value of any of its proper parts. Finally, we will stipulate that if we had an account of all the basic constituents of prudential value and of their combinations, we would have an account of all the prudential value there is.² Everything else that is prudentially valuable is so only insofar as it either includes one or more of these basic constituents as parts, or is a means to their obtaining.

Neither the distinction between basic and derivative value nor the distinction between final and instrumental value maps onto the more familiar distinction between *intrinsic* and instrumental value (if intrinsic value is understood, as it often is, as supervening exclusively on the intrinsic properties of a state of affairs).³ Of course, many of the things that are derivatively prudentially valuable are so because they are means to the obtaining of intrinsically prudentially valuable states of affairs. Supposing it to be good for Francine to study for that French test on Thursday, to take that weekend trip to Vermont on Friday, and to eschew those Doritos every day, it may yet be that none of these things is good for Francine for its own sake. Rather, the

² These conditions roughly follow Bradley (2009, pp.4-8). Provided we take sufficient care in specifying the basic constituents of prudential value, the third condition does not rule out the view that the *shape* of a life (i.e. the way valuable and disvaluable states of affairs are temporally distributed within it) matters to its overall prudential goodness. I wish to remain neutral on this matter.

³ See, for instance, Korsgaard (1983) and Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (1999).

value of these things may reside entirely in the fact that they contribute to the obtaining of other states of affairs. The studying is plausibly good for Francine because it will lead to an increase in her knowledge, and/or because improving her French will allow her to form more friendships in Montreal. The trip is plausibly good for her because of the pleasures the idyllic Vermont landscape will afford. Refraining from eating Doritos is plausibly good for her because it keeps her in good shape for hockey season.

On the other hand, some derivatively valuable states of affairs themselves have intrinsic value, in virtue of having proper parts that are intrinsically valuable. An example is the complex state of affairs in which Francine takes pleasure in observing both the beautiful sunrise and the spectacular sunset. Francine's taking pleasure in the sunrise is intrinsically good for her, and her taking pleasure in the sunset is also intrinsically good for her. The state of affairs consisting of the combination of these distinct, temporally disunified instances of pleasure here seems to inherit the intrinsic value of its parts. This is a somewhat gruesome example, but there are other bearers of derivative intrinsic value that are commonly appealed to in ordinary conversation. If Francine has throughout her life enjoyed many pleasures of the sort described above, and has comparatively few unpleasant experiences to her name, we may say that *her life* has, overall, been a pleasurable one. The value here is intrinsic, but must nonetheless be distinguished as of a different order than the value borne by individual instances of pleasure. Only the latter have basic intrinsic prudential value.⁴

Moreover, we are not assuming that the basic constituents of prudential value are all intrinsically valuable. It is a matter of controversy whether all the things that are basically good

⁴ The best primer on the notion of basic intrinsic value is Feldman (2000).

(for people or in general) are intrinsically good. This dissertation is not an entry in the debate surrounding intrinsicism about final value, and so will take no side on this issue.⁵

This is enough axiological stage-setting for the present. In the next section I offer a sketch of the general structure of hybrid theories of prudential value. This will set the stage for our discussion (in section 1.4) of what is appealing about these theories in general, and about DHT in particular.

1.3 - The Structure of Hybrid Theories

It is fair to say that hybrid alternatives to the dominant (objective and subjective) theories of well-being have been experiencing a boom in popularity of late. I consider why this is so at some length below, but before we can answer this question we need to get clear on what separates these theories from other, more traditional approaches. The aim of the present section is, accordingly, to identify the distinguishing features of hybrid accounts.

To this point, I have been helping myself to the well-worn dualism between subjectivism and objectivism. Thus, I have characterized hybrid theories of prudential value as those which combine elements from objective and subjective theories. If we are to better understand the nature and appeal of hybrid approaches, then, we must acquire a firmer grasp on how the distinction between subjectivism and objectivism serves to classify theories of prudential value. Alas, there is no generally agreed upon way of framing this distinction. Moreover, it is doubtful that we can find any way of identifying the core commitments of subjectivism and objectivism about well-being, respectively, that is neutral with respect to substantive theoretical issues. This is because isolating the core commitments of subjective and objective theories already requires

⁵ Once more, see Korsgaard (1983) and Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (1999), as well as Kagan (1998).

one to take a stand on the question of what is *distinctively appealing* about each kind of theory. That is, we need to have some idea of what subjective accounts are *supposed to do*, before we can ascertain whether a given theory deserves to be called subjective. This is equally true in the objective case.

I will be operating with one specific account of what makes theories subjective or objective (or both). Although my account of this distinction is neither uncontroversial nor substantively neutral, I will argue that it is at once more intuitive and more fruitful for taxonomical purposes than others on offer. A notable advantage of the approach I defend is that it allows for genuine hybrid theories, namely those that are at once (to some extent) objective and (to some extent) subjective. Hybrid accounts are now quite popular, and ought therefore to be recognized by our taxonomies of theories of well-being. And yet, approaches that take objectivism and subjectivism to be mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive categories do not leave any room for such theories. Perhaps the best-known instance of such a proposal is that offered by Wayne Sumner.⁶ Sumner states that “a theory is subjective if it treats my having a favorable attitude toward something as a necessary condition of the thing being beneficial for me”.⁷ Call the claim that nothing can be basically good for a person if that person does not have some pro-attitude toward it *subjective necessity* (I ask the reader to remember this claim, as it will be important later). All that is required to make a theory come out as subjective on Sumner’s account is that it endorse subjective necessity. Objective theories, in turn, are for Sumner all those that reject subjective necessity.

⁶ Sumner (1995 and 1996).

⁷ Sumner (1995, p.768). Tiberius (2007, p.373) endorses more or less the same criterion: “Those defending subjective theories argue that a person’s having a positive attitude (or a positive attitude under certain conditions) toward *x* is necessary for *x* to count as part of that person’s well-being. Proponents of objective theories deny this claim.”

Sumner's approach forces us to classify any proposed theory as either a version of subjectivism or objectivism, without allowing for any admixture of the two. But surely our taxonomical scalpel need not be wielded so bluntly. Consider a theory that accepts subjective necessity, but insists that it is also a necessary condition on a given thing's being good for a person that it possess some substantive (which is to say attitude-independent) value. Call this second condition *objective necessity* (again, I urge you to keep this claim before your mind). We will discuss theories with this structure in more detail in the next section. The point now is just that it would be strange to classify these theories as straightforwardly subjective. After all, they explicitly make appeal to attitude-independent prudential goods. This suggests that we would be better served by an approach that is more fine-grained than Sumner's, and that allows us to classify theories of prudential value as purely subjective, purely objective, or as hybrids with both subjective and objective elements.⁸

The approach I favour starts by identifying the *minimal* commitments of both objectivism and subjectivism. First, consider the following claim:

Minimal Subjectivism (MS): *At least some* of the things that are good for a person have their prudential value *at least in part* because the person has the right kind of pro-attitude toward them.

⁸ For similar reasons, we should reject the view, propounded in Yelle (2014, p.367) that "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.) towards something as a *sufficient* condition of that thing's contributing to that individual's well-being" (italics added). This way of carving things up would make DHT itself straightforwardly subjectivist, even as it allows things towards which an individual has no positive orientation to contribute to that individual's well-being. Yelle goes on (pp.367-8): "Objective theories deny this sufficiency...they argue that something can be (directly or immediately) good for one even if one does not regard it favourably or is not positively oriented toward it". Yet this is a misleading passage, insofar as one clearly need not deny the sufficiency claim in order to affirm Yelle's latter claim (indeed, DHT affirms both claims).

My proposal is that any theory which satisfies MS should be classified as (at least partially) subjective. We can then move on to compare theories which meet this minimal condition, with respect to *how* subjective they are. A commitment to subjectivism, on the approach I am recommending, admits of degrees. A *thoroughgoing* subjective theory would say something like this:

Thoroughgoing Subjectivism (TS): *All* the things that are good for a person have their prudential value *solely* because the person has the right kind of pro-attitude toward them.

Between TS and MS there is room for a wide variety of partially subjective accounts. Thus, one might defend a theory according to which *some* of the things that are good for a person have their value *solely* because the person has the right kind of pro-attitude toward them, but other things are prudentially valuable for other reasons (indeed, this is exactly what I will do in the ensuing pages). Alternatively, one could hold that *all* the things that are good for a person have their value *in part* because the person has the right kind of pro-attitude toward them, but that these things must also meet some other condition (this is what the joint necessity hybrid theories discussed below claim). One could even defend a view according to which some of the things that are good for a person have their value solely because they are the object of the right kind of pro-attitude, whereas others have their value in part because of the person's pro-attitudes but in part because some other condition is met.

Now consider the following claim:

Minimal Objectivism (MO): *At least some* of the things that are good for a person have their prudential value *at least in part* because they have (the right kind of) attitude-independent value.

We can in turn contrast MO with a far stronger claim:

Thoroughgoing Objectivism (TO): *All* the things that are good for a person have their prudential value *solely* because they have (the right kind of) attitude-independent value.

Once again, the approach taken here leaves ample room for theories that fall somewhere between these two poles. Thus, one might defend an account according to which *some* of the things that are good for a person have their prudential value *solely* because they are good in some substantive, attitude-independent sense, but where the prudential value of other things is grounded in the person's pro-attitudes (again, this is exactly what I will do in the ensuing pages). One might also hold that *all* the things that are good for a person have their prudential value *in part* because they are good in some substantive, attitude independent sense, but that they must also meet some subjective condition (again, this is just what joint necessity hybrid theorists say). Or finally, it might be that some of the things that are good for a person have their prudential value solely because they are substantively good, but others have their value in part because they are substantively good but in part because they meet some other relevant condition.

Hybrid theories of prudential value, on the approach I am recommending, are all those which accept both MS and MO. Note that this leaves a lot of space for the hybrid theorist to maneuver, more than has yet been recognized. It is important to bear in mind, as well, that none of the above was put in terms of constraints such as subjective necessity or objective necessity. It is, of course, open to the hybrid theorist to accept one or both necessity claims. However, I see no reason to limit the range of potential hybrid theories in advance to those which endorse either subjective or objective necessity, let alone both.

1.4 - Why Go Hybrid?

Now that we have clarified what makes a theory of prudential value a hybrid, we can direct our efforts to explaining the appeal of such accounts. I will here consider two quite distinct reasons

why a theorist of prudential value might find a theory that accepts both MS and MO compelling (there are doubtless other reasons, but the two I pick out are both prominent and instructive). These reasons correspond, in turn, to two distinct kinds of objection that one may have to non-hybrid versions of objectivism and subjectivism. Moreover, they point us towards quite different versions of hybridism. This section thus provides us with our first occasion to contrast DHT with extant hybrid theories, and affords an initial glimpse into both the novel structure of the former approach and its distinctive advantages.

It is possible to identify various typical strategies for arguing against any proposed theory of prudential value, whether it be objective or subjective. Simon Keller has pointed out, what seems difficult to dispute, that there appear to be forceful intuitive counterexamples to all extant accounts of what the basic constituents of a person's well-being are. Moreover, there are quick and easy methods for generating such counterexamples to *any theory* of this sort that could conceivably be proposed.⁹ Here I'll merely point to two of the most prominent such methods, which are of special relevance in the context of hybrid approaches.

First, one may charge a theory of prudential value with being *too inclusive*. That is, it may count as good for a person things that intuitively do not contribute to her good. I will call this the *over-inclusiveness objection*. All that is required to generate a version of this objection is that we can identify at least one instance in which the theory is committed to treating as good for a person something that, intuitively, lacks any value for her. The striking thing to observe is that both objective and subjective theories are typically seen by their respective critics as undermined by some version of the over-inclusiveness objection.

Objective theories, in principle, allow things toward which I have no favourable attitude of any sort to count as basic constituents of my well-being. The thoroughgoing objectivist must

⁹ Keller (2009, pp.657-60).

even admit that states of affairs that I (or some ideal version of myself) would not care about or be motivated to pursue even were I fully informed and fully procedurally rational can be good for me. This, the critics of objectivism hold, divorces me from my own good in a way that renders it difficult (if not impossible) to grasp how it could still be *my* good. Thus, Peter Railton famously claims that “it would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone’s good to imagine that it might fail in any way to engage him”.¹⁰ It should be clear enough that this well-known *alienation objection* is but one instance of the over-inclusiveness objection.

Subjective theories are, in their turn, also charged with being too permissive. One complaint that is often lodged is that even the most sophisticated versions of subjectivism (i.e. those that appeal only to the desires a fully informed and procedurally rational version of oneself would desire that one have) are insufficiently sensitive to the independent value of the objects of the pro-attitudes they take to be prudentially relevant.¹¹ Sometimes people want things (to stick with the kind of pro-attitude most typically appealed to) that lack any independent value. It seems likely that no system of desire laundering which doesn’t appeal to substantive values can rule out the possibility of my being benefited (according to subjectivism) by the satisfaction of desires with trivial, base, or even immoral objects. Again, we can see that this *objection from worthless objects* is a version of the over-inclusiveness objection, now turned back upon the subjectivist.

If one agrees with their critics that the parties on both traditional sides of the debate are too permissive in what they allow to be good for a person, a natural move is to see whether in combining elements of both theories one can arrive at a theory that is less *laissez-faire* than either would be on its own. This is a plausible explanation for the recent popularity of a certain

¹⁰ Railton (2003, p.47). See also the extensive discussion of this worry in Rosati (1996).

¹¹ See for instance Kraut (1994) and Fletcher (2013).

kind of hybrid theory. I argued above that neither objective necessity nor subjective necessity should be treated as essential commitments of the hybrid theorist. It is, therefore, all the more striking that the hybrid theories of prudential value that have received the most attention all accept both necessity claims. As Christopher Woodard notes, the following general structure is shared by these extant hybrid accounts:

“For any subject S and any thing X, X is a constituent of S’s well-being if and only if and because (a) S subjectively engages with X and b) X is objectively good”.¹²

This is what Woodard calls the *joint necessity model*. I will refer to all theories with this structure as *joint necessity hybrid theories*.¹³ Such theories have been proposed by Robert Adams, Krister Bykvist, Shelly Kagan, William Lauinger and Derek Parfit.¹⁴ Joint necessity hybrid theories are themselves a subclass of what Alexander Sarch calls *objective adjustment theories*.¹⁵ The latter include all accounts which take well-being to be composed of subjective engagements of some sort, the prudential value of which is adjusted according to the attitude-independent value of their objects. Such theories are committed to subjective necessity, but they need not endorse objective necessity. The most discussed of these accounts (namely those elaborated by Adams and Kagan) do seem to endorse objective necessity, and moreover they take the relevant kind of subjective engagement to be taking pleasure in or enjoying the thing.¹⁶ Yet others have advocated an objectively adjusted version of desire-satisfactionism, again with

¹² Woodard (2015, p.164).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Adams (2002, pp. 93-102), Bykvist (2010b, pp. 50-4), Kagan (2009), Lauinger (2012), Parfit (1984, pp. 501-2).

¹⁵ Sarch (2012, p.441).

¹⁶ There is a complication here, namely that on some accounts the value of pleasure is itself attitude-independent. If so, a theory of this kind may not in fact be a genuine hybrid, but rather an objective list approach of a peculiar sort. This would only further support my claim that the potential of hybrid theories has been insufficiently explored. Of course, even if the Adams/Kagan approach is not properly classified as a hybrid theory, it may yet boast distinct advantages over more standard objective accounts.

objective necessity built in.¹⁷ An objective adjustment theory that *does not* incorporate objective necessity may accord some small amount of prudential value to instances of enjoyment or desire-satisfaction even where they lack appropriate objects, but treat this value as comparatively negligible, or even as lexically inferior to the value of subjective engagements with attitude-independent goods. However, it is also open to such a theory to take a less extreme adjustment function and so depart further from the claim of joint necessity. The key points that all objective adjustment theories agree on are just a) subjective necessity and b) subjective engagement with a substantively valuable object is *more valuable* than similar engagement with an object that lacks attitude-independent value.

It bears remarking that Sarch could just as easily have treated joint necessity theories as a subclass of what we will call *subjective adjustment theories*. Subjective adjustment theories are all those that take a person's well-being to be composed of attitude-independent goods, the prudential value of which is adjusted according to whether the person has some pro-attitude toward them. Such theories are committed to objective necessity, but need not also incorporate subjective necessity. A subjective adjustment theory that does incorporate subjective necessity may be indistinguishable from an objective adjustment theory that endorses objective necessity. Joint necessity theories, then, can be seen to occupy that point in theoretical space where objective adjustment theories and subjective adjustment theories converge.

Plausibly, hybrid theories that build in either of these necessity claims can help us in responding to the over-inclusiveness objection. This goes double for joint necessity hybrids. On these grounds alone, there is something important to be said for such accounts. And yet, there is

¹⁷ Lauinger (2012) offers the most sustained defense of this view. Bykvist discusses (and even expresses support for) such a theory in various places, but does not develop it at comparable length (2006a, pp. 265-8, 2006b, p.287, 2010a, pp.2-5, 2010b, pp. 50-4). Parfit (1984, pp. 501-2) also gestures toward a hybrid version of desire-satisfactionism, although he never pursues this idea further.

another ready-made source of counterexamples to any proposed theory of prudential value, which turns out to be a kind of mirror image of the first. We may also charge such an account with being *insufficiently inclusive*. That is, the account may *rule out*, as basic constituents of a person's well-being, certain things that intuitively do count as good for that person. We will call this the *under-inclusiveness objection*. Both objective and subjective theories have proven susceptible to such intuitive counterexamples.

Thoroughgoing subjectivists are forced to deny that anything can be good for a person if that person does not have the appropriate sort of pro-attitude towards it, even intuitive prudential goods like knowledge, friendship, virtuous activity, achievement, autonomy, and pleasure. This claim is difficult to accept. I believe there are things that many of us, philosophers and folk alike, would take to be beneficial *for any person*, without feeling the need to ascertain whether they are the object of any pro-attitude. In cases (and even if uncommon, such cases surely do exist) where one of these items is instantiated in a person's life without being the object of the right sort of pro-attitude, pure subjectivism thus appears under-inclusive.

Thoroughgoing objectivists do not evade this charge either. The claim that when I care (sufficiently and in the right way) about some thing, this is (at least sometimes) sufficient to make that thing good for me, is extremely compelling. It is *my own* good after all, so shouldn't I have some power to determine what constitutes it, by conferring prudential value upon things I care about, even where those things would not otherwise be valuable? Intuitively, this question should be answered in the affirmative. Thus, in disqualifying anything which lacks attitude-independent value from counting as a basic constituent of my well-being, pure objectivism also appears under-inclusive.

We now seem to find ourselves in a similar position as before, in which thoroughgoing objective and subjective theories both fall prey to ready-made counterexamples. And again, it is worth exploring whether by combining elements from both kinds of theory we can produce an account that is less susceptible to these criticisms. It is obvious that joint necessity hybrid theories are not going to help us defend ourselves against the *under-inclusiveness* objection. For as we have seen, these theories seem designed precisely to *rule out* more candidate goods than either thoroughgoing objective or subjective approaches can on their own. If, therefore, it is worthwhile trying to produce a theory which doesn't succumb to the under-inclusiveness objection, we will seemingly need to go in a different direction.

The most promising avenue for dealing with the under-inclusiveness objection, I suggest, is to develop a theory that could act as a kind of mirror image of the joint necessity hybrid theories discussed in the previous paragraph, in that rather than combining objective and subjective elements so as to weed out certain things that otherwise would need to be included, it instead combines them *in order to include certain things that otherwise would need to be excluded*. This naturally points toward a view that combines subjective and objective elements but rejects both subjective and objective necessity. And indeed, the theory I will develop and defend in the following pages is a hybrid account of just this sort. This new hybrid theory has the following structure:

Disjunctive Hybrid Theory (DHT): Thing x is good for person P if and only if x is *either* a) cared about (sufficiently and in the right way) by P, b) a bearer of (the right kind of) attitude-independent value, or c) both.

Compare DHT so formulated with Woodard's above-quoted characterization of joint necessity theories, as those which hold that "[f]or any subject S and any thing X, X is a

constituent of S's well-being if and only if and because (a) S subjectively engages with X and b) X is objectively good". Minor disagreements in terminology aside, the only difference between DHT and a joint necessity hybrid theory is that the "and" is replaced with an "or": neither subjective engagement nor attitude-independent value is treated as a *necessary* condition. Rather, the necessary condition is itself disjunctive. *Either* the presence of (the right kind of) subjective engagement *or* the presence of (the right kind of) attitude-independent value is necessary. But *either alone is sufficient*.

This move, as far as I can tell, is not anticipated in the literature. Although Sarch, for instance, recognizes that objective adjustment hybrid theories do not need to follow the joint necessity model, he nonetheless takes it to be definitive of such theories that they take the value of objective goods with which one is not at all subjectively engaged to be nil (that is, subjective necessity is still built in).¹⁸

It should be clear enough that the account of prudential value that can best respond to the under-inclusiveness objection will be a hybrid theory with just such a disjunctive structure. DHT thus has at least one important point in its favour, namely that it promises to answer better than any extant approach to one of the most popular lines of objection to both thoroughgoing objective and thoroughgoing subjective theories of well-being. I believe it should, on that account, be treated as at least on a par with those theories that are more often discussed. It seems, moreover, that this sort of account deserves the name of hybrid theory at least as much as accounts that accept subjective and/or objective necessity, even it has a rather different aim and structure.

It is important to take stock of what the arguments so far mustered do and do not show. Suppose it is granted that there are good reasons to be concerned about the under-inclusiveness

¹⁸ Sarch (2012, pp. 444-7).

objection, and that the best way to secure ourselves against the counterexamples it relies upon is to embrace a theory like DHT. If there are equally good reasons to worry about the over-inclusiveness objection, and the best way to fortify ourselves against *it* is to embrace a joint necessity hybrid theory, this at best supports a policy of neutrality between those theories that deal maximally well with the former objection and those that deal maximally well with the latter.¹⁹ Now, I do believe that this conclusion alone would constitute an important step forward in our theorizing, insofar as it would establish that a theory of the kind being developed here merits at least as much consideration as joint necessity hybrid approaches. If the latter are viable candidate theories, so is the former. If nothing else, this would vindicate the idea that the project to be carried out in the following pages of adding flesh to the bones of DHT is of considerable interest.

I am not content to stop there, however. I believe there is a compelling case to be made that DHT (provided it is developed carefully) should be favoured over joint necessity hybrid theories, and indeed over every other approach to prudential value. This is a bold claim, and can only be fully vindicated after we have engaged in an extended process of theory development. The best I can do here is provide an initial sketch of my reasons for being more optimistic about the prospects for DHT than I am about joint necessity hybrids.

The first point that speaks in favour of DHT bears on how pressing we should take the under- and over-inclusiveness worries, respectively, to be. A plausible case can be made that the under-inclusiveness objection is the more damaging. If this is so, we should be especially concerned to construct a theory that is sufficiently inclusive. The argument for this conclusion

¹⁹ I am here presuming that no theory of prudential value can simultaneously make itself immune to both types of intuitive counterexample. The tenor of the literature to this point offers some reason to believe that this is so. I would, of course, be as pleased as anyone to be proven wrong.

rests on the following methodological principle, which when theorizing about prudential value seems to me very compelling:

The Care Principle (CP): If those who *love* and *care most* about person P believe that x is good for P (and desire x for P's sake), this constitutes solid *prima facie* evidence that x is in fact good for P.

I am not the first to observe that the notion of well-being seems to play an especially prominent role when we are thinking about what we want (or should want) for those people we care most about.²⁰ From the perspective of one who loves a person, the general question “what would make their life go best for them” is commonly foregrounded. By contrast, when we are deliberating about our own lives, the general idea of well-being ordinarily fades into the background, and it is instead the particular objects of our individual desires that engage our attention.²¹ This is not to say that we do not (in almost all cases) care about our own well-being, but simply to stress that it is only on those relatively rare occasions when we are willing and able to take up a more reflective stance on the broader course of our own lives that this notion plays an explicit role in our first-personal deliberations. Yet what is special about such occasions seems to be precisely that the person is taking up a position similar to that of anyone else who cares about and loves them.²² It makes sense for the theorist of prudential value to focus on what someone who occupies such a position would judge to be good for one, given how easy it is for

²⁰ The idea is found, for instance, in Darwall (2004), Feldman (2004) and Scanlon (1998). I will often appeal in my later examples to just such a standpoint on a person's life. The general method has been referred to in the literature as the *crib test* (see Feldman, pp.9-10), although it is not only in the context of parents and children where this sort of concern arises.

²¹ Cf. Scanlon (1998, pp.127-133) and Raz (2004, pp.281-7).

²² Cf. Darwall (2004, pp.4-9). Note that I am not here endorsing Darwall's claim that we can *analyze* well-being in terms of what it is rational to want for someone insofar as one cares about them. Nonetheless, the substantive claim that *if x is good for person P, and I care about person P, I ought to desire x for P's sake* is at once plausible, and helpful for understanding the role well-being plays in practical thought.

careful consideration of one's own good to be effaced, in first-personal deliberation, by more immediate enticements. If our concern is with what ordinary people believe about the constituents of well-being, we ought surely to prioritize those contexts in which this notion is most often appealed to in ordinary thought.

CP inherits its considerable plausibility from the above reflections. Moreover, if this principle is accepted, it lends independent support to a theory like DHT. For, if we ask the person on the street what kind of life they would wish for their loved ones (their friends, family members, romantic partners), they are likely, as a start, to point to one filled with things like certain interpersonal bonds (friendship, romantic love, familial love), achievement, important knowledge, virtuous activity, autonomy, and enjoyable mental states. The satisfaction of the loved one's core desires would also likely be highlighted as an important aspect of their well-being, in its own right. This is all to say that, when it comes to the kinds of things that are basic constituents of their loved ones' well-being, most people seem to pre-reflectively endorse a view which we can call *common-sense pluralism about prudential value*.

Now let us consider whether this common-sense pluralism builds in a claim like *subjective necessity*. Here I do not think we can give a single answer. People, even people uncontaminated by philosophy, do not all agree in their intuitive judgments about well-being. I am quite confident that some of the folk would endorse subjective necessity when considering what is good for those they care about, but equally confident that others would not. We should not be surprised or dismayed to find such disagreement, insofar as one's attitudes towards the constituents of a good life (for oneself or others) are heavily shaped by one's own formative experiences. The question is how theorists of prudential value should respond where intuitions conflict in this way. And it is here where I believe CP can help us make progress.

If we take CP seriously, we may well be led by the fact that *some people* intuitively reject subjective necessity when it comes to their loved ones to reject it as theorists. For, this is the only way we can avoid ruling out of contention for the status of basic constituents of prudential value certain things that, precisely according to those who care most about P, would make P's life go better by their presence. Any instance of one of the aforementioned intuitive prudential goods to which P does not have some pro-attitude is disqualified from counting towards P's good, if subjective necessity is accepted. And this is so regardless of what those who love and care about P may think about the prudential relevance of these things for P. However, if CP is a reasonable principle, the fact that at least some of those who care about P would include things toward which P does not have any pro-attitude as constituents of P's well-being is solid *prima facie* evidence that subjective necessity is false.

Turning to the other constraint favoured by various hybrid theorists, CP now firmly in hand, I believe we will find that this methodological principle does not support objective necessity either. Once again there is bound to be disagreement on this question, but many people do share the intuition that the satisfaction of a person's desires (or at least some subset of them) is among the things that contributes to the prudential value of their life. It is not plausible that these people are all, either implicitly or explicitly, importing a substantive value constraint on the objects of the desires that are prudentially relevant. I, at least, want those whom I care most about to have those things that they want, even in cases where I myself fail to see anything worth pursuing about them. Thus, I believe the same considerations that led us to be skeptical of subjective necessity push in the direction of rejecting objective necessity. And of course, recognizing that there are both attitude-independent and attitude-dependent goods, while rejecting both necessity claims, just amounts to endorsing DHT.

Those who find the over-inclusiveness objection the more pressing challenge often appear to be operating under the banner of the following very different methodological principle:

First Person Veto (FPV): If person P (or an idealized version thereof) would not assent to the judgment that state of affairs x is basically good for P, then x cannot in fact be good for P.

Although this is not just a negative restatement of subjective necessity, it is very close to it. The only difference is that it is put in terms of refusing assent to the judgment that a given thing is good for one rather than failing to hold any pro-attitude towards the thing. FPV is thus treated as a trump card that can in principle be pulled out to disqualify any proposed candidate for the status of basic constituent of prudential value.²³ On this view, every individual person has a right of refusal with respect to anything that we might assert to be good for them.

Unlike CP, I believe FPV as stated cannot be correct. Indeed, I will discuss several cases that directly count against it in Chapters 2 (see section 2.3, p.66) and 4 (see sections 4.5 and 4.6). For now, the point I wish to press is just that there are no good grounds for taking FPV *more seriously* than CP. The most plausible explanation for why FPV, or some principle like it, has gained widespread support is that it answers to the intuitively compelling idea that individuals should be allowed a fair amount of autonomy when it comes to judgments about their own well-being. For some theorist to insist that certain things are good for me, even if I do not judge these things to have any prudential value (and perhaps could not even be brought around to such a

²³ Cf. Hawkins (2010 p.62). “Contemporary theorists of well-being typically view the driving intuition of subjectivism as an attempt to honor the subject’s own evaluative judgments about her life...just as in ordinary life we are often reluctant to insist to someone that something she values or wants is not in fact good for her (to do so could seem arrogantly paternalistic), subjective theorists of well-being are reluctant to adopt theories that stipulate that certain items are good for a person who does not herself see them as good. In short, they are reluctant to set up theories that contradict the individual’s own evaluative judgments. Subjectivism so conceived is committed to what I shall call *the authority of the individual’s evaluative perspective*.”

judgment through some idealizing procedure), brings with it an air of philosophical imperialism. At its worst, this sort of attitude may be thought to pave the way for paternalistic interventions.

Now, I agree that individuals should be taken to have *some sort* of authority over what is good for them. My only disagreement has to do with how we, as theorists of prudential value, can best understand the relevant sort of authority. In the first place, I fail to see why P's capacity to *veto* certain proposed candidate goods by refusing to recognize them should be privileged as somehow a fuller exercise of P's autonomous agency, when compared with P's capacity to *confer value* upon objects by caring about them (sufficiently and in the right way). Indeed, if anything the latter seems to me more worthy of respect, if only because it is a more active and constructive exercise of P's agency. Admittedly, one is still to some extent passive when it comes to what one cares about, but this is no less true of what one judges to be good for one (in neither case is it entirely up to one what one's attitude to a given thing is). In caring about some thing x (and thereby conferring value upon it), it seems that a person is exercising at least as much agency as they are when they refuse assent to some proposed judgment about their own good. And of course, DHT is not only compatible with this capacity of ours to confer prudential value upon the things we care about, it insists upon it.

What is more, it is not the case that any paternalistic political conclusions follow from the supposition that some x can be good for person P, even though P would not assent to the judgment that this is the case. The recognition that people are to some extent fallible about the contents of their own good affords no reason to believe that policy-makers are more likely to know what is best for them. Most of us are leery of such claims for good reason. Although CP does imply that the best judge of what is good for P may not be P herself, but rather those who love and care most about her, few of us are so sanguine about our governments as to suppose that

they are plausible candidates for this role. Moreover, insofar as autonomy is itself a substantive prudential good (I argue for this claim in Chapter 4), there are good grounds for even one who does genuinely love and care about a person not to interfere with her choices, even where this may seem to be for her own good.

From a methodological perspective, then, CP provides us with a sound justification for taking special care to avoid the under-inclusiveness objection. Despite this, other theorists of prudential value have been primarily occupied with the over-inclusiveness objection. This is revealed by the fact that joint necessity hybrids have been the subject of extensive discussion, and DHT has been the subject of virtually none. We must consider in more detail why this is.

I suspect that some part of the explanation is the omnipresent threat of succumbing to the alienation worry, which has seemed to many an especially important version of the challenge from over-inclusiveness. The complaint here is that, if we allow things that I do not somehow enjoy or favour to contribute to the goodness of my life *for me*, we are divorcing me from my own well-being in an objectionable way. On this way of thinking, in merely recognizing attitude-independent prudential goods we do not make ourselves vulnerable to such criticism. We do this only when we allow such things to enter in as constituents of a person's well-being *in their own right*, whether or not they are appreciated or endorsed by the person.²⁴

There is reason to doubt that hybrid theories which accept subjective necessity really have any pronounced advantage over DHT, when it comes to assuaging the alienation worry. Thus, let us imagine a person who cares not at all about the independent worth of the things that

²⁴ Cf. Noggle's claim (1999, p.303) that "if we are measuring the extent to which a life is valuable for the person living it, then it seems that the criteria for evaluation must be those of the agent herself. The ends and goals in terms of which we evaluate the success of a person's life must not, it seems, be completely alien to the agent's own ends and goals."

they take pleasure in or desire. All this person cares about in life is feeling as much pleasure as possible and satisfying all their desires. Supposing that such a person has a life that ranks very highly on both the hedonistic and desire-satisfactionist scales before adjustment, how can we justify to this person the (more or less steep) discounting rate that we proceed to apply to the pleasures and satisfactions that involve no engagement with substantive values? It is dubious whether we can do so, at least in any terms that this person will understand and accept. Such a person might well complain that we are introducing alien values, and thereby devaluing her life by appeal to a standard which she cannot endorse. I fail to see why we should treat the imposition of this sort of external standard as less objectionable or illicit than other ways of introducing alien values. Perhaps, then, hybrid theorists should simply accept that we will not be able to satisfy those who are moved by such worries. Indeed, I doubt that it is worth trying to satisfy them, as any anti-alienation constraint will force us to rule out of a person's good things that should not be ruled out. I will defend this point at greater length in Chapter 4. For now, I'll merely note that DHT makes no claim to satisfy an anti-alienation constraint, and that I take this to be a good thing.

A preference for hybrids that incorporate subjective necessity might also be defended at the metaethical level by appeal to the special nature of the concept GOODNESS-FOR. That is, we might think that if we are to capture the intrinsic relationality of prudential value, we will have to insist that any x that is a constituent of person P 's well-being bear some essential relationship to P 's own attitudes. However, we have good reasons to be suspicious of any proposed conceptual analysis that prejudices substantive issues in this way. We can very well grant that prudential value is fundamentally relational without taking the relevant sort of relationality to be the kind that the subjectivist has in mind. In recent years, Stephen Darwall, Richard Kraut, and Guy

Fletcher have all developed meta-ethical accounts of prudential value that do just this.²⁵ Surely it cannot just be *conceptually true* that to be a constituent of P's well-being some x must be subjectively engaged with by P, given that many competent users of the concept deny this. One needs to provide an independently compelling argument for this position, if it is taken instead as a substantive claim. I do not know where such an argument could come from, and I am not optimistic that there is any to be found.

Another reason that the disjunctive possibility has been neglected may be that, in denying objective necessity, DHT leaves itself open to objection on the grounds that it allows objects that lack any substantive value to be good for a person (under the right conditions). Yet again, I believe the correct response to this charge is to bite the apparent bullet. We ought not to restrict the kinds of things that can be good for people, such that if something has no attitude-independent value it has no prudential value. There is considerable intuitive pull to the idea that things that are otherwise valueless can be good for me precisely because I care about them (sufficiently and in the right way). If a maximally inclusive theory is indeed desirable, we then have reason to reject objective necessity, even if this does open us up to some intuitive counterexamples.

Finally, it may be that the reason the disjunctive approach has received such short shrift is because it has been thought that, just insofar as it is disjunctive, it is bound to be ungainly and uninformative. Some may even go so far as to deny that what the disjunctive hybrid theorist offers deserves to be called a theory of prudential value. Indeed, I believe that concerns of this sort are behind many people's refusal to countenance a theory such as DHT. To begin to address such concerns, as well as to better situate DHT in the taxonomical landscape, it is necessary that

²⁵ See Darwall (2002), Kraut (2007), and Fletcher (2012).

we now turn to consider another distinction that has been prominent in recent discussions of prudential value, namely that between monism and pluralism.

1.5 - Enumerative and Explanatory Pluralisms

In this section I further highlight the distinctiveness and appeal of DHT by considering this new hybrid theory in the context of the debate between monists and pluralists about prudential value. I show that, in the theory of prudential value, a commitment to monism or pluralism can take two distinct forms, based on how one responds to two different questions. I call these the enumerative and the explanatory questions. DHT is pluralistic in its response, not just to the former, but also to the latter question. DHT's embrace of such an *explanatory pluralism* serves to distinguish it from virtually all other theories on offer. If explanatory pluralism about prudential value is itself appealing, and it is my contention that it is, then this provides further support for DHT, alongside the extensional concerns already discussed.

The initial schism between monists and pluralists about prudential value arises from their respective responses to what I am calling the enumerative question. The enumerative question is just this: *What are the basic constituents of prudential value?* The terminology of monism and pluralism naturally suggests that we carve up enumerative views into those which take there to be just one basic constituent of prudential value and those which take there to be more than one. Yet this, clearly, won't do. For no theory of prudential value denies that more than one *particular* state of affairs is a basic constituent of prudential value. The distinction, then, must be between views according to which there is only one *kind* of basic constituent of prudential value, and views according to which there are many.

We are now immediately on shakier metaphysical ground than we might wish. How does one determine whether two states of affairs are of different kinds? If we don't provide *some*

principled basis for sorting states of affairs into one kind rather than another, the worry is that the distinction between enumerative monism and pluralism is arbitrary. It seems that any theory could come out as monistic, provided we admit sufficiently few distinct kinds of states of affairs. We might, after all, just stipulate that to be a basic constituent of prudential value is to be *a state of affairs of the basically prudentially valuable kind* and end our carving up of the landscape at this point. This secures enumerative monism by fiat. On the other hand, if we admit sufficiently many distinct kinds of states of affairs, any enumerative view comes out as pluralistic, again seemingly by fiat.

Where most theorists of prudential value do not explicitly address this issue, content to rely on the intuitive distinction between kinds and particulars, Eden Lin has recently put forward a proposal about *how* to divide the basic constituents of prudential value into kinds.²⁶ A striking consequence of this approach is that it seems to render the distinction between the enumerative and explanatory questions irrelevant for present purposes. Lin argues that all extant theories of well-being address both the enumerative and the explanatory questions. More to the point, he claims that any theory that gives a pluralistic answer at the enumerative level *must* also be pluralistic at the explanatory level. This is because he thinks that in enumerating the *kinds* of states of affairs that can serve as basic constituents of prudential value, we are always at the same time proposing an explanation of *what makes a given thing* a basic constituent of prudential value. If Lin is correct, it should follow that standard objective list accounts are themselves forms of explanatory pluralism. And this is precisely what he argues. Considering an objective list account which includes both pleasure and knowledge on its list, Lin holds that “the fact that you are feeling E is basically good for you in virtue of the fact that it consists in your feeling an episode of pleasure. Moreover, if you know the Pythagorean Theorem, then the fact that you

²⁶ Lin (2017).

know the Pythagorean Theorem is basically good for you because it a fact consisting of your knowing something—i.e., a fact of the form that you know that p. On an objective list theory, each basic good on the list corresponds to an explanation of the basic goodness for you of particular facts.”²⁷

The purported upshot is that the only real difference between desire-satisfactionism, for instance, and a pluralist objective list account is that the former entails that the basic constituents of prudential value all belong to a single kind (roughly the kind ‘state of affairs that is desired by the subject’) and the latter holds that they belong to at least two distinct kinds (for instance, ‘state of affairs that is an instance of pleasure’ and ‘state of affairs that is an instance of knowledge’). Now, unlike those whom Lin is explicitly arguing against, I do not claim that the best way to taxonomize *theories* of prudential value is by distinguishing them into enumerative and explanatory. However, I am making much of the distinction between the enumerative and explanatory *questions* in my characterization of DHT’s distinctiveness and appeal. If objective list theories should also be seen as giving a pluralistic answer to the explanatory question, then I am not setting out on a new path in articulating and defending a view which embraces explanatory pluralism. My (still very real) disagreement with the objective list approach thus becomes an internal disagreement among explanatory pluralists. This does not touch our central claims, which are that DHT is itself both (a) interestingly novel and (b) plausible. However, it seems to me that the distinction between the explanatory and enumerative questions does help to bring out interesting features of DHT, and can also enhance our understanding of why its potential has not yet been recognized. I will thus briefly respond to Lin’s arguments.

I am not in a position to defend a particular metaphysics of kinds. Doing so in a way that

²⁷Ibid. (p.67). Lin’s facts can be treated as equivalent to our states of affairs.

would convince anyone to change their view would likely require a thesis of its own. I cannot discount the possibility that Lin is right about how theorists of prudential value must individuate kinds, and thus also right about the relative insignificance of the explanatory/enumerative distinction. If this is the case, then the theory I will go on to defend, while still *substantively* distinctive from anything in the extant literature, will turn out to be less *formally* novel than I have claimed. However, even if Lin is correct that there is a sense in which an objective list account does offer distinct explanations for the goodness of a given instance of knowledge and a given instance of pleasure, there is another plausible way of understanding such theories which does make them monistic in their response to the explanatory question. Moreover, understood in this same way the theory defended here still comes out as pluralistic. Accordingly, we can still pinpoint a real difference, which survives even in the face of Lin's criticisms. It is just that it requires us to dig deeper than we initially supposed.

The alternative way of understanding the objective list account is as follows. There is at bottom only one explanation for why any given thing is a basic constituent of prudential value. In Lin's terms, for any fact *x* that is basically good for you, it is good for you in virtue of the fact that it has attitude-independent value. Putting this now in the language of kinds, we can say that the things that are good for a person all belong to the kind "state of affairs that possesses attitude-independent value". The difference between the hybrid view that I am defending, in part under the banner of explanatory pluralism, and the objective list theory is now plain. These theories agree that *some* of the things that are good for people are good for them *precisely because* they have attitude-independent value, but DHT adds that other things are good for them *precisely because* the person cares about them. This is enough to justify the claim that DHT is pluralist at the explanatory level in a sense in which objective list accounts are not.

It thus does not really impact our core argument whether we follow recent practice in taking the enumerative question to be in some interesting sense separable from the explanatory one or whether we side with Lin. The essential point is that the theory to be developed here is pluralistic at a *deeper explanatory level* than extant theories of prudential value. For ease of exposition, I will make use of the enumerative/explanatory distinction going forward, but the reader can feel free to treat this as merely a colourful way of distinguishing between these higher and lower *levels* of explanation.

Let us return now to our previous intuitive distinction between enumerative pluralism, which recognizes that more than one kind of thing is a basic constituent of prudential value, and enumerative monism, which holds that everything that is basically good for a person belongs to a single kind. In thinking about where the extant theories of prudential value stand on this issue, it will be useful to begin with the most influential taxonomy of theories of well-being, Derek Parfit's tripartite division of such theories into mental state, desire-satisfaction, and objective list accounts.²⁸ Consider first mental state theories. Such views hold that the only basic constituents of prudential value are states of affairs consisting in someone's being in a certain mental state. In the canonical, *hedonistic* form, the mental states in question are taken to be instances of pleasure.²⁹ So according to the hedonist, the only things that are basically prudentially valuable are states of affairs consisting in someone's experiencing pleasure.³⁰ Hedonism is a version of enumerative monism if any theory is.

²⁸ Parfit (1984, pp.493-502).

²⁹ Whether there is anything interesting that all the states we call pleasure have in common, and that can be specified in a non-circular way, is itself a fascinating question to which I will not here attempt an answer.

³⁰ The most sophisticated contemporary defense of a hedonistic account is found in Feldman (2004). Other defenders include Bradley (2009), Bramble (2016) and Crisp (2006).

Most contemporary theorists of well-being are not hedonists. Many of them instead accept some version of *desire-satisfactionism*. In its simplest form, desire-satisfactionism entails that if and only if I desire x, x is a basic constituent of my well-being. Desire-satisfactionism is also a monistic enumerative theory, at least in the sense that the things that are good for a person all belong to the kind ‘state of affairs that is desired by the person’. It is, however, more pluralistic than hedonism insofar as it admits states of affairs that are not mental states as basic constituents of prudential value (assuming, what is surely true, that we have desires that are not desires to be in certain mental states). It has often been thought that an unrestricted desire-satisfactionism has unacceptable implications, and for this reason the most popular desire-based views these days are more sophisticated.³¹ They hold, for example, that it is only the satisfaction of those desires that a fully-informed and rational version of oneself would want one to have that count towards one’s good.³² These theories will also come out monistic in the sense that we can identify a single kind to which all the things that are good for a person belong (namely the kind “state of affairs that a rational and fully informed version of the person would want the person to desire”) but pluralistic in the sense that states of affairs other than mental states will be basic constituents of prudential value.

Although we saw above that their view need not be taken in this way, objective list theorists can also plausibly be seen as holding that the basic constituents of prudential value

³¹ I will consider several of these objections at some length in the ensuing chapters.

³² Railton (1986, p.54) offers a well-known statement of this kind of view: “The proposal I would make, then, is the following: 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. The wants in question, then, are wants regarding what he would seek were he to assume the place of his actual, incompletely informed and imperfectly rational self, taking into account the changes that self is capable of, the costs of those changes, and so on.”

belong to more than one kind. We will follow Parfit for the present, in classifying as objective list theories all accounts that hold that the basic constituents of prudential value are good for one regardless of whether one has any pro-attitude toward them. Among the attitude-independent goods that are most often identified are knowledge, virtue, achievement, and friendship. This sort of view has been well-represented in the recent literature.³³

Finally, we have the existing hybrid theories. Some of these will come out as monistic at the enumerative level. Thus, consider the view according to which the basic constituents of prudential value are states of affairs consisting in the enjoyment of excellent objects. This hybrid account in fact comes out as a rather restrictive version of enumerative monism, insofar as the basic constituents of well-being are all pleasurable mental states, and moreover pleasurable states of one specific kind. As we noted above, there are many different hybrid views that might be offered, and some of these will instead be versions of enumerative pluralism. This is obviously the case, for instance, with DHT. Since I am not primarily concerned to defend *enumerative* pluralism (it is rather a happy consequence of the view I am defending), I will not engage in a more exhaustive discussion of the possibilities at this point.

Now that we have a better idea of what our quarry is, we can more directly address the explanatory question. The explanatory question is as follows: *what explains why a given thing is a basic constituent of prudential value?* We should understand this as asking about any proposed list of basic prudential goods: what is it that *makes it the case* that all and only these kinds of states of affairs have the relevant sort of value? One who poses this question wants to know not

³³ Some of these theories are *perfectionist*. I class as perfectionist any theory that accords pride of place to some notion of *human nature* in its claims about the objective prudential goods. The most well-worked out perfectionist theory of prudential value is in Kraut (2007). Other defenders of perfectionism include Brink (2008) and LeBar (2004). Non-perfectionist objective list approaches are defended in Arneson (1999), Ferkany (2012), Fletcher (2013), Hooker (2015) and Rice (2013).

just what things are good for us but *what grounds* our prudential value claims, when such claims are true. What has not always been recognized is that, as with the enumerative question, there are both monistic and pluralistic answers that we can return to such a person.

The *explanatory monist* holds that there is some one size fits all explanation that tells us why any item that appears on the list of basic constituents of prudential value is on the list. The *explanatory pluralist*, on the other hand, holds that the basic prudential value of distinct states of affairs is also susceptible of distinct explanations. Monistic and pluralistic views must both be distinguished from views according to which there is simply no informative story to tell about why thing x is a basic constituent of person P's well-being. Following Christopher Woodard, we can call these *no-answer views*.³⁴

Above, we identified three types of theory that can be understood as (in some sense) offering a pluralistic answer to the enumerative question. These were desire-satisfactionism, objective list theories, and some extant hybrid theories. Let us now consider what each kind of account has to say in response to the explanatory question.

Return first to desire-satisfactionism. Desire-satisfactionists tell us that there is only one kind of fact that can make it the case that something is a basic constituent of prudential value, namely that it is the object of (the right sort of) desire. Thus, if we are asked what it is that makes x a basic constituent of prudential value, we can give an answer that is guaranteed in advance to apply equally well to basic constituents of prudential value y and z. In an important sense, then, desire-satisfactionism is a fundamentally monistic theory.

³⁴ Woodard (2013, p.800).

What of objective list accounts? These have sometimes been understood as offering only a brute enumeration of the prudentially valuable things. If we take their claims in this way, objective list theorists are just not engaged in the same project as someone like the desire-satisfactionist. Some objective list theorists may take themselves to be pursuing a project of this comparatively modest sort.³⁵ Such people may be quietists about the explanatory question, or they may be committed to a no-answer view. However, even if we reject Lin's claim that in enumerating the several kinds of prudentially good things we are already engaged in an explanatory project, we have reason to doubt that a *mere list* of the basic constituents of prudential value could amount to a satisfactory philosophical theory of prudential value. Objective list theorists are therefore advised not to go entirely silent on the explanatory question if they can help it.

Before we continue, this last claim calls for elaboration. There are at least two distinct desiderata that any theory of prudential value should strive to satisfy. The first is extensional adequacy. That is, we want the theory to provide a plausible enumeration of the basic constituents of prudential value. Concerns about extensional adequacy are what lay behind the over- and under-inclusiveness objections. This desideratum thus plays an important role in motivating DHT (as well as the joint necessity hybrid theories to which we have opposed it). However, there is another desideratum of comparable importance, it seems to me. This is that the theory should give a plausible explanation of why the things that appear in our enumeration of the basic constituents of prudential value are there. If we have no (non-vacuous) story to tell about what would make it the case that states of affairs x, y, and z are all basically prudentially valuable, it is difficult to see what principled way we will have for arbitrating between the disputants when disagreements occur at the enumerative level. If this is indeed the situation we

³⁵ Scanlon (1998, pp.113-26) appears to be one such figure.

find ourselves in, I trust I am not alone in thinking that it should very much trouble us. The brute list approach suggests that theorizing about prudential value must in such cases resign itself to stalemate. I am optimistic that we can do better.

It is for this reason that I reject the recent suggestion that we adopt a taxonomy that divides *theories* of well-being into enumerative and explanatory. Rather, we do better to treat the enumerative and explanatory projects as two, not entirely independent, aspects of the theory of prudential value. Attempts to answer the explanatory question can help us to understand what it is that makes the things that we intuitively take to be good for people good for them. If we once arrive at such an understanding, we may in turn be forced to revise some of our intuitive beliefs about what kinds of things are basic constituents of prudential value. We will also have principled grounds for objecting to some candidate goods while admitting others.

Thus, we should hold that any account that concerns itself solely with the task of enumerating those things that are prudentially valuable is in an important sense incomplete. Certainly, not all theories that are classified by the traditional taxonomy as objective list accounts are so modest in their ambitions. Perfectionist approaches, such as that recently defended by Richard Kraut, go considerably further.³⁶ Kraut argues that what all the things that are basically good for human beings have in common is that they are constituents of a human being's *flourishing*, where this latter notion is unpacked through an appeal to characteristically human capacities. He employs this framework to arrive at a more or less standard list of attitude-independent prudential goods. However, far from being ungrounded, Kraut's list purports to base itself on deep and quite general claims about the specific content of human nature. Kraut's theory is clearly a version of explanatory monism, regardless of how rich and varied are the goods it admits. For if something is a basic constituent of a person's good, this is always and everywhere

³⁶ Kraut (2007).

because it forms part of what it is for this person to flourish as the kind of being it is (namely a member of the species *homo sapiens*, in all cases with which we are familiar).

Although this has not always been adequately recognized, it is open to objectivists who share Kraut's explanatory ambitions to proceed in a quite different way. Guy Fletcher has (separately) defended both the objective list theory and a *locative* account of prudential value, according to which what explains why something is good for a person is (in part) that it is good *simpliciter*.³⁷ The locative account is again quite compatible with a pluralistic enumerative story (as Fletcher's own theory shows). However, neither Fletcher's locative nor Kraut's perfectionist account is any less monistic than desire-satisfactionism at a deeper level of inquiry. In both cases, it is agreed that there is some single (non-trivial, non-disjunctive) necessary and sufficient condition that anything that is a basic constituent of a person's well-being must meet.

One of my aims in this dissertation is to press both objectivists and subjectivists on this last point. Theorists of prudential value across the spectrum have tended to agree that at least this much monism must be conceded. However, there are good reasons for dissenting from this view. At the very least, our opponents are not entitled to assume it. DHT, it should be readily seen, is in tension with such an assumption. This theory, recall, denies both objective and subjective necessity. DHT states that sometimes a certain kind of subjective explanation of the prudential value of a given state of affairs is appropriate, and at other times a certain kind of objective explanation is called for. It does not insist that x must satisfy *both* the subjective explaining

³⁷ Fletcher (2012 and 2013). It must be noted that Fletcher himself accepts, indeed presses, the classification of objective list theories as enumerative (2013, pp.206-209). He does not present the analysis of the relation and the enumeration as parts of one unified theory. Nonetheless, it strikes me that this is an attractive strategy, and moreover one that is open to him. And Fletcher seems to agree when he writes (2012, p.8) that a "positive feature of the Locative Analysis is that it yields a way to give a grounding for objective-list theories of well-being...the analysis imposes informative conditions on what can be good for someone, namely only things that meet the conditions specified in the analysis. This suggests a way of narrowing down and determining what should be on the list."

condition (being cared about sufficiently and in the right way by P) and the objective one (possessing the right kind of attitude-independent value) if it is to qualify as a basic constituent of P's well-being. While it is necessary that *at least one* of these conditions be met, either on its own is sufficient, according to DHT. On this account, it thus seems that we can point to no single (non-trivial and non-disjunctive) set of necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being prudentially valuable.

It is instructive to contrast the above structure, once again, with that of joint necessity hybrid theories. These theories, too, purport to explain why the things that are good for a person are such by appealing to both objective and subjective explaining conditions.³⁸ However, although the explanation of a thing's prudential value involves both objective and subjective elements, for any given prudentially valuable state of affairs this explanation is the same (namely, that both the objective and subjective necessity conditions are met). That is, the explanation is still one size fits all. In this sense, joint necessity hybrid theories remain monistic.

Insofar as we have now sketched an account of just this sort, it is evident that there is room in conceptual space for a theory of prudential value that is pluralistic at even this deepest level of explanation. It is therefore puzzling that this alternative has gone almost entirely undiscussed in the literature.³⁹ Even if it is supposed to be a non-starter, we should at least find

³⁸ It should be noted that Woodard (2015, p.164) distinguishes *hybridism*, which he understands as a view about the explaining conditions of prudential value claims, from *pluralism*, which he treats as an enumerative view about how many basic constituents of well-being there are. However, we need some way to distinguish the underlying structure of DHT (which, even if one does not find it plausible, is clearly a view in conceptual space) from that of extant hybrid theories. I believe the most natural way of doing this is by adverting to a deeper kind of pluralism.

³⁹ Sarch (2012) may initially seem to be an exception. He offers an illuminating discussion of what he terms (p.440) "multi-component theories...according to which there is more than one basic source of welfare value for a person (i.e. more than one fundamental good-making property whose instantiations directly and in themselves enhance well-being)." DHT is quite different from any theory Sarch discusses, however. The multi-component hybrid theories Sarch has in mind take both enjoyments and desire-satisfactions to be basic constituents of prudential value, but adjust the value of each according to the independent worth of their objects. If they follow the joint necessity model, such theories are monistic, at

some arguments to this effect. Yet not only do we not find anyone arguing for this sort of pluralism, we cannot find any arguments against it.

Explanatory pluralism thus seems to be in much the same position as DHT, which is itself but one instance of an explanatorily pluralistic theory (and the most plausible to my mind, although others might be broached). I believe that the reason why explanatory pluralism has generally been neglected is the same as the reason why DHT has not received a fair hearing. No reader, I trust, will begrudge me the observation that philosophers tend to have a fondness for neat and well-ordered theoretical landscapes. The disunity that pluralist accounts embrace seems to render them messier and less illuminating than we have a right to expect. In the case of brute list theories, we are simply handed a heap of apparently unconnected facts to the effect that x, y, z and so on are basically good for people. Confronted with such an unlovely aggregate, we might well lament, echoing Sidgwick's famous refrain, that the cosmos of prudential value has been reduced to a chaos.⁴⁰ If someone is going to in good conscience call themselves a value theorist, the thought is that they had better say *something* about what ties the various basic constituents of prudential value together.

Of course, none of the above has prevented shallower forms of pluralism about prudential value from receiving a fair hearing in the literature. However, we might well surmise that these sorts of worries are even more apt to arise once the rot, if such it is, spreads further down. After all, the enumerative pluralist might still hold out the promise of a unified explanatory story.

least in the sense just discussed. Among the theories considered by Sarch, even those that do not follow this model all accept subjective necessity. Our theory, again, denies both objective necessity and subjective necessity. Sarch simply does not consider *this kind* of pluralistic hybrid theory. Woodard (2013, p.791) also notes that "different answers to this [explanatory] question might be proposed for any particular item enumerated." However, he does not defend this view or tell us more about what it might look like. The only sustained defense of a version of explanatory pluralism of which I am aware is Lin (2016). Lin's view, though, is not a hybrid account. Instead, he defends a pluralistic version of subjectivism which he calls *disjunctive desire satisfactionism*.

⁴⁰ Sidgwick (1874, p.473).

However, as I have laid things out, the distinguishing characteristic of explanatory pluralism is precisely its denial that any such story can be given. It is perhaps little wonder, then, that this sort of approach has not found willing defenders.

I do not dispute that theoretical unity is an important desideratum, in ethics as elsewhere. Other things being equal, I too should favour an account of prudential value that could somehow bring all the basic constituents of prudential value under a single aegis. But surely, we ought at least to consider the possibility that no informative and plausible theory of this kind is ever going to be forthcoming. Suppose we do become convinced that this is how things stand. There are two very different ways we might react.

As mentioned above, Woodard lumps all views “according to which there is no true, general, and informative answer to the explanatory question” together as no-answer theories.⁴¹ However, this is unjust to explanatory pluralism and to DHT in particular. It is true that *one way* we might go, upon concluding that there is no unified explanatory story to be had, is to deny that we can give any true, informative answer to the explanatory question. T.M. Scanlon opts for this route, expressing skepticism about the prospects for any theory that could “provide a more unified account of what well-being is, on the basis of which one could see why the diverse things I have listed as contributing to well-being in fact do so”.⁴² Scanlon, indeed, seems content to give up the search for a *theory* of prudential value and to fall back on enumerating assorted platitudes about the good life.

The other option, which we are pursuing here, treats such counsels of despair as premature. In disavowing the quest for a single, non-disjunctive explanation of all the prudential value facts, we are not automatically throwing our hat in with anti-theorists such as Scanlon. We

⁴¹ Woodard (2013, p.800).

⁴² Scanlon (1998, p.125).

need not deny that there is always some true, informative story to tell about what makes it the case that thing x is a constituent of person P's good. DHT emphatically does not deny this. All it asks us to give up is the idea that *the same* explanation is appropriate for any x. DHT also does not ask us to deny that there is a real evaluative property that is picked out by the term 'prudential value', and only one such property. The disjunctive hybrid theorist only denies that the explanation of *why* this property is correctly ascribable to a given thing is always the same. Sometimes we will need to appeal to an objective explaining condition, and at other times a subjective explanation will adequately account for the prudential value of the thing in question. The novel structure of DHT rests on the conviction that either an objective or a subjective explanatory account, considered in isolation, will offer at best part of the truth about prudential value (or better, all of the truth part of the time).

1.6 - First Steps in Filling Out DHT

As it has been formulated so far, DHT is wildly underspecified. If we left things at this stage, the charge that we are not offering an informative theory would be fair. However, I do not intend to stop here. Rather, I aim to show a) that both the subjectivist and objectivist strands of DHT can be developed in ways that are at once explanatorily powerful and intuitively plausible, and b) that when these strands are combined we get a theory that is both extensionally and explanatorily preferable to (because more inclusive than) all extant accounts of prudential value. Here I will only be able to make a start on this task. In the remaining chapters I further develop each aspect of the argument.

I take it that one of the primary motivations for hybrid theories is the thought that both subjective and objective theories of prudential value have traditionally got *something* right, although neither provides a complete picture of the landscape. It is critical, then, in assessing

what kind of hybrid theory we should adopt (if any), that we get clear on what that something is in each case. The best hybrid theory will be that which does the best job of capturing the core insights of both subjective and objective theories. I claim that this is DHT.

The subjectivist side of DHT's disjunct, recall, says that some x is basically good for some person P if P cares about x (sufficiently and in the right way). This just restates what we earlier called the subjectivist insight, which is that a person can confer prudential value upon things by caring about them (sufficiently and in the right way). This still leaves many unsettled questions. The idea of caring about something is a very general one, and may be taken to encompass all pro-attitudes (that is, those attitudes that involve 'favouring' or somehow being 'for' some thing). Traditional subjectivists have focused on one particular class of pro-attitudes, namely a person's desires, or some subset thereof. However, this is not the only way that we might try to spell out the subjectivist insight, as several contemporary theorists have illustrated. The first pressing issue for us, then, is whether we do better to formulate the subjectivist strand of DHT in terms of desire or some other attitude. On this matter, I side with the traditionalists, for reasons I will expand on in Chapter 2. My argument there is that focusing on desires allows us to best capture the central subjectivist insight. Although desire-satisfactionism cannot explain why everything that is good for a person is so, this approach contains an important grain of truth (so important that we might even call it a *heap* of truth). This is the truth that at least some of a person's desires are themselves sufficient to confer prudential value upon their objects.

Objectivists, for their part, are fond of remarking that in general we desire things *because* we see them as good. The charge is thus that desire-satisfactionism gets the relationship between prudential value and desire the wrong way around. I believe this is, in many cases, a fair accusation. It seems wrongheaded to suppose that friendship and achievement are prudential

goods only because and while people want them, so that if my friend Gerald suddenly sinks into the worst sort of depression and no longer desires these things they cease to be good for him. We had better say in this case that something has gone far wrong with Gerald, insofar as he has ceased to favour things that are in themselves prudentially valuable. This is, roughly, the objectivist insight.

Where the objectivist gets into trouble is in taking desires for things such as friendship and achievement to be the paradigm for all desires. This gives a quite distorted view of how desire in general functions. For consider that many of my desires are for things that are nothing like friendship etc., in that they are not plausible bearers of attitude-independent value. Even if to be moved to desire something I must see something good about it, it does not follow that it actually has any value that is not a mere artifact of my attitude toward it.

Take Evangeline's twin desires to someday meet her hero William Shatner and to see Venice preserved. Assume these are her two strongest and most enduring desires. Plausibly, we can tell a story according to which the state of affairs in which Venice is preserved has some independent value. On the other hand, it is very hard to see any attitude-independent value in Evangeline's meeting Shatner (especially if we stipulate that she will be too riddled with anxiety to derive any pleasure from this meeting, should it occur). If the state of affairs in which she meets Shatner would nonetheless be good for Evangeline, as is intuitively the case, this is only because she strongly desires this outcome.

Now, we may well wish that Evangeline was not so consumed by such a silly desire. Desiring states of affairs that have some attitude-independent value (and having these desires satisfied) is no doubt prudentially better, other things being equal. Desire-satisfaction seems, that is, to have a double value where the object of the desire is substantively valuable. Insofar as

DHT takes this line, it can itself be understood as a kind of objective adjustment hybrid theory, albeit distinguished from those discussed in section 1.4 by its renunciation of objective necessity. And the upshot here is that we had better renounce objective necessity, insofar as the judgment that things go better for Evangeline when this central desire of hers (however silly it may seem) is satisfied is intuitively irresistible. The lesson to be gleaned from Evangeline's case is that human beings do not merely *recognize* pre-existing value, although the capacity to do so is surely one of our finer abilities. We also introduce new value into the world, insofar as we are creatures to whom things matter. In virtue of the attitudes we take towards objects, we are *original sources* of prudential value as well as cognizers of it.⁴³

Other components of a person's well-being, DHT goes on to say, are good for the person simply because they possess (the right kind of) attitude-independent value. The objectivist insight is that there are certain kinds of states of affairs whose instantiation in a person's life improves that life, whoever the person may be. The most plausible bearers of such value can be enumerated as follows: pleasure⁴⁴, virtue, achievement, certain interpersonal bonds (i.e. friendship, family, romantic love), knowledge, and autonomy. The thought that such things are attitude-independent goods is, once more, intuitively hard to resist. Moreover, as I argue in more detail in Chapter 4, we should not suppose that the value of such things for a person is cancelled out if the person lacks any pro-attitude towards them.

Suppose, for instance, that I am someone who loves and cares about Francine. Imagine I am asked whether I think it would be a better thing *for her* (other things being equal) if her life

⁴³ Griffin (2000, p.282), in discussing the ideas earlier expressed in Griffin (1986), encapsulates them as follows: "I thought that the venerable question "valuable because desired, or desired because valuable?" was to be answered 'Neither'". I think, by contrast, that this venerable question should be answered 'Both'.

⁴⁴ Note that pleasure appears on the list here only on the assumption that it is not reducible to desire-satisfaction. See Heathwood (2007) for a defense of the position that it is.

contained more in the way of friendship and achievement. Must I hold off on answering until I have asked the further question: does Francine herself have some pro-attitude to each of these things? This would be an odd reaction. It just seems clear that friendship and achievement are prudentially valuable, and so make a person's life go better. From the perspective of one who cares about Francine, there is no need to ask the further question about Francine's own attitude to these things. True, the desire theorist or hedonist might respond that the reason these things have such obvious prudential value is because they *just happen to be* the sort of things that all (or almost all) human beings desire or take pleasure in. Yet this is *prima facie* unconvincing. If the prudential value of these goods were merely coincidental in this way, insisting on an answer to the follow-up question before committing oneself to their being good for Francine would not seem like such strange behaviour. Given that it seems strange indeed, it is much more plausible to hold that the reason people desire such things and take pleasure in them is *because* they are independently recognized as good.

1.7 - Conclusion

I am far from claiming that I know how to put forward an account of prudential value that will not have intuitively implausible implications in some cases. That may well be a pipe dream. I also admit that the complicated structure of DHT brings with it significant theoretical challenges. However, DHT need not, it seems to me, leave out of its account of a person's well-being anything that forceful intuitions tell us should form part of such an account. Moreover, it will always be able to offer an intuitively plausible explanation of why a given thing is a basic constituent of prudential value (albeit not always the same explanation). The theory is capable of being, in both these senses, optimally inclusive. And this, I argue, gives it an edge over all extant theories.

DHT is not thereby immune to counterexample. I suspect that it will seem *overly* inclusive to many. However, I propose that we start by endeavoring to build a theory that does not rule out anything that is, plausibly, a basic constituent of prudential value. Only after this initial, optimally inclusive framework is in place should we turn to the difficult matter of paring down our list of constituents, to do justice to our less ecumenical judgments. This strategy has yet to be explored as a way out of the stalemate between various theories of prudential value, all of which have their intuitive advantages. The development and defense of DHT which follows is my attempt to pursue such a methodology as far as it can go. I am as optimistic about the prospects for this approach as one can be about a view that has not yet been considered at any length.

Chapter 2 - Desire and the Heart of Subjectivism

2.1 - Introduction

Above, I identified what I take to be the core insight of subjective theories of prudential value, which is that *a person can confer prudential value upon objects by caring about them (sufficiently and in the right way)*. In this chapter I argue that DHT can best incorporate this insight by modeling its subjectivist strand on desire-satisfactionism. Desire-satisfactionism, in various more or less sophisticated guises, has long been the most well-known and commonly defended subjective theory of well-being. However, it can no longer just be assumed that the best way of capturing what is attractive in subjectivism will focus on desires. In recent years, several philosophers have argued that subjective theories of prudential value should de-emphasize desire in favour of some other attitude, and have developed accounts that do just this. Desire-based theories (if only because they have been dominant for so long) have been found to face formidable difficulties. The prospect of finding a way of expressing the subjectivist insight that does not face the objections that desire-satisfactionism does is thus an enticing one. This is true whether one is a thoroughgoing subjectivist or a hybrid theorist.

In this chapter I discuss two recent attempts to develop non-desire-based versions of subjectivism, Dale Dorsey's *judgment subjectivism* and the *value-fulfillment theory* defended by both Valerie Tiberius and Jason Raibley. I identify two different strategies that the latter approach can use to mark off value-fulfillment from mere desire-satisfaction, the first in terms of the nature of the attitudes involved, and the second in terms of how the state of affairs which is the object of the relevant attitude is brought about. If the distinction is made in the second way,

this brings the value-fulfillment theory into close contact with Simon Keller's view that well-being is largely a matter of the achievement of goals. I close by considering Keller's account.

I argue that these alternative approaches are unable to accommodate the subjectivist insight as well as desire-satisfactionism can. Dorsey's judgment subjectivism is at once implausibly restrictive in the attitudes it allows to be prudentially relevant, and implausibly permissive. To put this in the terms of the previous chapter, Dorsey's approach succumbs to forceful versions of both the under-inclusiveness objection and the over-inclusiveness objection. For its part, if the value-fulfillment theory marks value-fulfillment off from mere desire-satisfaction by *distinguishing the attitudes involved*, it turns out to be compatible with a version of desire-satisfactionism that is independently appealing and defensible. However, if it instead concentrates on *the way in which the state of affairs that is the object of the relevant pro-attitude is brought about*, the value-fulfillment view (like Keller's similar approach) proves under-inclusive.

The underlying cause of these extensional problems is that these views fail to secure the result that it is whether I care about something (sufficiently and in the right way) that determines whether it is a bearer of basic attitude-dependent prudential value. Desire-satisfactionism, on the other hand, (when correctly understood) allows us to incorporate this core subjectivist insight into our hybrid theory in a satisfying fashion. Perhaps there is some other, yet to be developed, subjective approach that can perform equally well in this respect. But when we consider the different subjective theories that have thus far been proposed, it is evident that the purported advantages that the subjectivist accrues by moving away from desire come at a significant cost. Indeed, this cost is so great that we do better to stick with desire-satisfactionism, even though it comes with its own distinctive challenges.

Thus, the conclusion of this chapter is that we have good reason to suppose that some version of desire-satisfactionism forms at least part of the truth about prudential value. In the next chapter, I consider in more detail the question of how the desire-satisfactionist strand of DHT can be most plausibly developed.

2.2 - Desire-Satisfactionism And Its Critics

Before we can move on to address the respective merits of different versions of subjectivism, it behooves us to consider why desire-satisfactionism has increasingly been under fire from within the subjectivist camp. That is the task of this section. After briefly sketching out the landscape of possible subjective theories, we will consider two objections to desire-satisfactionism that explicitly motivate Dorsey's presentation of his alternative. The first, *the scope problem*, is by far the more pressing, and has been invoked in support of the value-fulfillment theory as well. We will show that in responding to the scope problem the desire-satisfactionist is not without theoretical resources. Although we provide the beginnings of a response to this challenge here, we will need to return to the scope problem at more length in Chapter 3.

It will be useful to start from Dorsey's general characterization of subjectivism as the view (or family of views) according to which " \emptyset is intrinsically good for x if and only if, and to the extent that, \emptyset is *valued*, under the proper conditions, by x" (italics added).¹ This is what Dorsey elsewhere calls the *Good-Value Link*.² Insofar as Dorsey follows Sumner in taking subjectivism and objectivism to be exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories, his taxonomy looks rather different from ours. It would classify a theory such as DHT as objective, precisely because it denies that the Good-Value link sets out a *necessary* condition that any thing \emptyset must

¹ Dorsey (2012b, p.407). The reader should take care not to conflate the thin notion of valuing at play here with the much more robust notion to which Tiberius and Raibley appeal.

² See the reformulation of this principle in Dorsey (2017, p.200).

meet if it is to be good for any person x . However, if we weaken Dorsey's Good-Value Link so that it provides only a sufficient, as opposed to a necessary condition, it does seem to articulate an essential commitment that any theory of prudential value must embrace, if it is to preserve the subjectivist insight. Call this modified version of the principle *Good-Value Link**.

According to Good-Value Link*, then, \emptyset is basically good for x if \emptyset is valued, in the right way, by x .³ The subjectivist insight, to reiterate, is that in caring about something (sufficiently and in the right way) a person can confer prudential value upon it. Plausibly, when we say that \emptyset is something that x cares about, or alternatively that \emptyset matters to x , at least part of what we are saying is that x values \emptyset . Thus, if DHT is to capture the relevant insight, the subjectivist strand of the theory needs to be understood in such a way as will, at a minimum, secure Good-Value Link*.

Good-Value Link*, like Dorsey's original principle, is neutral as to *how* the requisite connection between what a person values and their good is secured. To fill out the theory we thus need to supplement it with what Dorsey calls a *theory of valuing*.⁴ Desire satisfactionists, on this understanding, are those subjectivists who embrace a *desiderative* theory of valuing. To value

³ I am also here omitting the 'to the extent' clause, and replacing 'under the proper conditions' with 'in the right way'. The former clause I omit because it is incompatible with DHT. As to the latter change, it seems to me that subjectivism is better understood as concerned with what a person *actually* values, rather than with what they *would value* if they were different in various ways. This claim is not inconsistent with some degree of idealization of a person's actual attitudes, insofar as such idealization may in principle be needed if a person's attitudes are to match up with what they actually value. Moreover, we need to add the 'in the right way' clause because it is plausible that some instances of valuing are not prudentially relevant. I consider these issues at more length in Chapter 3.

⁴ Dorsey (2012b, p.408) and Dorsey (2017, p.201). There are other possible theories of valuing, beyond those discussed in this chapter. For instance, one might in principle defend a view according to which valuing is a purely emotional (but non-hedonic) state. However, my focus here is on those theories that have in fact been defended.

something, according to the desire-satisfactionist, is just to have the right kind of desire for it.⁵ If we start from Good-Value Link*, we thus get the following view:

Desire-Satisfactionism* (DS*): \emptyset is basically good for x if x has the right kind of desire for \emptyset .

According to DS* the presence of the right kind of desire is a sufficient but not a necessary condition, and so it is quite compatible with DHT.

As desire-satisfactionism's historical popularity bears out, there is something distinctly intuitive about this way of understanding the connection between a person's good and what they value.⁶ And yet, it also threatens to saddle us with well-worn problems. Limitations of space preclude mention of all the challenges that DS* faces. I here consider only those that are directly relevant to the present dispute. These and other issues will be addressed further in Chapter 3.

One of Dorsey's main arguments for the superiority of judgment subjectivism is that it sidesteps the so-called *scope problem*, which has been a persistent thorn in the side of desire-satisfactionists for decades now.⁷ The thought that, by directing our focus away from desire, we can do away with this problem is also explicitly part of Raibley's motivation for adopting the value-fulfillment theory.⁸ If one (or both) of these alternative approaches can indeed provide a more satisfying response to the scope problem than DS* can, this is a significant point in its favour.

The scope problem for DS* is another instance of the over-inclusiveness objection discussed in the preceding chapter. In its traditional form, this problem arises because, while

⁵ There is a staggeringly wide range of views about what is required for a desire to be "of the right kind". I address this question at some length in Chapter 3.

⁶ Prominent desire-satisfactionists include Brandt (1979), Goldman (2009), Heathwood (2005), Railton (1986), and Sobel (2016).

⁷ The locus classicus for this problem is Overvold (1980). It is also discussed at length in Darwall (2002).

⁸ Raibley 2013 (pp.189-90).

many of our desires are clearly prudentially relevant, others intuitively are not. Consider a well-known example from Derek Parfit.⁹ Suppose that I meet an amiable stranger, and learn that the poor fellow is suffering from an apparently terminal illness. Because he is so amiable, I form a desire that this stranger be miraculously cured. If the stranger's illness is indeed cured at some point in the future, it is nonetheless implausible to hold that this state of affairs is basically good *for me* (assuming that I am unaware of this fact and have, in any case, quite forgotten about him by this time). Any version of DS* that does not impose some restrictions on the desires that matter for one's own well-being suffers from intuitive overbreadth in cases like that of the stranger's cure.

Of course, the recognition that an *unrestricted* version of DS* is over-inclusive does not vitiate the entire approach. There may yet be some plausible and principled way of isolating the prudentially relevant desires, which will allow us to rule out my desire for the stranger's cure. Even if no such fix can be found, it is open to the defender of DS* to hold that our intuitive verdicts about individual cases like that of Parfit's stranger should be accorded no great weight. After all, as was shown in the last chapter, we have yet to find (and perhaps never could find) a theory of prudential value that is immune to such intuitive counterexamples.

Alas, the scope problem for DS* cannot be swept aside so easily. For one thing, the above case is far from the only one in which it appears to issue implausible verdicts. Granting that a few apparent counterexamples are not enough to topple a theory of prudential value, the more of these there are (and the more stubborn are the recalcitrant intuitions) the more pressure this puts on the theory. On pain of multiplying such counterexamples, we will need to find some way of ruling out various desires that seem prudentially irrelevant because they are either trivial,

⁹ Parfit (1984, p.494).

pathological, or too remote from our own life. In these categories, respectively, we might place Caroline's desire for a can of cola, Sandrine's desire to smash icicles whenever she sees them, and Josephine's desire that the number of atoms in the universe be prime.¹⁰ Many other cases of each kind could be given.

The challenge can be put to the defender of DS* in a still starker way. Set aside intuitive counterexamples for now. If we don't find some way of at least distinguishing *altruistic* desires from *self-interested* ones, we risk rendering true self-sacrifice conceptually impossible.¹¹ Here it is not just that we get unintuitive results in particular cases, rather the very distinction between my own good and the good of other people and things that I care about threatens to collapse.

To illustrate this latter problem, consider the case of Gary, who turns down the job of his dreams as a human rights attorney to take an unfulfilling job as a corporate lawyer. Gary's sole reason for accepting the corporate job is that it allows him to stay close to home and care for his mother, who is suffering from terminal cancer. Suppose Gary knows that, if he forfeits the present opportunity, he will never have a career he truly loves. Nonetheless, he cares more about being there for his mother during her last years of life, and so takes the soulless corporate job.

Intuitively, we think that in a case like this Gary is simply putting the well-being of his mother before his own. This is seemingly because he has an (other-regarding) desire to make his mother's last years more bearable, that overrules his (self-regarding) desire to have a fulfilling career. Gary's act, in other words, looks to be one of great self-sacrifice. This is no doubt part of

¹⁰ The second example is taken from Kraut (1994, p.42). The last is borrowed from Kagan (1998, p.37).

¹¹ On this problem, again see Overvold and Darwall. The most compelling defense of desire-satisfactionism against this charge is offered by Heathwood (2011). Even if Heathwood's defense fails (and it may not), I believe the best version of DHT can deal satisfactorily with this problem. I return to this challenge in Chapters 3 and 4.

what we admire about him. And yet, it now seems that we need to find a principled way of distinguishing self-interested desires from altruistic ones, on pain of saying that Gary's apparent act of sacrifice is no sacrifice at all, but is in fact best for him (just insofar as what he most desires is to alleviate his mother's situation).

Various theorists have attempted to solve the scope problem by imposing constraints of different sorts on the desires that count. Perhaps the simplest way to do this is to stipulate that it is only desires I have *about my own life* that count.¹² Such a move may allow one to give the right intuitive verdicts in the cases of Gary, Josephine, and the stranger's cure, although this will depend on just how we draw the boundaries of the person's own life. Presumably, my desire that the number of atoms in the universe be prime is not about my life, whatever it is we mean by this locution. The same can be said of my desire that the stranger will recover. In the case of Gary, however, there is at least a case to be made that this desire is about his own life, even though it is other-regarding. This reflects a deeper problem, which is that there seems to be no principled, non-circular way of classifying my desires into those which are about my life and those which are not.

We might try to cash out a restriction of the above sort by claiming that, for a desire to be prudentially relevant for a given agent, the agent must be an essential constituent of the object of the desire.¹³ However, this does not help us in dealing with cases of trivial or pathological desires, such as those of Caroline and Sandrine. Moreover, this criterion also appears to be *under-inclusive*, thus landing us with a different extensional problem. Many desires that seem clearly to be prudentially relevant do not meet the proposed criterion. Suppose, for instance, that

¹² This suggestion is found, for instance, in Parfit (1984, pp.494-5).

¹³ As suggested in Overvold (1980, p.118).

I am forced to put my cat up for adoption. Because I love the cat, I fervently desire that it have a good life with its new owners. Intuitively, it matters to the prudential value of my life whether this desire is satisfied. However, although the reason it is prudentially valuable is because I desire it, the state of affairs that is the object of my desire does not here involve me at all. The fact that this state of affairs could obtain even if I did not exist just does not seem relevant to whether (given that I do exist and do desire that it obtains) it is good for me. Many more cases like this could be presented.

Although I will say more on this later, let me briefly state how I believe the defender of DS* should respond to the scope problem. The most plausible way to ensure that my desire that the stranger be cured is disqualified from counting towards my good is to claim that it is only what I will call *global desires* (those which reflect stable, temporally extended goals or commitments with which I identify) that are prudentially relevant.¹⁴ This restriction to global desires also readily explains why fleeting whims such as Caroline's hankering for a cola can be ruled out of prudential relevance. There remain issues with formulating such a restriction, and we will have to be careful to ensure that it does not exclude desires the satisfaction of which does seem to matter to one's well-being. It may be that there are some comparatively fleeting desires that nonetheless are so overpowering that their satisfaction is prudentially relevant. If Caroline wants that can of cola with sufficient intensity, perhaps the satisfaction of this desire does have

¹⁴ My usage of this term is admittedly idiosyncratic. Global desires have elsewhere been individuated in terms of their intentional content, rather than via the features mentioned above. Thus, Parfit (1984, p.498) identifies a person's global desires as those that are about "some part of his life, considered as a whole, or about his whole life". This makes versions of DS* that focus only on global desires implausibly under-inclusive. Moreover, it does not capture the intuitive difference between those desires that genuinely reflect what a person cares about and those that do not (which is, I think, the underlying motivation for the turn to global desires). This is best understood as a difference, not in the object of the desire, but in the degree to which one identifies with it. I thus see the restriction to global desires (so understood) and the acceptance of what I call the *identification constraint* as going hand in hand.

some impact on her well-being. We should not exclude any desires from prudential relevance by fiat. However, it strikes me that (at the very least) an emphasis on comparatively global over local desires is well justified, and on grounds internal to the subjectivist insight itself.

The above maneuver, admittedly, has limited force against other problem cases. There seems to be nothing preventing desires that are compulsive like Sandrine's, or that have remote objects like Josephine's, from counting as global in the relevant sense. Moreover, we are still left with the problem of self-sacrifice, insofar as other-regarding desires, such as Gary's, are often among a person's central conative commitments. Yet note that DHT, which supplements DS* with an objectivist strand, at least avoids rendering self-sacrifice conceptually impossible. This is so even if we do not place any restrictions on the desires that are prudentially relevant. The disjunctive hybrid theorist who embraces DS* can grant that satisfying the desire to stay in town and alleviate his mother's situation is *pro tanto* good for Gary. This is compatible with the claim that the action motivated by this desire is self-sacrificing, because we can now advert to the attitude-independent prudential goods that Gary is losing out on by acting in this way. Of course, one may still object that the satisfaction of this desire does not seem even *pro tanto* good for Gary. The same may be said about the desires of Josephine and Sandrine. It is possible that we will have to bite these intuitive bullets. The charge of over-inclusiveness is something the defender of DHT should, at any rate, be accustomed to dealing with.

At present, the scope problem remains an issue that any supporter of DS* (as either the whole truth about prudential value or one part of it) must address. In the next several sections, I argue that the benefits that subjectivists supposedly accrue by moving away from desire are to a large extent illusory. Moreover, even if non-desire based subjective theories do enjoy a real advantage when it comes to the scope problem, this gain is not significant enough to offset what

is lost when we exile desire from subjectivism. Or so I shall argue.

There is one other challenge to DS* that Dorsey presses in arguing for judgment subjectivism, and that is worth briefly considering here, before moving on to the details of his view. Dorsey points out that his approach is immune to a type of paradox which DS* (as well as some other theories of prudential value) appears to run into.¹⁵ The problem arises when we consider a person who desires that their life go badly. If we assume that the person's life is otherwise on the border between going well and going badly, we can seemingly construct cases where the person's life is going well if and only if it is not going well. I will grant Dorsey's claim that judgment subjectivism sidesteps this issue. Yet it remains to be shown that a plausible version of DS* cannot do the same. Bradford Skow has offered what I think is a satisfactory response to the apparent paradox, and the only major adjustment it requires is that we distinguish degrees of desire-satisfaction rather than taking it to be all or nothing (which is in any case a friendly amendment).¹⁶ The threat of paradox thus does not constitute a compelling reason to give up DS*.

2.3 - Dorsey's Judgment Subjectivism

Dorsey's new version of subjectivism rests on a *cognitive* theory of valuing, according to which "persons value what they *believe is good for them*".¹⁷ We thus have a thoroughly *judgment*-based

¹⁵ For discussion of the purported paradox see Bradley (2007), Heathwood (2005, pp.501-503), Mabrito (2013) and Skow (2009).

¹⁶ Skow (2009).

¹⁷ Dorsey (2012b, p.415). This appears patently circular if put forward as an analysis of *the concept* GOODNESS-FOR. However, we need not treat Dorsey's view as a conceptual analysis. We may still legitimately worry that the account is rather less informative and interesting than that offered by the desire-satisfactionist. The latter is providing an account (or at least a partial account) of the extension of a given evaluative property, in terms of a class of pro-attitudes that have nothing essentially to do with that

subjective theory (hence its name). In this section I will argue that, even if Dorsey's judgment subjectivism (henceforth JS) does fare better than DS* when it comes to the above problems, this advantage is not sufficient to outweigh its disadvantages. To see why, we will first need to get clear on the theory's commitments. Our investigation will reveal that, not only does judgment subjectivism not help with the charge of over-inclusiveness, it also proves under-inclusive. These extensional failures reflect a deeper issue, namely that the attitudes Dorsey is focusing on are insufficiently tied to what the person intuitively cares about. For this reason, JS does not adequately express the subjectivist insight.

First, the good. JS can seemingly dispense with the scope problem in straightforward fashion. Dorsey points out that his theory can readily distinguish prudentially relevant instances of valuing something (namely, judgments that something is good *for me*) from those that are prudentially irrelevant (all others, including judgments that something is good *simpliciter* or for someone else). Thus, in switching to this new class of attitudes subjectivists can immediately, and in a principled way, isolate those attitudes that are prudentially relevant. Dorsey adds that, according to JS, "*I cannot coherently believe that it is good for me to be worse off*".¹⁸ All he needs to obtain this result is a weak coherence condition, to the effect that one cannot simultaneously hold evaluative beliefs that are flatly inconsistent, such as "f is (intrinsically) good for me" and "f is (intrinsically) bad for me". Given this coherence condition, there also appears to be no threat of paradox on Dorsey's view.

I am prepared to grant Dorsey's point that JS, by contrast with DS*, does not face the scope problem in its classic form. It may also be less susceptible to paradox. But we must also

property. Dorsey is giving an account of the extension of the same property in terms of beliefs *about that property itself*. The subjectivist can, it seems to me, do better.

¹⁸ Ibid. (p.423).

consider what Dorsey commits himself to in pursuit of these advantages. I cannot resist noting, for a start, that there are people currently employed in academic philosophy (not to speak of the layperson) who avowedly do not believe that there is any such property as *goodness for a person*.¹⁹ Dorsey's theory has the unsavory implication that nothing is good for such theorists. Although they may not be surprised to hear this, I suspect that most of their friends and colleagues would be.²⁰ We get the same implication in the more extreme case of the value nihilist, who believes that there are no evaluative properties *tout court*.²¹ Babies and non-human animals (and any other being that lacks the cognitive architecture to make prudential value judgments) also seem stuck in a situation where nothing is either good or bad for them on this view. Even in the case of adult humans, I doubt that Dorsey's view can do justice to our experience of value. Whether or not there are any non-prudential values, it is plausible that we *experience* many things as having impersonal value, and even consciously *judge* them to have such value at times. Yet it is also plausible that many of these same things are basic constituents of our own well-being. It does not seem that we must also possess a belief that they have *specifically prudential value*, if this to be so. In all these ways, JS is intuitively under-inclusive. This suffices to show that, while it does not face the classic scope problem, Dorsey's theory has its own struggles with extensional adequacy.

We have so far been considering JS as if it were a complete theory of prudential value.

¹⁹ For example, see Brewer (2009) and Hurka (1988 and 1993). The very existence of these figures also constitutes a compelling argument against the principle that, in the last chapter, we called First Person Veto (FPV). FPV states that if person P (or an idealized version thereof) would not assent to the judgment that state of affairs x is basically good for P, then x cannot in fact be good for P. Yet I can personally attest that Hurka, at least, would be unlikely to assent to the judgment that any x is good *for him* (in conversation).

²⁰ Prominent friends of goodness-for include Korsgaard (2013), Kraut (2007 and 2011), Piller (2015), Rosati (2006), and Sumner (1996).

²¹ I thank Anthony Kelley (in conversation) for this point.

This is perhaps unfair. For our own endgame is not to defend a thoroughgoing desire-satisfactionism, but to vindicate DS* as the best candidate for the subjectivist strand of DHT. Insofar as we are promoting desire-satisfactionism as one strand of a hybrid account rather than as a self-standing theory, we should be assessing judgment subjectivism by the same lights. The proper object of assessment is therefore not a *necessity* claim, of the kind made by JS, but the *sufficiency* claim made by the modified approach that we can call JS*. According to JS*, then, \emptyset is basically good for x if x believes that \emptyset is good for x . JS*, like DS*, is quite compatible with the existence of attitude-independent prudential goods, and so with DHT.

JS* does not have the unintuitive consequences that were bruited above. Even if I do not believe that anything is good for me (whether because I lack the capacity to make such judgments or for some other reason) the presence or absence of the attitude-independent prudential goods in my life still impacts how well it is going for me. Something similar can be said about those particular cases where something intuitively benefits a person despite their having no belief that this is so.

However, moving to JS* does not solve all the extensional problems. It remains implausible to hold that, insofar as some welfare-subject does not judge that anything is good for it, nothing *matters* to it in the sense that theorists of prudential value should be concerned about. It is clear that at least some such subjects (consider again our esteemed colleagues) care about various things. Moreover, so long as this is the case, *what matters to them should matter to us as theorists*. If we want to preserve the subjectivist insight, we had better not deny this claim. It will not do to say that in all such cases whatever goods there are in the subject's life must be attitude-independent ones. There is no good reason to believe this, absent an antecedent commitment to JS*. What this suggests to me is that evaluative beliefs are just the wrong sorts of attitudes for

subjectivists to focus on, precisely because they fail to track whether things matter to a welfare-subject, and therefore also fail to track what should matter to us.

JS* also generates other extensional issues, which we have yet to mention. The account is intuitively *over-inclusive* in a distinctive way. It saddles us with awkward results in cases where a person believes that something is good for her but does not desire that thing, is not motivated to pursue it, and would derive no satisfaction from attaining it. Plausibly, I can judge that something is good for me without *favouring* it or *being for* it at all.²² Evaluative judgments, understood along Dorsey's lines, do not seem to be, in other words, genuine *pro-attitudes*. Thus, while JS* does give the agent's attitudes the power to confer prudential value upon objects, and to this extent respects the subjectivist insight, it does so in a way which allows agents to confer value even upon things which they are alienated from (in the sense that these things leave them entirely cold). In doing so, it appears to lose sight of what is most appealing about subjective theories of prudential value.

The defender of JS* may counter that, provided one embraces a sufficiently strong kind of internalism about evaluative judgments (according to which they are inherently motivating and affectively laden), one can deny that cases such as those described in the last paragraph are even possible. I do not find this sort of internalism plausible, but I concede that such a view is on the table. The first thing to say in response is that packing more into evaluative judgments does nothing to alleviate the problem of under-inclusiveness discussed above (if anything it exacerbates it). Moreover, it should be noted that a commitment to internalism forms no part of Dorsey's theory, and he at least does not rule out that there can be cases of the sort I have just

²² I am here reminded of my childhood attitude to broccoli, and my present attitude to strenuous physical exercise.

described.²³ Yet even in such cases, he insists that the *mere belief* that the thing is good for me suffices to make it good for me. This is the view I reject.

It is now evident that JS* presents us with bullets we should not be eager to bite. If it were conclusively shown that Dorsey's route is the only way to avoid succumbing to the scope objection, perhaps we should still on balance side with his view. We are not yet justified in drawing such a pessimistic conclusion, however. All that history entitles us to conclude is that the scope problem is a formidable challenge for DS*, not that it is a knockdown objection to it. And far from triumphing over DS* on extensional grounds, JS* has itself been shown to be extensionally inadequate on multiple counts. The moral we should draw from the foregoing discussion is that, if a theory is to capture the subjectivist insight, it must develop Good-Value Link* in a way that accurately reflects those things that a person cares about, that matter to her. This is the point on which JS* flounders.

2.4 - The Value-Fulfillment Theory and the Identification Constraint

In recent years, Valerie Tiberius and Jason Raibley have also argued separately that the subjective element theorists of well-being should be focusing on is not a person's desires.²⁴ They suggest that we should instead turn our attention to what the person *values*. The first thing to note about this view is that this is not just the claim that subjectivists should endorse Good-Value Link*. That would not distinguish it from DS* or from JS*, both of which also aim to capture Good-Value Link*. Both Tiberius and Raibley are, instead, pointing us towards values understood in a thicker sense, as a *particular kind of attitude*. Moreover, in a distinct maneuver

²³ Dorsey (2012b, pp.436-437).

²⁴ In Tiberius (2008 and 2011), and Raibley (2010 and 2013).

which we will consider in more detail shortly, they each combine this with a specific view about what is involved in *fulfilling* one's values. Thus, the *value-fulfillment theory* (VFT) as conceived by both Tiberius and Raibley is a complex animal involving two distinct and separable commitments, both of which serve to render the scope of the view narrower than that of traditional desire-satisfactionism. The first restriction bears on the kinds of pro-attitudes we are to focus on, and is what I will call the *identification constraint*. In the present section, I argue that this constraint is quite consistent with a plausible version of DS*. The switch from talking in terms of desires to talking in terms of values to this extent turns out to be largely terminological, and the dispute an internal one within DS*. However, both Tiberius and Raibley express support for a second claim, which imports a different kind of restriction, this time on the way in which the state of affairs that is the object of the relevant pro-attitude is brought about. This is what I will call the *agency constraint*. In the next section, I argue that this second constraint is incompatible with the subjectivist insight and, moreover, results in a theory that is severely under-inclusive. It should accordingly be rejected.

Raibley is helpfully up-front about his motivations for favouring a value-based version of subjectivism over a desire-based one, so we will start here with what he himself says. Raibley's worries about desire-satisfactionism, like Dorsey's, chiefly concern the scope of the theory. He is, to begin, troubled by the fact that unrestricted desire theorists allow the satisfaction of *any* of a person's desires, however trivial or fleeting (Caroline's yen for a cola not excepted) to contribute to that person's well-being. He also presses the familiar worry about desires, such as Josephine's desire that there be a prime number of atoms in the universe, that seem too remote

from one's own life for their satisfaction to be relevant to one's well-being.²⁵ Thus DS* is seen by Raibley as succumbing to the over-inclusiveness objection, for quite traditional reasons.²⁶

Raibley argues that, in shifting to a more demanding conception of which attitudes are prudentially relevant, we can rein in the scope of subjectivism in an appealing way. To value something, on Raibley's account, is to have a stable non-instrumental pro-attitude towards that thing with which one also *stably identifies*. More precisely, one values something if and only if one takes their pro-attitude towards it "to be representative of who they are and who they want to be".²⁷ This is what, going forward, I will refer to as the *identification constraint*. Tiberius, for her part, also endorses a restriction of roughly the same kind. She writes that, on her conception, "values have a special status in our planning and evaluation, they have greater stability than mere preferences and they are emotionally entrenched in ways that desires might not be".²⁸

It is apparent that, for Tiberius and Raibley, valuing x typically involves a good deal more than desiring x, or for that matter judging x to be good for one. Valuing may not even be identifiable with any single, isolatable pro-attitude, instead being composed of an integrated complex of emotions, motivations, and judgments. Thus, Tiberius also asserts that to value "is to have a co-ordinated pattern of emotions and motivations toward something that you take to be relevant to how your life goes. Not all values are fully realized—sometimes our motivations to

²⁵ Raibley (2013, pp.189-90).

²⁶ Raibley also claims (2013, pp. 191-192) that values are more closely connected to a) reasons for action and b) a sense of meaning in life, than desires. However, the considerations he musters in each case suggest only that a more nuanced approach is called for if we are to secure such a connection, rather than that we need to appeal to pro-attitudes other than desires. In Chapter 5, I briefly consider the question of what makes a life meaningful. I argue that DHT can give an interesting and appealing gloss on this issue.

²⁷ Ibid. (p.191).

²⁸ Tiberius (2011, p.6).

act, our emotions and our judgments are out of sync with each other—but values in their most complete sense include all these elements”.²⁹

Note how much has now been packed into this notion. Among other things, it seems that something like a judgment that thing x is good for me (of the sort Dorsey thought was both necessary and sufficient for x’s being good for me) has been deemed necessary on this view as well. However, as we argued above, this sets up an implausibly high bar to clear in certain cases (i.e. those pertaining to all infants and some philosophers). Any theory that is reliant upon such a cognitively involved notion of valuing thus appears to be intuitively under-inclusive. If VFT is to avoid this problem it must relax the above criteria somewhat. The most plausible version of the view will hold that, for something to be among the things I value, it need not be the case that I display towards it *the entirety* of that complex of motivations, judgments, and emotions that constitutes full-blooded valuing. Indeed, Tiberius suggests as much in the above quoted passage, where she notes that only some of a person’s values are ‘fully realized’.

The defender of VFT might then say that, for something to be valued by me, it is sufficient that *any one* of the above elements is present. This is to significantly shrink the gap between VFT and desire-satisfactionism, however. For Raibley at least, a central motivation for the shift from desires to values was to rule out of prudential relevance the satisfaction of certain problematic desires, namely those that are fleeting, remote, compulsive, or at odds with the person’s broader self-conception. However, if what makes something good for me is the fact that it is valued by me, and this requires only that I exhibit *any one* of the elements involved in fully realized valuing, the appeal to values does not itself help in dealing with these objectionable desires. For desire is, at the very least, one of those elements. The same goes for the mere belief

²⁹ Ibid.

that something is good for me, and so we seem to inherit JS*'s over-inclusiveness problems as well.

I do not know where the line is beyond which these theorists actually want to say that I value something, in the sense that makes it good for me. How much further than mere desire (if at all) must we go? This is surely a question of the first importance if we are to fairly adjudicate between VFT* (which again, is simply VFT formulated as a sufficiency rather than a necessity claim) and DS*. The advocate of the value-fulfillment approach needs to tread carefully here. If the standard of valuing is set too high, the theory will exclude from prudential relevance things that do seem relevant. If it is set too low, VFT* loses any advantage it might have had over DS* and runs into precisely the same worries about over-inclusiveness. It seems, moreover, that VFT* should not take a Dorsey-style belief to be either necessary or sufficient for valuing, for the reasons already discussed.

VFT*, then, needs a construal of valuing that is restrictive enough that it does not treat every instance of desiring something as an instance of valuing it, but not so demanding that it requires an evaluative judgment. Accordingly, we might understand Tiberius and Raibley as endorsing a more *global* approach to the question of what the subjective determinants of my good are than that which is proffered by an *unrestricted* version of DS*. In saying that I value something, we do indeed seem to be saying something more than that I happen to desire it at the present moment. Intuitively, I can strongly desire something in the moment without really valuing it at all. Unlike mere desires my values are, in the first place, presumed to be relatively stable and enduring parts of my overall psychological make-up. They are also presumed to play an important role in my conception of the kind of person I am and want to be. Finally, they are typically associated with a range of emotional, motivational, and behavioural orientations.

Desire, understood in the thin sense favoured by many philosophers, may seem by comparison an anemic notion, ill-suited to sit at the root of a subjective theory of prudential value (or of the subjectivist strand of DHT).

If this is the right way to pick out values, VFT* has undoubted appeal. For one thing, it helps to disarm the scope problem, insofar as many of one's desires will not meet the above criteria, and so will not count as values in the prudentially relevant sense. Among the desires that will presumably be ruled are those that are fleeting like Caroline's, or remote like Josephine's. Compulsions, such as Sandrine's desire to destroy every icicle she sees, may also be easily dispensed with in this fashion. The same can be said of my desire for the stranger's cure. On the other hand, the above criteria do not seem sufficient to secure the intuitive result in a case like Gary's. Still, if such a turn to values helps deal with *most* of the kinds of cases that intuitively give rise to the scope problem, this may a good enough reason for subjectivists to revise their view in this way.

And yet, shifting from desires to values does not ultimately afford any such advantage. The important thing to see here is that one can endorse an *identification constraint* on the pro-attitudes that are prudentially relevant, along the lines sketched above, without abandoning the desire-satisfactionist framework. Few defenders of DS* believe that the satisfaction of *any* of one's desires contributes to one's well-being. This suggests that desire-satisfactionists are already standardly sorting desires into various classes, only some of which are prudentially relevant. If DS* was obligated to understand its core notion only in the broadest and most generic sense possible, then indeed there would be no room for an identification constraint. There is no need to limit the theory in this way, however.

It is nonetheless fair to hold that, if we are to be justified in incorporating such a constraint into DS*, we must provide a principled motivation for it which is grounded in the subjectivist insight itself. I believe that this can be done, and will defend this conclusion at greater length in the next chapter. The basic point is this. DS*, like any other version of subjectivism, stands or falls based on how well it answers to the subjectivist insight. And plausibly, the view can best capture the significance of what a person cares about, what matters to them, what they *value* (in the minimal sense that the Good-Value Link* is trying to capture), by incorporating an identification constraint. According to this modified version of DS*, the desires that are prudentially relevant, because genuinely reflective of what I care about, are just those that are relatively stable, enduring, and integrated into my self-conception. It is towards this kind of, independently appealing, subjectivist approach that we will move in Chapter 3.

In general, it is open to the defender of DS* to recognize as many distinct classes of desire as are needed to best reflect the subjectivist insight, and to accord prudential relevance to only some of them. To this extent, Tiberius and Raibley's critique underestimates the resources of their opponents. Desire-satisfactionists may be well justified in building in an identification constraint, and their theory may then turn out to be extensionally equivalent to VFT* (for all that has been said so far). Perhaps the broader lesson is that we should not be misled by the bloodless way philosophers sometimes talk about desires into thinking that they are necessarily less rich and complex than the attitudes Tiberius and Raibley would have us focus on.

2.5 - The Value-Fulfillment Theory and the Agency Constraint

Tiberius and Raibley both seem to hold that something other than the identification constraint distinguishes VFT* from DS*. This takes the form of another restriction, which I will call the *agency constraint*. The agency constraint entails that the satisfaction of a desire for a given state

of affairs is only good for me if I have played an active part in bringing about this state of affairs.³⁰ The introduction of this second criterion brings VFT* into close contact with the view recently defended by Simon Keller, according to which a person's well-being is (at least in large part) determined by the extent to which they achieve their goals.³¹ The agency constraint places a restriction, not on the kind of pro-attitude that is prudentially relevant, but on the way in which the state of affairs which is the object of one's pro-attitude must be brought about, if its obtaining is to be good for one. In this respect, and strictly speaking, it is not DS*'s focus on desires that is the value-fulfillment theorist's target anymore. Rather, the disagreement concerns what is required for the *fulfillment* of those attitudes that are deemed to be prudentially relevant. Although distinguishing desiring from valuing *as attitudes* is no longer really the point, it is in fact here where the most important difference between VFT* and DS* lies. It is also here where the former approach goes seriously wrong. For, insofar as it incorporates an agency constraint, VFT* cannot adequately capture the subjectivist insight, and so should not be viewed as a genuine competitor to DS*.

In endorsing the agency constraint, VFT* takes it to be of vital importance that one realizes one's values through one's own activity. We find in both Tiberius and Raibley the claim that values serve to guide one's actions and practical deliberations, and Raibley explicitly ties the

³⁰ Thus, Raibley (2013, p.192) writes that "one's welfare is increased only when one plays an active role in realizing one's values: it neither benefits nor harms one when a desire that does not prompt action—e.g., the desire that the stranger's illness be cured—is satisfied, even if one knows it has been satisfied." Tiberius is less explicit on this point, but she does state (2011, p.7) that "a person's life goes well to the extent that *she pursues and fulfills or realizes things that she values*" (italics added). This passage at least suggests that the person must herself play a role in bringing about a desired state of affairs, if it is to count as an instance of value-fulfillment.

³¹ Keller (2004). For a sketch of a similar view see Dorsey (2011).

successful realization of one's values to the exercise of "robustly functioning agency".³² Indeed, he goes so far as to say that "values-realization is important for welfare *because* it is a central aspect of functioning agency".³³ So the ultimate test of whether something is relevant to my well-being, on this view, is whether it involves robustly functioning agency. Values (or as we can now characterize them, desires that satisfy the identification constraint), have a special connection with this kind of agency, that other desires lack. Raibley's claim is that it is precisely this feature which makes them the proper focus of the subjectivist.³⁴

The agency-based approach provides the value-fulfillment theorist with a new angle from which to attack the scope problem. Thus, one method for dealing with the worry about overbreadth is to tie the value of desire-satisfaction to the person's own efforts. This seems to afford a principled, non-arbitrary way of distinguishing those desires that are prudentially relevant from those that are not, and it may be thought that we will not find a better way. For the idea that one's well-being and the exercise of one's agency must be closely connected has its own intuitive pull. At least since Aristotle, philosophers have been attracted to views that accord to individuals a significant degree of control over how well their life is going for them. As human beings, it seems that we are not mere passive receptacles of prudential value. Rather, we are creatures with the capacity to transform the evaluative landscape through our own efforts. One appealing way of unpacking this basic idea ties our well-being to how successful we are, as

³² Raibley (2013, p.206). The model of robustly functioning agency, according to Raibley, also calls for one's values to be coherent, consciously held, responsive to evidence, and connected to a broader framework of affective motivations. These conditions on valuing can, for reasons pointed out above, be equally well met by a suitably refined desire-satisfactionism, and so I will not discuss them further here.

³³ Ibid. (p.210).

³⁴ It bears remarking that Raibley, at least, is open to the idea that the satisfaction of even those desires that do not meet the identification constraint (and so do not qualify as values) can make some contribution to one's well-being. However, on his view this is only because such desire-satisfactions can involve robustly functioning agency, if in an attenuated form (pp. 207-8). A more plausible view, as I argue below, is that the satisfaction of one's desires (at least those of them that meet the identification constraint) is good for one even in cases where one is a mere patient.

agents of just this sort. This line of thought, taken to its limit, suggests that if we are value-conferring beings it is only through exercising our agency in pursuit of some end that this is so, so that if I play no part in bringing the end about, the mere fact that I desire it cannot make it good for me. When we add to these intuitive considerations the fact that the agency constraint also appears to help in dealing with the scope problem, it is perhaps little wonder that it has won adherents.

Keller, similarly, motivates his approach by appeal to the idea that it is in “imposing one’s will on the world” that one both lives a good life, and confers value upon things that otherwise lack it. On Keller’s view, the achievement of a given goal can be basically good for a person even if the goal lacks any independent value. Thus, to take a modified version of Rawls’ famous grass-counter example, the claim is that insofar as the grass-counter devotes a great deal of time and effort to ascertaining precisely how many blades of grass are on his lawn, acquiring this knowledge is good for him.³⁵ It may be that there would be additional prudential value if the knowledge that he devoted all this time to acquiring was itself valuable rather than trivial (say, if instead of counting grass he was discovering fundamental laws of physics), but the important thing to stress is that this is not a necessary condition on *the acquisition of the knowledge* being valuable. And the same goes for other instances of achievement. Keller claims, as well, that the *only* instances of desire-satisfaction that are welfare relevant are those in which I have had a hand in bringing about the desired state of affairs. Moreover, although one could cleave to a more demanding account of achievement, Keller (like Raibley) suggests that, provided my own

³⁵ For the original example, see Rawls (1971, p.432).

efforts have played *some part* in bringing about the object of my desire, this is sufficient to make the obtaining of *any desired state of affairs* good for me.³⁶

There is much that is appealing in the picture sketched to this point. It is plausible that one's level of well-being does depend to a significant extent on the successful operation of one's agential capacities, especially the capacity to pursue and realize one's most cherished aims. And yet, we must be careful not to run together prudential value too closely with the degree to which a person is flourishing *qua agent*. For the hard truth is that there are many things over which we have no control, which nonetheless clearly impact how well off we are. Some of these things will enter DHT through its objectivist strand. But, even when we are merely considering which desire-satisfactions make a basic contribution to a person's well-being, we cannot defensibly restrict them to those in which the person plays some active role in satisfying the desire.

An example borrowed from Keller himself will help to bring out the unacceptable implications of the agency constraint. Keller asks us to consider the case of Joan, who fruitlessly devotes a great deal of her time and energy to the abolition of one of her nation's laws, which she views as unjust. Although Joan's own efforts fail to make any difference (assume through no fault of her own), the law is subsequently abolished for entirely unrelated reasons. Keller's claim is that the change in law does not in this case make Joan's life any better, regardless of how much she desired this event. "Nothing she does makes any difference. She is not imposing her will upon the world, even if the thing she wills is imposed...Joan's is a life of wasted effort".³⁷

By far the more plausible position is that, insofar as Joan has a strong, stable, enduring desire that the law be abolished and identifies with this desire, the abolition of the law indeed

³⁶ Bradford (2015) offers the most sophisticated account of the value of achievement in the literature, although she is non-committal as to whether achievements should be understood as *prudentially valuable* (pp.6-7).

³⁷ Keller (2004, pp.33-4).

makes a difference to how well things go for her. This is so even though Joan does not succeed in “imposing her will upon the world”. This point becomes harder to dispute if we compare Joan with two of her friends, Jean and Jane.

Jean has a much weaker desire than Joan that this law be changed. She rarely thinks about the law at all, although when she does it is with distaste and a wish that it be abolished. And yet, this latter commitment is by no means a deeply engrained or important aspect of her identity. Now suppose that Jean, idle and bored one day, agrees to fill in for a more politically active friend of hers on one of her regular door to door canvassing expeditions. As it happens, Jean knocks on the right door. A powerful business magnate answers, and despite Jean’s relatively half-hearted petitioning, he is convinced by her spiel (she happens to remind him of his estranged granddaughter). He ends up donating millions of dollars to the cause, which directly results in the law being repealed. Next consider Jane, who is like Joan in that she cares a great deal about changing this law, but unlike her in that she needs to work two jobs simply to keep food on the table and thus lacks either the time or the resources to contribute to this goal.

It is an implication of Keller’s view (and it seems of Raibley’s as well) that the abolition of the law contributes to some extent to Jean’s well-being, but does not contribute at all to Joan’s or to Jane’s. Is this really what we should say in this case? I suspect most readers will find such a conclusion impossible to accept. Joan and Jane, after all, both care a great deal about the law being repealed. Jean does not. Joan and Jane see their opposition to this law as a central aspect of their identity, and indeed Joan has expended considerable time and effort campaigning against it. Jane would have done the same if she were able to do so. It just so happens that both Joan and Jane are unlucky (Joan in that none of her efforts in pursuit of the goal of abolition end up helping, Jane in that she is not even in a position to make such efforts).

Granted, the fact that Joan's effort is wasted is regrettable to some extent. Other things equal, it would surely have gone better with her had she succeeded in bringing about (or at least helping to bring about) a change in the law. But the question is not whether it would have been better for Joan to achieve the goal herself, as opposed to seeing the end she so fervently desired attained through other means. The question is whether, in the latter case, the obtaining of this state of affairs can be dismissed as entirely irrelevant to how well off she is. The comparison with Jean helps us to see that it must make *some* positive difference to Joan's well-being that her cherished desire has been satisfied, even if her actions are not a part of the causal story that explains why this occurred. This point extends to Jane's case, as well. If we deny it, we are forced to bite the bullet and say that Jean's welfare was more impacted by the repeal of the law than either Joan's or Jane's, even though the latter two care much more about this outcome. This is not something we should be comfortable saying.

The plain fact is that sometimes we just get lucky or unlucky with respect to the objects of our desires. However, how lucky or unlucky we are doesn't itself impact how much we care about (or, if you like, how much we *value*) these objects. How lucky and unlucky we are in this respect does indeed affect how well off we are. However, it doesn't impact what we care about and therefore doesn't affect which states of affairs *would be basically good for us if they did obtain*. To the extent that we mean to capture the subjectivist insight, we should be concerned above all with what a person cares about, not with what they succeed in bringing about, or even (here let us remember Jane's case) with what they have actually invested any effort in bringing about. It is only the former consideration, and not the latter two, that helps to determine what the basic constituents of someone's well-being are (as opposed to how well things are currently going for them).

A more reasonable condition to place on an instance of desire-satisfaction's being prudentially relevant is that one must be *willing* to exercise one's agency in the pursuit of the desired state of affairs, *should one* be in a position to do so. I am happy to accept such a counterfactual understanding of the agency restriction. Moreover, the counterfactual reading is quite compatible with DS*. On the other hand, Keller and Raibley are arguing that what matters is whether one causally contributed to bringing about the desired state of affairs. It is here where we should part company, if we wish to preserve that tie between what is good for someone and what they care about that subjectivism is expressly designed to capture.

It is worth mentioning here that, insofar as it incorporates an agency constraint, VFT*, (somewhat ironically) does not even satisfy Good-Value Link*. This is because, on this view, for \emptyset to be basically good for x it does not suffice that \emptyset is valued, in the right way, by x. Rather, VFT* so understood incorporates a further, external condition to the effect that x must play a causal role in realizing \emptyset . This latter condition does not bear at all on what x cares about, and so we shouldn't be surprised that through it Good-Value Link* is severed.

There is one final point I wish to make about the agency constraint. It may initially seem like a minor quibble, but it will prove important going forward. Recall that the subjectivist insight is precisely that a person can confer basic prudential value upon objects by caring about them (sufficiently and in the right way). Now, on at least one way of understanding the Keller/VFT* view, it is compatible with this insight, in at least a minimal sense. After all, insofar as I make a given state of affairs my end and exert my own agency to bring it about, it seems that I have thereby made this goal valuable for me, even if it was antecedently worthless. However, we must recognize that there is another, quite plausible way of understanding the value of achieving one's goals.

One might hold that the kind of exercise of human agency that is involved in the successful pursuit of goals itself has attitude-independent value. Such a claim may be supported by a perfectionist framework, or it may be explained in some other way, or even taken as primitive. It may, again, be understood as a claim about goodness for a person or about goodness *simpliciter*.³⁸ I believe the view that achievement is a substantive good is an independently attractive one. Indeed, when I develop the objectivist strand of DHT in Chapter 4 I will argue that achievement deserves a place on our list of attitude-independent prudential goods. Yet the important thing to note here is just that views like this make the locus of the value *the achievement* (the complex consisting of the goal and the successful pursuit of it) rather than the desired state of affairs itself. They do not help us express the insight that human beings are value-conferring beings, which we have identified as essential to subjectivism.

The threat of a collapse into objectivism thus provides another reason to steer clear of an agency restriction. At the very least, subjectivists should be careful to stress that it is the object of one's pro-attitude that is basically prudentially valuable (so, the goal itself), rather than the complex consisting of the goal *and* the successful exercise of one's agential capacities in pursuit of it (that is, the achievement). We will see in the ensuing chapter that it is not just in the context of the agency restriction that this threat of a collapse into objectivism arises. If one hopes to maintain a genuinely subjectivist element in one's theory of prudential value, one must recognize that a person's pro-attitudes can confer prudential value upon their objects. This, I will argue, should lead the disjunctive hybrid theorist not only to reject the agency constraint, but also to adopt one particular interpretation of DS*.

³⁸ Hurka (1993, pp.17-18) explicitly takes achievement to be among the things that are good *simpliciter*, denying that it should be treated as good for a person. Bradford (2015, pp.6-7 and 2016, p.201) discusses both views, but does not make a definitive choice between them.

2.6 - Conclusion

My argument throughout this chapter has rested on my own (admittedly not uncontroversial) conception of the subjectivist insight. As I see it, the beating heart of subjectivism is the idea that in caring about something (sufficiently and in the right way) a person can make it a basic constituent of their well-being. My argument has been that neither JS* nor VFT* can accommodate this insight as well as DS* can. To the extent that these views shift the focus from desires to some other class of attitudes, they prove either under-inclusive or over-inclusive. To the extent that they adopt an agency constraint, they again prove to be under-inclusive. My conclusion is that, if subjectivist theories of prudential value are to avoid losing sight of their original target, they should remain focused on desire-satisfaction, and not incorporate an agency constraint. This holds *mutatis mutandis* for the subjectivist strand of DHT.

Chapter 3 - What's Good in Desire-Satisfactionism?

3.1 - Introduction

In the previous two chapters I introduced and motivated DHT, and argued that the best way to develop the subjectivist strand of such a theory is along desire-satisfactionist lines (I thus labeled this part of the theory DS*). Desire-satisfactionism itself comes in many varieties, and thus there remain many questions to answer before we can move on to discuss DHT's objective elements. The aim of this chapter is to set out the most plausible version of DS*, one that when integrated into DHT can bring with it what is most appealing in subjectivism.

This requires, first off, that we draw a distinction between two different interpretations of desire-satisfactionism, the *object view* and *the combo view*. Although it may seem to be a mere formality which of these views the disjunctive hybrid theorist adopts, deciding between them is in fact of crucial importance. Indeed, I will show that it is only if we understand DS* in the light of the object view that it genuinely expresses, and so can incorporate into DHT, what we have identified as the subjectivist insight.

Once this interpretive issue has been dealt with, we will turn to the topic of which instances of desire-satisfaction should be treated as prudentially relevant. We saw in the previous chapter that an unrestricted DS* runs into the scope problem. In response, various kinds of constraints have been proposed, with the aim of isolating just those desires that matter for well-being. We have already ruled out an agency constraint as incompatible with the subjectivist insight. On the other hand, we offered some initial support for an identification constraint, understood in such a way as to emphasize those desires that are comparatively enduring, stable, and integrated into a person's self-conception. Whereas the agency constraint concerns how a

desire is satisfied, and the identification constraint concerns the role a desire plays in a person's life, other proposed constraints concern either the conditions under which the desire is or would be formed or retained (we will call these *procedural constraints*), or the content of the desire itself (we will call these *substantive constraints*).

Procedural constraints typically involve the imposition of some hypothetical idealizing procedure, such that only those desires that would survive after being suitably laundered are accorded prudential significance. Idealization helps deal with some of the cases that give rise to the scope problem. However, it does not help with others. Moreover, shifting our focus from actual to idealized desires comes at a significant cost. The price of idealizing is always that it loosens our grip on what is most compelling in subjectivism, namely the connection it draws between what actually matters to a person and what is good for her. If the corresponding gains were significant enough, this cost might be justified. However, I argue that the kinds of cases that have been used to motivate the imposition of idealizing procedures can be satisfactorily dealt with by other means. The upshot of this discussion is that we should not idealize.

I also argue that we should reject any proposed substantive constraints on the content of the desires that are classified as prudentially relevant. One kind of constraint that is defended by certain hybrid theorists places an independent value condition on the objects of these desires. Such a restriction is in fundamental tension with the subjectivist insight, and should accordingly be rejected. Another type of substantive constraint, which we discussed and dismissed in the previous chapter, allows the satisfaction of only those desires that are about my own life to contribute to my well-being. A somewhat similar view holds that the only desires that matter for well-being are those that are about my *whole* life, rather than any smaller segment of it. This

latter proposal should also be rejected, insofar as adopting it renders DS* massively under-inclusive.

Although I here take a stand against both procedural and substantive constraints, I do not advocate an unrestricted version of DS*. I argue that we are well-justified in restricting the scope of our concern to *intrinsic* desires, although distinguishing in a plausible way between intrinsic and instrumental desires proves a somewhat complicated matter. I also reaffirm my support for a view that restricts the desires that matter for well-being to those that satisfy an identification constraint. A constraint of this last kind is at least consistent with, and may indeed be demanded by, the governing insight of subjectivism. I close by considering certain issues surrounding the time at which desire-satisfaction benefits a person.

If it is to preserve the subjectivist insight, DS* *must* be understood according to the object interpretation. It also needs to eschew any condition to the effect that the objects of one's desires must possess attitude-independent value, if they are to be basic constituents of one's well-being. Beyond this point, the question of which instances of desire-satisfaction are prudentially relevant is an internecine one to which different answers may be given, consistent with the acceptance of both DS* and DHT. Thus, if certain readers do not agree on all points with the present treatment of these issues, this should not prevent them from taking up and further advancing the broader theoretical framework set out in these pages.

3.2 - Introducing the Object and Combo Views

In a classic article criticizing desire-satisfactionism, Richard Kraut describes the theory he opposes as holding that, “it is *good for one's desire to be satisfied*, regardless of the content of

the desire. *The objects we now want or will want are made good for us by our wanting them*”.¹ Notice that there is a significant ambiguity in Kraut’s reconstruction of the desire-satisfactionist’s claims. Is the theorist with whom Kraut is sparring assigning basic prudential value to *the state of affairs in which a person’s desires are satisfied, whatever their objects may be*, or to *those very states of affairs that are the objects of a person’s desires*? As was first pointed out some two decades ago, these are distinct positions, with different implications.² Nonetheless, they have usually not been treated this way in the literature, either by desire-satisfactionists or by their critics. This situation would be pardonable if it were a mere technical matter which interpretation we adopted, with no broader implications for our theorizing about prudential value. Among those who haven’t simply elided the distinction, this has generally been assumed (I discuss the exceptions below). However, it turns out that the decision between these views has important and wide-ranging repercussions.

We will call the first interpretation, according to which it is *the state of affairs that is the object of the person’s desire* that is a basic constituent of prudential value, the *object view*. The second interpretation, according to which it is *the combination of the person’s desiring that some state of affairs obtain and that desire’s being satisfied* that is basically good for the person, we will call the *combo view*.³ I begin, in this section, with a more detailed account of the differences

¹ Kraut (1994, p.40, italics my own).

² The first explicit mention of this interpretive issue that I am aware of (and still the best discussion) is found in Rabinowicz and Osterberg (1994). Although their stated focus is preference utilitarianism, much of their discussion is directly relevant to the issue of how best to formulate desire-satisfactionism, precisely as a theory of prudential value. Rabinowicz and Osterberg call the competing interpretations the *object* and *satisfaction* interpretations. These views are also discussed and distinguished, under various names, by Bradley (2009 pp.25-30 and 2014, pp.234-6), Bykvist (2002, p.475 and 2006a pp.266-7), Dorsey (2012a pp.272-5 and 2013), Heathwood (2005, p.491), and Sarch (2011, pp.179-81).

³ I am here adopting Bradley’s terminology, since it is less apt than Rabinowicz and Osterberg’s to cause confusion between the so-called *satisfaction interpretation* and DS* itself. Although the combo view does not build in anything like an agency restriction, the reader should nonetheless notice the structural similarity between this interpretation of DS* and the view that achievement itself has attitude-

between the object and combo views of DS*. In the next section, I argue that the former view should be preferred, on the grounds that only it secures the result that in caring about a thing (sufficiently and in the right way) a person can confer prudential value upon it. The commitment to this kind of value-conferring is an essential one, if we want our theory to capture what is distinctively appealing in subjectivism.

For the purposes of this discussion, it will be convenient to work with the simplest variant of DS*, according to which the satisfaction of *any of a person's actual desires* is relevant to the person's well-being. This approach is *actualist* in that it is the desires a person has in the actual world that count, and *unrestricted* in that it imposes no constraints on which of these are prudentially relevant. Thus, we will call this version of DS* *unrestricted actualism*.⁴

The disagreement between the object and combo interpretations of DS* does not center on the *kinds* of entities that can bear prudential value. The dispute instead concerns what we might call the *location* of the basic constituents of prudential value. According to the object view, the basic constituents of prudential value (here identified with the objects of my desires) may be entirely states of the world outside my own head, even though their value is conditional on their bearing the right relation to what is going on in my head. The object interpretation of DS* is, accordingly, consistent with the possibility that none of the states of affairs that are basically good for me are either wholly or partly constituted by my own mental states. Of course, it will almost always be the case that among my actual desires will be desires to be in certain mental states. But it is important to see that on the object view this *need not* be the case. The objects of my desires are good for me *because* of my mental states, but that does not entail that in

independent value, discussed in the last chapter. I believe this should immediately make one suspicious about whether such a view can really capture the subjectivist insight.

⁴ On both the object and combo interpretations, to say that my desire for some state of affairs *x* is *satisfied* is just to say that I desire that *x* obtains and *x* does in fact obtain. Where the object of my desire does not obtain, we will follow standard practice and say that this desire is *frustrated*.

enumerating the things that are good for me we must include such states. To put this in terms of the previously mentioned distinction between the enumerative and explanatory questions, it is only in answer to the latter question that the object view must invoke mental states. It is a contingent matter whether, in response to the enumerative question about my good, we need appeal to such things. That depends on what I am like.

On the other hand, the combo view takes the basic constituents of prudential value to be more complicated items, composed of a) the desire that some state of affairs obtain and b) the obtaining of that state of affairs. On this interpretation, all those things that are basically good for me are located *at least partly* within my own head. At least, this will be the case if DS* is taken to be the whole story, rather than one strand of DHT.

One potential reaction to the contrast just drawn is to see the object view as *less* subjectivist than the combo view. After all, it has often been supposed that a core marker of subjectivism is some kind of commitment to *the dependence of prudential value upon the agent's mental states*. The most obvious way of securing such a dependence, it might be thought, is to embrace a view according to which the basic constituents of prudential value are *themselves all mental states*. This may help explain hedonism's perennial appeal. Short of endorsing hedonism, the combo view (if it is understood as a complete account) nonetheless ensures that each basic constituent of prudential value is *at least partly* composed of some mental state. The object view, on the other hand, does not guarantee that *any* of the basic constituents of prudential value are constituted either wholly or partly by mental states. This may lead one to conclude that subjectivists (or at least thoroughgoing subjectivists) are better served by adopting the combo view.

This is a mistaken conclusion. The considerations in the above paragraph all concerned the respective interpretations' answers to the enumerative question. However, a more fruitful way of gauging the extent to which a theory of prudential value is subjective is in terms of its response to the explanatory question. On the classificatory approach defended in Chapter 1, if a theory holds that *at least some* of the things that are basically good for a person have their prudential value *at least in part* because the person has the right kind of pro-attitude towards them, then it is at least partially subjectivist. A thoroughgoing subjectivist view, then, is any theory according to which *all* the things that are basically good for a person have their prudential value *entirely* because the person has the right kind of pro-attitude towards them. The object interpretation of DS* is clearly at least partially subjectivist by these lights (whether it is a full-blooded version of subjectivism depends again on whether it is being considered on its own or as one strand of DHT). A commitment to subjectivism thus does not imply that the mental states that *explain why* certain states of affairs are basically prudentially valuable must themselves be counted among the basic constituents of prudential value.

The debate between objectivism and subjectivism is orthogonal to the dispute about whether the basic constituents of prudential value are located within or without the mind. We can bring this out more clearly by considering the following view (or combination of views). Suppose that, in response to the explanatory question, one endorses a *locative account* of prudential value (we will consider this account in more detail in Chapter 4). According to the locative account, goodness for a person is best understood as goodness *simpliciter* instantiated in a person's life. On this approach, nothing that is not good *simpliciter* can be a basic constituent of prudential value. Moreover, all that is needed to explain why something is good for a person is

the fact that it possesses this other sort of goodness, together with certain other conditions designed to ensure its connection to the person's own life.

Suppose, further, that our locative theorist thinks that the only things that are good *simpliciter* are mental states of some sort. We can be confident that this is a possible position because it has in fact been defended. G.E Moore famously held that the only way to make sense of goodness for a person is in terms of goodness *simpliciter* instantiated in that person's life.⁵ Nonetheless, prominent among the items that are good *simpliciter* he included pleasure, provided it is of the right sort. Specifically, Moore claimed that "by far the most valuable things which we know or can imagine are certain states of consciousness which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects".⁶ Moore did not himself defend the position that these are the *only* things that are good *simpliciter*. However, Donald Regan's recent development of the Moorean approach explicitly denies that anything is basically valuable besides certain mental states of this sort.⁷ This revised Moorean theory of prudential combines a) a locative explanatory account, with b) a type of mental state view at the enumerative level. Yet my sense is that a theory like Regan's should not be classified as even partially subjectivist. It certainly should not be treated as more fully subjectivist than the object view.

Now that I have clarified what is at stake, I will move on to assess the comparative merits of the object and combo interpretations of DS*. In the next section I argue that the object view is more plausible than the combo view, and better captures the subjectivist insight.

⁵ Moore (1903, p.99). One can also read Moore as a thoroughgoing skeptic about prudential value. It does not matter here which reading is historically correct.

⁶ Moore (p.179).

⁷ Regan (2004).

3.3 - In Defense of the Object View

The subjectivist insight is that a person can *confer* basic prudential value upon a given thing by caring about it (sufficiently and in the right way). If DS* is to incorporate into DHT what is most appealing in subjectivism, it must therefore be developed in such a way as will express this fundamental idea.

According to either of the above interpretations of DS*, the way to pick out what we care about in the right way is by appeal to our desires. It should be clear that, understood according to the object view, DS* expresses the subjectivist insight quite well indeed. To return to our example from Chapter 1, if Evangeline desires to meet William Shatner, then according to the object view (and assuming unrestricted actualism) it is basically good for her to meet him. This is so even though, considered on its own, such a meeting does not seem at all valuable. The fact that Evangeline wants this meeting to occur is the sole source of whatever prudential value it bears.

By contrast, the combo interpretation of DS* does not, as it turns out, have the implication that persons can confer prudential value on states of affairs by desiring them. The *combination* of Francine's desire for x and x itself is a basic constituent of prudential value, and moreover one that is partially constituted by Francine's desire. And yet, *x itself* is not a basic constituent of prudential value on this view. It is thus not the case that in desiring x Francine confers basic prudential value upon *it*. As for the compound consisting of the desire and its object, that is taken to be good for Francine *regardless* of her attitude to it.⁸ We are forced to

⁸ It would be passing strange to claim that the source of the prudential value of such compounds is always a second-order desire that the first-order desire be satisfied. This would, after all, just be to endorse the object view at one remove. Moreover, I see no principled reason for thinking that only desires that have as their object instances of desire-satisfaction possess such value-conferring power. We should also note that a vicious regress threatens if one ventures down this path. If a higher-order desire that my lower-order

conclude that my desires do not introduce new basic constituents of prudential value into the world on the combo view, even though the things that are basically good for me constitutively involve my desires.

The combo interpretation thus seems fundamentally unable to capture the subjectivist insight. If DS* is interpreted in this way it may not even deserve to be called a subjective theory. Insofar as the essence of subjectivism is tied to the idea of value-conferring (which, even if a controversial understanding, is a plausible one), DS* falls on the wrong side of the divide. Nor can I think of any other plausible approach that will conclusively land the combo view in the subjectivist camp. Call this the *problem of creeping objectivism*.⁹

We should conclude that the combo view does not capture the heart of subjectivism. It is important to see that this is so even if one has a quite different understanding of the subjectivist insight from our own. We have already discussed, and rejected, the view that the essence of the subjectivist idea is best expressed via an anti-alienation constraint, to the effect that a person's good cannot include things which do not somehow resonate with them.¹⁰ But suppose that someone else *is* moved to accept subjectivism by this kind of consideration. If Francine desires *x*, this does guarantee that *x* *itself* resonates with her. Thus, if DS* is understood according to the object interpretation, all the basic constituents of prudential value it introduces are guaranteed to satisfy the anti-alienation condition. On the other hand, it seems that Francine could, while yet desiring *x*, be quite indifferent to the following conjunction: *I desire x and x obtains*. The

desire is satisfied is always needed to explain the value of ground-level desire-satisfaction, how then do we explain why it is good for the higher-order desire to be satisfied? We seemingly will need to keep adding new desiderative levels *ad infinitum*. This is bizarre. It also makes it hard to see how the relevant value gets into the picture in the first place.

⁹ The reference is to Dreier (2004). This problem for the combo view is raised, although not under this name, in Bradley (2014, pp.234-6).

¹⁰ As expressed, for instance, by Dorsey (Forthcoming), Railton (1986), and Rosati (1996). Dorsey (2012a, pp.272-5) also points out that the combo view fails to secure this kind of resonance, and argues against it on these grounds.

complex of the desire and its satisfaction is just not what people ordinarily care about. It is not the satisfaction of Francine's desire for x that resonates with her, but x itself.¹¹ The anti-alienation constraint is thus not satisfied by the combo view. It is striking that the combo view comes out on the wrong side of the argument, even if we assume a very different understanding of what is appealing in subjectivism from our own.

Rabinowicz and Osterberg draw a contrast between the *participant* and the *spectator* models of preference utilitarianism, which proves illustrative in this context. The object view appears to map on well to the former model, the combo view to the latter. The former model emphasizes "participation in...projects, the situation is to be viewed from within".¹² The latter, on the other hand, takes the perspective of a detached impartial spectator. Looking down from such rarefied air, it may well be that what seems valuable is the compound state of affairs consisting of the desire and its satisfaction. But this does not capture what the person really cares about. If we are trying to express the insight that what matters to a person explains, at least to some extent, what is basically good for her, the combo view is a poor candidate.

I hope to have brought out by now that a good deal hangs on the decision between these two interpretations of DS*. This is so despite the fact that the object and combo views need not diverge at all in their substantive judgments about how well off people are.¹³ It is true that, when it comes to assessing a person's well-being level, nothing much hangs on the choice between the object and combo views. Hence, perhaps, the temptation to treat them as mere notational variants. However, we should not suppose that because two theories of prudential value agree

¹¹ The combo view could seemingly satisfy the anti-alienation constraint only by requiring that Francine have a higher-order desire that her desire for x is satisfied. Whereas the view discussed in the previous footnote would allow the presence of a higher-order desire to *confer* value upon instances of desire-satisfaction, this view would allow the absence of such a desire to *revoke* their value. It is untenable for similar reasons.

¹² Rabinowicz and Osterberg (1994, p.3).

¹³ Bradley (2014, p.235) also notes the extensional equivalence of the object and combo view.

about people's respective well-being levels they agree on *everything that matters*. A large part of the task of any such theory is to provide a plausible explanation of why the things that are prudentially valuable are so, and of why certain people are better off than others.

Here is a silly example that nonetheless serves to sharpen the above point. Imagine a view according to which *x* is basically good for any person *P* if *x* is something that William Shatner wants for *P*. Suppose also that all the benevolent Shatner wants for any of us is for us to have exactly what we desire. We now have an approach that, in its extension, differs not at all from either interpretation of DS*. But where DS* is (when understood correctly) plausible, Shatner-satisfactionism is patently absurd.

Of course, the combo view is much more intuitively appealing than Shatner-satisfactionism. Indeed, of those who commit to one or the other interpretation, it is noteworthy that one finds support for the combo view among defenders of desire-satisfactionism as well as among its opponents.¹⁴ Nonetheless, we should conclude that the subjectivist insight is better represented by the object view. It follows that, if our aim is to develop DHT so that it incorporates what is most attractive in DS*, and in subjectivism more broadly, we should be adopting an object rather than a combo interpretation. In the next section, I draw out some further implications of this conclusion.

3.4 - The Object View and Objectivism

Defenders of objective list accounts claim it as an important theoretical virtue of their view that they can accommodate a wide variety of attitude-independent prudential goods. In principle, there seem to be no restrictions on the constituents of the objective list, either with respect to

¹⁴ Desire-satisfactionists who favour the combo view include Heathwood (2005, p.491) and Lukas (2010, pp. 3-4). Opponents of the theory who also favour this interpretation include Bradley (2009, pp.25-30) and Sarch (2011, pp.179-81).

their number or their nature. One recent stratagem has been to reserve a space on this list for desire-satisfaction.¹⁵ If such a gambit is plausible, it represents a significant victory for the objective list theorist. For not everyone who feels the force of the idea that getting what one wants is *among the things* that makes an independent contribution to one's well-being is willing to embrace thoroughgoing subjectivism. Some of these people are like myself, in that they also expect a theory of prudential value to accommodate certain objectivist intuitions. If it were the case that the desire-satisfactionist element could be comfortably incorporated into the objective list itself, this would seem a straightforward and attractive way of proceeding. It would also preclude the need for a hybrid theory of the kind I am setting forth. DHT treats the objective list theory and desire-satisfactionism as each getting at part of the truth. Yet, if the objectivist patch above works, there is no longer any call to complicate matters by appealing to two such distinct and irreducible sources of prudential value. We can remain straightforward objective list theorists, and at the same time gain all the perks that the desire-satisfactionist enjoys.

Crucially, any hope this maneuver has depends on our adopting the combo view of DS*. On the object reading, it is easy to see that a theory which simply appends the desire-satisfactionist's axiological commitments to an existing list of attitude-independent goods is unpromising. For one thing, the objects of any individual's desires are in principle unbounded in both number and variety. An *indefinitely long* objective list is not, I take it, something that any theorist of prudential value is willing to countenance. Furthermore, one quickly finds oneself in tangles if one supposes that whatever a person desires is a *substantive* prudential good. Recall the case of Evangeline, who so fervently desires to meet William Shatner. Suppose now that one of Shatner's most cherished desires, in turn, is that he never meets Evangeline. It follows that the state of affairs in which Evangeline meets Shatner and the state of affairs in which she does not

¹⁵ This is suggested, for instance, by Arneson (1999, p.124), Keller (2009, p.659), and Rice (2013, p.6).

meet Shatner must both be included on the list of attitude-independent prudential goods. This looks very odd, however. It is, admittedly, not as odd as the claim that both states of affairs are good *simpliciter* would be. The one, we can say, is good *for Evangeline* and the other is good *for Shatner*. But remember that the relevant value is in both cases supposed to be substantive, which is to say wholly independent of Evangeline's or Shatner's attitudes. At this point I do not know what could be meant by this latter qualifier, however. We seem to have lost our grip on the very idea of a substantive prudential good. Thus, if we adopt the object interpretation of DS*, it does not seem that objectivists can capture the subjectivist insight so cheaply.

The combo view does not, at least, encounter the above worries. For on this interpretation of DS* we need add only one item to the objective list. Desire-satisfaction is just one more kind of thing, all instances of which have attitude-independent prudential value. The combo reading is thus preferable, if one wants to accord independent prudential significance to desire-satisfaction while remaining a thoroughgoing objectivist. It is worth asking, though, what could explain *why* desire-satisfaction is good for a person on such a view.

I can think of three broad approaches here (I will discuss each in more depth in the next chapter). The first justifies the content of the objective list by appealing to a broadly perfectionist theory grounded in general claims about human nature.¹⁶ The second is the locative approach, which understands what is good for me in terms of goodness *simpliciter* occurring in my life. The third, primitivist, approach denies that we can offer (or need offer) any non-trivial explanation of why desire-satisfaction (or anything else) appears on the objective list.¹⁷

On the first approach, the attitude-independent value of desire-satisfaction would need to derive from the fact that it realizes our distinctive human capacities, or something to that effect.

¹⁶ As in Kraut (2007).

¹⁷ As in Scanlon (1998).

This, however, sounds implausible, except perhaps if we endorse the agency constraint. But we have seen that there are good independent reasons to reject any such restriction. The second approach is somewhat more compelling. And yet, it does not allow the objectivist to incorporate what is intuitively attractive about subjectivism, and so about desire-satisfactionism, even if it might suffice to render an objective list theory extensionally adequate. Moreover, the ascription of goodness *simpliciter* to desire-satisfaction sounds decidedly odd to these ears. The primitivist approach we should turn to only if all other options have been exhausted. I conclude that, even if one favours the combo view, desire-satisfaction is not an especially plausible candidate for the objective list. We should, at any rate, not favour this view.¹⁸

One lesson I hope will be drawn from the preceding discussion is that the distinction between the object and combo views is something that more theorists of prudential value should be thinking about. With respect to the unfolding structure of DHT, we have seen that which of these views one adopts makes a big difference. This is not merely a peculiarity of the present project. Despite their extensional equivalence, the object and combo views diverge significantly in their commitments, and we will do well to keep this in mind.

3.5 - Why Not Idealize?

¹⁸ There is one argument *against* the object view that I want to briefly consider here, if only because it suggests something interesting about the nature of prudential value. Sarch (2011, p.180) suggests that this interpretation is implausible because it implies that the final, basic prudential value of the desired state of affairs supervenes on something other than its intrinsic features (namely the relation between this object and my mental state). This is only a problem if it is assumed that the final, basic prudential value of a thing must supervene on its intrinsic properties. We need not assume this, and indeed there may be good reason for doubting it. After all, part of what seems distinctive about *prudential* value is that it is fundamentally *relational*. Their ability to easily account for this relationality is surely a large part of what makes subjectivist approaches so appealing. But even objectivists must say that x's being valuable *for* me involves some relation between x and myself. Given this, why shouldn't the relational features of a thing matter to whether it is valuable for me *for its own sake*? See Dorsey (2012a) for further discussion of this point.

Above we were assuming, for simplicity, an unrestricted actualist version of DS*. However, this most straightforward version of the view has been widely criticized. Indeed, the objections to it have been so influential that virtually no contemporary desire-satisfactionist defends unrestricted actualism.¹⁹ It is generally assumed that we need to impose certain constraints on the desires that matter for one's well-being. Such constraints can take several forms. Some of the conditions that it has been suggested desires must meet if their satisfaction is to be good for a person are broadly procedural. Supporters of such constraints, which generally involve some degree of idealization, deny the *actualism* of the simple desire theory. Other proposed restrictions are substantive, in that they bear on the content of the desires in question. Finally, some argue that we should only accord prudential relevance to those desires that are sufficiently stable, enduring and tied to one's broader self-conception (this is what in the last chapter we called the identification constraint). It is not the actualism but rather the *unrestrictedness* of the simple theory that the latter two proposals target. I begin, in this section, with a discussion of procedural constraints. I defend the view that DS* should focus on a person's actual, as opposed to idealized, desires. In the ensuing sections I argue that content-based restrictions should also be rejected, before concluding that a content-neutral identification constraint is defensible.

Procedural constraints bear on the conditions under which desires have been (or would be) formed or retained. These can take various forms, although they commonly involve some degree of idealization. One kind of view starts from one's actual desires, and specifies that it is only those which one would retain, were one in possession of all the relevant (non-evaluative) information about their objects, that confer basic prudential value upon these objects. Call this the *full-information view*. A quite distinct view holds that it is only those desires that an ideally

¹⁹ Lukas (2010) and Mendola (2009) stand out among the few remaining defenders of the unrestricted view.

rational and informed advisor would have on my behalf (or would desire that I have on my own behalf) that count. Call this the *ideal advisor view*. Although neither of these views leaves our desires as they stand, the latter departs even further from actualism in that it allows things that I have no desire for, as I am presently constituted, to count towards my good. These are but two examples of what we can collectively call *idealized desire-satisfaction theories*. Theories of this kind have been defended by some of the most prominent figures in the literature.²⁰

Idealized desire-satisfaction theories all face the same objection. The immediate issue that arises is that, the more we idealize, the further away we seem to move from what the person, as they actually are, cares about. The central thrust of the argument in Chapter 2 was that subjectivists had best not divorce the idea of my *valuing a given thing* (in the sense that confers prudential value upon it) from the idea of my *caring about this thing*. If that point was well taken, then in formulating DS*, our chief aim should be to ensure that those desires which track what the person in fact cares about are accorded prudential relevance. However, in shifting the focus away from actual desires, idealization is at least in *prima facie* tension with this goal. The more extensive the laundering that a person's desires must undergo, the more removed we are from what matters to them as they are in the actual world. This divorce between what matters to the person and what matters to the theorist seems to be, to put it simply, the price of idealization.²¹ That said, if the advantages they accrue by moving away from actualism are great enough, this may be a price that desire-satisfactionists should be willing to pay.

Before moving on to consider these purported advantages, I should address a response that David Sobel has made to the above line of argument. He is here considering the objection,

²⁰ See Brandt (1979), Railton (1986), and Sobel (2016 [2009]). Sidgwick (1894) has also at times been read as defending such a view, although just what Sidgwick's theory of prudential value was remains a matter of controversy. For a very different reading of Sidgwick see Shaver (1997).

²¹ Enoch (2005), Loeb (1995) and Rosati (1995) forcefully argue against idealization on similar grounds.

pressed by David Enoch, that there is no rationale *internal to subjectivism* for focusing on idealized as opposed to actual desires.²² Sobel's reply is as follows:

“[T]he most natural way to develop the thought that it is one's desires that determine one's well-being is to hold that it is whether one wants X that determines whether one benefits in getting X. Then we need to distinguish cases where the agent thinks she wants X from cases where it really is X that she wants. How should we mark this distinction? Well, one obvious way is to say that the desire is truly for X when the desire is sustained or created in light of complete and accurate information about what X would be like. When one's desire for X has such a status, we should think that it truly is X that one wants.”²³

I believe Sobel is correct in thinking that it is what the person really wants that the subjectivist needs to zero in on. It is also clear that people can sometimes be mistaken about what they really want, and desire-satisfactionism must find a way to accommodate this datum. However, the assertion that I can only truly want x if I know all the relevant information about x (that is, all information that might in principle impact my desire for x), and that otherwise my desire is for something else (call it x*), is implausibly demanding, if for no other reason than that it makes it dubious whether any person has ever truly wanted anything. For *complete and accurate* information about what fulfilling our desire for x would be like just does not seem to be something that beings with our limitations ever possess.²⁴

Moreover, we can differentiate between what a person really desires and what they merely *think* they desire in a much more straightforward way. This requires only that we draw attention to an intuitive distinction that our earlier, rough formulation of actualism skirted over. It has often been suggested that the actualist should be concerned only with the satisfaction of *intrinsic* desires.²⁵ Here, to intrinsically desire something is to desire it for its own sake, or non-instrumentally. The relevant contrast is with *instrumental* desires, which are desires for

²² Again, see Enoch (2005).

²³ Sobel (2016 [2009], p.269).

²⁴ This point is developed most fully by Rosati (1995).

²⁵ This is how Heathwood (2005) and Murphy (1999) formulate actualism, for instance.

something merely as a means to something else. When we say of someone that ‘they think they want x but they in fact want y’, one plausible explanation of what is going on is that we are taking them to have confused an instrumental desire for an intrinsic one. If the desire for x is instrumental, it may also turn out to be conditional on mistaken means-end reasoning. For instance, Evangeline may desire to go to Comic-Con this year, but only because she believes that if she attends she will get to meet William Shatner. If, unbeknownst to her, Shatner has cancelled his scheduled appearance, attending Comic-Con is not even instrumentally good for Evangeline, despite her belief that it is. In such a case, we are inclined to say that Evangeline does not *really* want to go to Comic-Con, because doing so will not *really* help her achieve the desired end, which is meeting Shatner.

If we instead characterize actualism so that it ranges over intrinsic desires only, it is plausible that these do map on to what one really wants. If I genuinely have an intrinsic desire for x, it seems to be x that I indeed want, not x*. This is intuitively so, even if the desire for x would not be retained under conditions of full information. Consider again Evangeline’s desire to meet William Shatner. It may be that, if she knew all the relevant facts about Shatner, she would no longer have such a desire. This doesn’t change the fact that, as Evangeline is currently constituted, she cares about meeting Shatner as much as she cares about anything else. If the aim of DS* is to capture the subjectivist insight, there is therefore a strong presumption in favour of the view that the state of affairs in which Evangeline meets Shatner is a basic constituent of her well-being.

We seem justified, then, in treating actualism as the default version of DS*, any deviation from which comes at a heavy theoretical price. The switch from actual to idealized desires is accordingly in need of special justification, in the form of some distinct theoretical advantage (s).

The purported advantages of idealization all bear on the extension of the theory. We saw in the previous chapter that desire-satisfactionists have struggled to deal with the scope problem. The imposition of an idealizing procedure is one more way we might try to restrict the scope of DS* and thereby save its extensional adequacy. However, I will argue that the theoretical gains from idealization are in fact quite minimal, and do not come close to offsetting the cost.

Insofar as the full-information view starts from one's actual desires and uses the condition of full-information only to weed out some of them, the idealization involved is more modest than on the ideal advisor view. However, other things being equal, the attractiveness of DS* decreases proportionally as the degree of idealization increases. Thus, if we can show that even the amount of idealization involved in the full-information view is uncalled for, we will not need to consider approaches that idealize even further. We will have undermined the motivation for such accounts at the root.

The undoubted appeal of the full-information view derives from the fact that some of our desires appear defective, for the simple reason that they are based upon a false apprehension of their object. Suppose that I am a recovering alcoholic. I desire to drink the clear, bubbly liquid that is in the glass before me, believing it to be ginger ale. As it happens, the liquid in the glass is not ginger ale but champagne. Surely in this case the fact that I desire to drink this liquid does not make it good for me to drink it. Drinking it will, rather, be very bad for me. Thus, any version of desire-satisfactionism that gives the result that it is basically good for me to drink the clear liquid appears over-inclusive. And there are seemingly many other cases where, to borrow Sidgwick's memorable phrase, the object of my desire proves to be "a 'Dead Sea apple,' mere dust and ashes in the eating..."²⁶ If I only desire some object because I anticipate that it will have certain appealing features that, should this desire be satisfied, I will discover it does not

²⁶ Sidgwick (1894, p.110).

have, should we really say that the object of my desire is a basic constituent of prudential value? Cases of this kind suggest that a plausible condition on a desire's having the capacity to confer prudential value on its object is that it not be based on a misapprehension of what that object is like.

Although such cases are intuitively forceful, I am not convinced that they show what the critic of actualism thinks they do. First, it is possible for the actualist to grant that, even in the case where I am deceived, it is *pro tanto* good for me to drink the clear bubbly liquid. This in no way precludes the same theorist from holding that, *all things considered*, things go better for me in the case where I do not obtain the object of my desire. This is, first, because the satisfaction of the desire to drink what is in the glass is incompatible with the satisfaction of what we are assuming is my much stronger desire to stay on the wagon. What is more, if my accidental indiscretion leads to a relapse, this will likely thwart the satisfaction of many other important desires. We haven't yet mentioned the desire to drink some ginger ale, which is also disappointed. All this suggests that, even for the actualist, I will be worse off on the whole if I drink the champagne than if I refrain from doing so.

It is not just that many desires that otherwise might have been satisfied are sure to be frustrated, in the event that I drink the champagne. As I will argue in Chapter 5, the frustration of a desire for a given state of affairs is not itself a good candidate for prudential *disvalue*. It is better understood as a mere absence of prudential value. The negative side of DS* should instead focus on *aversions*, such that if I am (sufficiently and in the right way) averse to some state of affairs, it is a basic constituent of prudential disvalue. In the above case, it is evident that I do indeed have an intense aversion to drinking champagne, as well as to many of the likely consequences of such a lapse.

Now, when two or more desires cannot be jointly satisfied, we may wish to say that the prudential value of satisfying the stronger desire (s) simply cancels out the prudential value of satisfying the weaker one. On this view, it follows that drinking what is in the glass is not even *pro tanto* good for me. But the actualist does not have to go this route. They can recognize that it is better for me overall not to drink what is in the glass, without denying that there is also some prudential value in satisfying my desire for the clear liquid. The same kind of response is available in other relevantly similar cases. Admittedly, there will sometimes be intuitive resistance to the idea that satisfying a given desire is even *pro tanto* good for me, but (as discussed in Chapter 1) we have reason to believe that no theory of prudential value can do without biting some bullets. At any rate, the more important question is what is good for a person *all things considered*. If an actualist version of DS* can give the intuitively correct verdict about *this* in the ginger ale/champagne case and others like it, this should be enough for us, given the comparative costs of idealization.²⁷

If an objector holds the line, and insists that desire-satisfaction lacks even *pro tanto* prudential value where the desire is based on false beliefs about its object, there is another response that the actualist can give. This reply again makes use of the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental desires. For note that the ginger ale/champagne case only works as an argument against actualism if we characterize the desires involved in one particular way. My intrinsic desire, the example presupposes, is to *drink the clear liquid in the glass before me, whatever it may be*. In the case where I drink the champagne, this desire is obviously satisfied. Now, this may indeed be one of the desires involved. Still, zeroing in on it threatens to mislead us. For in this case I surely also have a more specific desire to *drink some ginger ale*. This desire is clearly not satisfied by my drinking the champagne. And, intuitively at least, it is this latter

²⁷ The argumentative strategy here is inspired by Heathwood (2005) and Lukas (2010).

more determinate desire that deserves to be privileged. The actualist may then claim that I ultimately have only an *instrumental* desire to drink the clear liquid that is in the glass. I have this desire insofar as I believe that it is a way of satisfying my intrinsic desire, which is to drink some ginger ale. Given that I am mistaken, and the drinking of this liquid is not a way of getting what I really want, actualists need not accord it even *pro tanto* prudential value. In this way, it is just like Evangeline's desire to go to Comic-Con.

There is, however, a danger with this move. The danger is that in ruling out of prudential relevance all desires that are not intrinsic, we will end up ruling out *too many* desires. Thus, consider an example Chris Heathwood gives to illustrate the difference between intrinsic and instrumental desire: "If I desire to turn on my CD player only because I desire to hear the Pixies, I am made better off only if the latter, basic desire is satisfied. My desire to turn on my CD player is merely instrumental (or extrinsic): I have it only because I desire something else, and I think the thing instrumentally desired will lead to that something else."²⁸

My worry is that even Heathwood's desire to hear the Pixies may not come out as intrinsic, given the way that we have so far been characterizing such desires. Presumably, there is some reason why Heathwood desires to hear this band in particular, for instance the fact that hearing them reliably generates a pleasant feeling of nostalgia. But if so, is it really *hearing the Pixies* that he intrinsically desires, as opposed to the pleasure he anticipates? In a similar vein, let us consider again the desire for ginger ale, and press on the claim that this is an intrinsic desire. For this desire also seems to be conditional on the belief that the object has certain features (i.e. tastiness and bubblyness). If I knew that the ginger ale in the glass would be flat and nasty tasting (perhaps it has been sitting out far too long), I would plausibly lose my previous desire to drink

²⁸ Heathwood (2005, p. 489).

it. This again suggests that it is not the ginger ale itself that I intrinsically desire, but something else (perhaps the gustatory pleasure it gives me).

Similar reflections suggest that we cannot simply rely on the fact that the desire to drink what is in the glass (or to turn on the CD player) only endures for as long as I believe it to be ginger ale (or believe it will play the Pixies) to rule this desire out of prudential relevance. True, the persistence of the former desire is conditional on the belief that satisfying it is a means of satisfying the latter, purportedly intrinsic desire. Yet we have just seen that the desire to drink the ginger ale is itself conditional on certain background assumptions. Plausibly the same is true of the desire to hear the Pixies. It may turn out that many, if not most, of our desires are conditional on some very limited set of background conditions obtaining. The conditional/unconditional distinction throws the baby out with the bathwater, in that it is unable to distinguish between the desire to drink what is in the glass (or to turn on the CD player) and the desire for ginger ale (or to hear the Pixies).

I agree with Heathwood that the desire to hear the Pixies is importantly different from the desire to turn on the CD player. I am convinced that the same is true of the desire for ginger ale and the desire to drink what is in the glass. Still, a sound characterization of this intuitive difference remains elusive. We do not want to be forced to say that in the Pixies case or the ginger ale case our desire is just for pleasure, or for something else on a relatively short list.

Donald Bruckner points the way to a more helpful account of the relevant distinction, which does not have the result that there are implausibly few intrinsic desires. Bruckner writes:

“Suppose I desire a hammer in order to pound a nail, in order to build a house, in order to stay warm in winter. Then each end mentioned is subordinate to the subsequent end as a means, and the only intrinsically desired end is staying warm in winter. Now suppose I desire to take a walk in the park for the sake of pleasure. I do not mean that walking in the park is a means to

pleasure; I mean that pleasure is a constituent part of walking in the park for me. So pleasure is subordinate as a constituent part of walking in the park. I desire walking in the park intrinsically, that is....”²⁹

I understand Bruckner as making the following point. The desires we want to rule out of independent prudential relevance are those where the object of the desire is *expressly conceived* as a mere means to some further end. This does seem to isolate a feature of the desires to drink what is in the glass and to turn on the CD player, which is not also a feature of the desires to drink the ginger ale and to hear the Pixies. Even granting that I would no longer desire to drink the ginger ale or to hear the Pixies if I learned that these things would not be pleasurable, I generally do not conceive of the objects of such desires as means to some generic feeling of pleasantness. If asked why I want to drink what is in the glass or turn on the CD player, I am likely to reply with some explanation like “because it is ginger ale, and I want ginger ale” or “because I want to hear the Pixies” rather than with any direct appeal to pleasure. This suggests that what I want is just that distinctive experience that attends the drinking or the hearing. The pleasure is, in Bruckner’s terms, a constituent part of the drinking of the ginger ale or the hearing of the Pixies, rather than an end to which these activities are a means. We have a real difference in hand now, and it does not stretch the meaning of the terms to refer to these two types of desires using the traditional labels *intrinsic* and *instrumental*, respectively.

If the distinction so understood seems too tenuous to rest the fate of the actualist approach on, the reader can always fall back on the first response. Each of these replies is also available to the actualist in the other purported problem cases involving desires based on imperfect information. What this suggests is that imposing a condition of full-information is not necessary, even in those cases where such a restriction is most plausible. Given the intuitive

²⁹ Bruckner (2016, p.20).

advantages of avoiding idealization, an actualist version of DS* should therefore be preferred.

Before moving on to consider substantive constraints, I have one further observation about idealization as a strategy. This is that the shift from actual to idealized desires has limited force against the scope problem for DS*. Consider again the different types of cases that gave rise to over-inclusiveness worries. In Chapter 2, we pointed to Caroline's desire for a can of cola, Sandrine's desire to smash icicles whenever she sees them, Josephine's desire that the number of atoms in the universe be prime, Parfit's desire that the stranger be cured, and Gary's desire to look after his mother. We can now add cases like ginger ale/champagne, where the desire is based on a misapprehension of the object. A condition of full-information may allow us to rule out Sandrine's and Josephine's desires (although this will depend on how they are specified), along with my desire for the clear liquid. But it does not help at all with the other cases we have mentioned. The scope problem for DS* thus remains nearly as pronounced, on the full-information view, as it is for the actualist. This provides further support for our conclusion that, in idealizing, one is forfeiting much of subjectivism's appeal in exchange for comparatively little gain.

3.6 - Against Substantive Constraints

In this section, I consider whether substantive constraints on the desires whose satisfaction is relevant to one's well-being are any more plausible. I discuss three possible restrictions of this sort. The first imposes an independent value condition on the object of the desire. The second requires that the desire be about *some aspect of one's own life*. The third counts as prudentially relevant only those desires that are about *one's whole life*. I argue that we should reject all three proposed constraints.

A constraint of the first kind is endorsed by some of my fellow hybrid theorists. These philosophers wish to give independent prudential weight to the satisfaction of desires, without allowing that *just anything* can be good for a person.³⁰ Their complaint, again, is that DS* is over-inclusive, here in allowing objects with no substantive value to be basic constituents of prudential value (under the right conditions). There are at least two ways one can formulate such a restriction. The first limits the things that can be basically good for someone to those that have attitude-independent value. Such a restriction sits uneasily with the insight that, in caring about a given thing, a person can confer prudential value upon it that it would not otherwise possess. Once it is granted that a person's desires are original sources of prudential value in cases where the object has *some amount (however small)* of attitude-independent value, it is hard to sustain the view that desiring something that lacks substantive value confers *no* prudential value upon it. A theory which incorporated this sort of restriction would, in any case, not be a *disjunctive* hybrid account (insofar as it accepts objective necessity).

The other way of formulating an independent value constraint is more moderate, and correspondingly more plausible. This would limit the states of affairs that can be basically good for someone to those that *either* possess some substantive value *or* are substantively neutral. Such a view serves to ensure only that I cannot make anything that is substantively *bad* good for me, simply by desiring it in the right way. A hybrid theory which incorporated this more modest version of the independent value restriction could still be a disjunctive account (since such a constraint is compatible with the rejection of objective necessity). And yet, I believe we should reject this version as well. If we hold that a person's desires can confer prudential value upon objects that are not substantively valuable, we should also hold that, provided the person has

³⁰ I believe the first intimation of this view is found in Parfit (1984 pp.501-2). See also Bykvist (2006a, pp. 265-8, 2006b, p.287, 2010a, pp.2-5, 2010b, pp. 50-4) and Lauinger (2012).

the right kind of desire for them, even things that would otherwise be disvaluable can be basic constituents of prudential value. I will discuss some issues raised by this implication of my view in Chapter 5.

The second type of substantive constraint, which accords prudential relevance only to desires that are *about one's own life*, is again designed to help in dealing with the scope problem. However, we saw already in Chapter 2 that it is not promising in this role. For it remains vague what the conditions are that a desire must satisfy if it is to be about one's own life. The most plausible ways of spelling out these conditions generate new problems with extensional adequacy (namely, they make the theory intuitively under-inclusive). An alternative way of articulating such a restriction, which we have not yet considered in this context, appeals to what *one exerts some effort to bring about*. However, given that we have already rejected the agency constraint for independent reasons, this strategy is no longer available. I conclude that, in the absence of some new, better characterization of the boundaries of a person's own life, we should not build this kind of constraint into DS*.

The third type of restriction on the content of the desires that matter for well-being takes its cue from the above proposal, but goes even further. We should not be surprised, then, to find that it is implausibly under-inclusive. Recall the distinction, drawn in the last chapter, between *local* and *global* desires. I there suggested that, provided this distinction is drawn in such a way as to pick out and privilege those desires that are at least somewhat enduring, stably held, and integrated into one's self-conception, it links up with a plausible version of the identification constraint. Further defense of the identification constraint, so understood, will be provided below. Here I wish to highlight that there is an alternative way of characterizing global desires (which is, indeed, the standard one in the current literature).

On this understanding, desires are classified as global or local according to their content. A person's global desires, then, are all and only those which are about either "some part of his life, considered as a whole, or about his whole life".³¹ If this is the way one picks out a desire as global, a view which takes only global desires to be prudentially relevant is massively under-inclusive. I may have very few such desires, and a more spontaneous person may have none. Not only does this restriction generate the same extensional problems as the previous one, it goes on to rule out most of those desires that intuitively *are* about my own life (as few of these will truly count as global), including many that will satisfy any plausible construal of the identification constraint.

The above are the most plausible candidates for substantive constraints on the desires the satisfaction of which counts towards one's well-being. They have proven as unappealing as their procedural counterparts. We are thus justified in moving forward with a version of DS* that places neither substantive nor procedural constraints on the desires it takes to be prudentially relevant.

3.7 - In Defense of the Identification Constraint

To this point, the discussion in this chapter has tended in the direction of a maximally inclusive version of actualism. This should be unsurprising, given the general methodological principle which we laid out in Chapter 1. However, there are two restrictions on which desires count for the purposes of DS* that I believe are justifiable, on grounds internal to the subjectivist insight itself. The first is the restriction to intrinsic desires. The second is the identification constraint.

³¹ Parfit (1984, p.498).

The task of DS*, as the subjectivist strand of DHT, is to build the subjectivist insight into our hybrid theory as best it can. Thus, whatever version of DS* we adopt should be such that the basic constituents of prudential value it introduces are precisely those things that one cares about, that most fundamentally *matter to one*. Insofar as we are here concerned with final, basic prudential value, restricting our focus to things that one cares about as ends, rather than as mere means to some other thing, makes good sense. Moreover, it is plausible to hold that some objects of desire (even where the desire is intrinsic) do not really matter to one, at least not in the sense that the subjectivist insight demands that we recognize. The identification constraint, like the restriction to intrinsic desires, can accordingly be supported by the central subjectivist impulse itself.³² The fact that adopting such a constraint helps deal with some of the cases that gave rise to the scope objection is a fortunate side effect.

The identification constraint differs from those discussed above in that it bears, not on the way a desire is formed or retained or on its propositional content, but on how enduring, stably held, and central to one's identity it is. Strictly speaking, there are three different conditions being imposed here. The first serves to distinguish mere *whims* or urges, such as Caroline's fleeting desire for a can of cola, from those desires that genuinely reflect what matters to a person. The endurance condition is not enough, however. I may have desires that are very long-lasting, but which are of low intensity and easily extinguishable, and so do not intuitively map on to what I really care about. Thus, we seemingly need a further condition to the effect that the desire must be a somewhat firmly engrained, stably held part of one's psychological economy.

³² Cf. Noggle (1999, p.314): "I suggest that in order for desire-satisfaction to *matter* to a person...those desires must reflect or at least be responsive to her deepest, most central concerns and projects" (italics added).

This answers to the fact that caring about something, in the sense the subjectivist is striving to capture, seems to require some degree of *investment in* or *commitment to* it. If I could be easily persuaded to give up the desire for x and to move on to something else, one might reasonably question whether x was something that ever mattered to me, in any way that the subjectivist should be concerned with. Finally, the person must *identify* with the desire, which is to say that she must see it as to some extent constitutive of the person she is. One of the primary ways in which we comprehend ourselves as individuals is through what we care about. It is therefore reasonable, if we are trying to zero in on what fundamentally matters to the person, to focus our attention on those desires that are most central to her own self-conception.

There is one more condition that we might plausibly require a desire to meet if its satisfaction is to have independent prudential relevance. I have in mind the counterfactual construal of the agency constraint mentioned briefly in the previous chapter. The view according to which satisfying one's desires is only prudentially valuable when one has played a causal role in bringing about the desired state of affairs is unattractive, for the reasons there discussed. However, to the extent that we mean to isolate just those desires that track what one really cares about, it is plausible that only those that one would be willing to invest at least some effort to satisfy (assuming ability and opportunity, and other things being equal) meet this condition. We can take this last as a rough measure of the *intensity* of the desire, which seems to be a dimension that the identification constraint should be striving to capture.

The reader may worry that, in placing even these constraints on DS*, I am opening myself up to the under-inclusiveness objection, which given the motivation for developing DHT would be counterproductive. This is a legitimate concern. However, I do not think that the actualist is giving up very much in moving from the unrestricted view to this moderately

restricted one, which differs only in restricting itself to intrinsic desires and building in an identification constraint. This is because, bearing in mind that the task of DS* is to capture the insight that in caring about something (sufficiently and in the right way) a person can confer prudential value upon it, it is difficult to find compelling counterexamples to our two proposed restrictions. Any such counterexample would need to invoke some desire that is merely instrumental, fleeting, unstable, unrelated to a person's self-conception, or that the person would be unwilling to expend any effort to satisfy, but that (intuitively speaking) is nonetheless genuinely reflective of what this person cares about. There may be intuitive cases of this sort, but none immediately present themselves.

Some *apparent* counterexamples are not genuine counterexamples at all. Take, for instance, the case in which I have a fleeting but powerful desire to drink a glass of water on a hot day. It is surely at least somewhat good for me to drink the water. But we need not accord independent relevance to the satisfaction of my desire to account for this fact. An attractive and sufficient explanation of why it is good for me to drink the water, in this case, is that this will be a rich source of sensory pleasure. DHT, as will be seen in the next chapter, plausibly includes pleasure on the list of attitude-independent prudential goods. The disjunctive hybrid theorist who endorses an identification constraint thus has available a hedonistic explanation in this and similar cases, even if a thoroughgoing desire-satisfactionist would not.³³

³³ Of course, if pleasure is itself best analyzed in terms of desire-satisfaction, as Heathwood (2007b) argues, such cases are in fact a counterexample to the identification constraint. That pleasure, however it is analyzed, is basically prudentially good is a datum that any theorist must accommodate. In the case that pleasure is a species of desire-satisfaction, then, we will have to modify our view. On this new understanding, the identification constraint is true *except* in the case of those desire-satisfactions that are identified with pleasures. I do not think this is implausible, for even if pleasures are desire-satisfactions of some kind, they are surely a special class that deserves special treatment. So even if the Heathwood view

Accepting these two relatively modest constraints, moreover, does considerable work in responding to the scope problem for DS*. Many of those cases that are intuitively most problematic involve desires that can plausibly be ruled out by the identification constraint. This is certainly true of Caroline's desire for a can of cola and Parfit's desire that the stranger be cured. It may also be true of Sandrine's desire to smash icicles whenever she sees them and Josephine's desire that the number of atoms in the universe be prime, depending on how these last two are specified. Admittedly, our constraints do not seem to help in the case of Gary and his mother. Preserving a clear distinction between my own good and that of others I care about thus remains a challenge for DS*, insofar as other-regarding desires will in many cases satisfy the identification constraint.

However, the disjunctive hybrid theorist who incorporates a version of DS* that includes these proposed restrictions is not without resources even here. A first point is that, when some other-regarding desire does satisfy the identification constraint, it becomes more plausible that an increase in the well-being of the other contributes to one's own well-being. How well the lives of one's children go, for instance, intuitively can impact how well one's own life goes. A view according to which it is only when an other-regarding desire satisfies the identification constraint that it is prudentially relevant can capture what is different about the desire for one's children's well-being and Parfit's desire for the stranger's cure in an intuitive fashion. It also makes conceptual space for self-sacrifice, without introducing substantive constraints.

Of course, intuitively we want to allow for the possibility of self-sacrifice even in cases like Gary's, where the desire on which one acts satisfies the identification constraint. This is

is right, DHT can remain more or less as is, except that the objective list will have one less entry and the identification constraint will admit of one kind of exception.

where the other strand of DHT can help. For once the disjunctive hybrid theorist adds that there are other, attitude-independent, factors that matter to how well off a person is, the threat of losing the intuitive distinction between self-interested and altruistic concerns does not arise, even in the case of Gary and his mother. It is evident that, in rejecting the fulfilling job as a human rights lawyer and taking the soulless corporate job, Gary is sacrificing things that are substantively prudentially valuable. For one thing, insofar as he is taking a job he hates, he will find his life less pleasurable for this choice. Moreover, Gary is also making himself far less likely to achieve one of his central life goals, which is to use his legal training to help others. Appealing to such considerations in this case is quite natural, and suffices to remove any lingering worry about the conceptual possibility of self-sacrifice on DHT.

It remains the case that in incorporating *any* restrictions into DS* we are leaving the theory to some extent vulnerable to the under-inclusiveness objection. No doubt some will be more concerned about proposed counterexamples to the identification constraint than I am. Allow me to stress again, then, that within the broader framework of DHT there is a fair amount of space to disagree about the details. The only two points which I consider non-negotiable are a) the choice of the object over the combo interpretation of DS*, and b) the rejection of the stronger kind of substantive value constraint. Otherwise, we can afford to be ecumenical.

3.8 – Desire-satisfaction and Time

In this section, I briefly consider a set of puzzles that arises for any theory which incorporates a desire-satisfactionist element. One important complaint about such theories is that they have unacceptable implications when considering the question of *when*--i.e., at what time-- a person is

benefited by desire-satisfaction.³⁴ I would be remiss if I concluded our discussion of DS* without addressing this issue. In what follows I sketch the view I favour, and explain why I favour it. If certain readers find this view difficult to accept, this should not stand in the way of their acceptance of DS* or of DHT. Those who are sympathetic to the theory in its general outline are free to plug in their preferred account of the time at which the satisfaction of a desire benefits a person.

To isolate the issue at hand, we will again work with an unrestricted actualist version of DS*. According to unrestricted actualism, for any x , if I desire x , x is a basic constituent of prudential value. Even this simplest version of DS* quickly runs into complications when we begin to reflect on what is good for me beyond the present moment. This is, first, because many of the desires that I currently have are for things that I will not desire in the future. It is thus quite possible that, although I presently desire x , I will lose that desire before the time at which x obtains. If so, is the obtaining of x at t_2 good for me *then* simply because I desire that it obtains *now* at t_1 , even though I will lose this desire somewhere along the way? The affirmative answer sounds strange. We might deal with such cases by holding that the desire for x must persist at the time that x obtains, if an instance of desire-satisfaction is to be prudentially relevant.³⁵ However, there are other cases that are more difficult to handle.

We also have desires that are about the past. For instance, I now strongly desire that I had kept up my skating lessons as a child. That desire, unfortunately, will never be satisfied. Yet there is no reason to deny that I can also have a present desire for some state of affairs that in fact

³⁴ See Bradley 2009 (pp.21-5), Sumner (1996, p.127)

³⁵ Heathwood (2005) adopts this requirement and calls it *concurrency*. Bradley (2016) and Sarch (2013), neither of whom are desire-satisfactionists, nonetheless argue that *if* one is a desire-satisfactionist one should adopt a concurrency requirement.

did obtain in the past. Suppose that I am an orphan who never knew my mother and father, but that I nonetheless desire that my parents loved me and regretted giving me up. If this desire meets the identification constraint, it is plausible that I am better off in the case where it is satisfied. However, it does not seem that we can locate the benefit to me at the time at which the desired state of affairs actually obtained. After all, it may be that I only developed this desire recently, and that previously I cared not a whit what my parents' attitude to me was. This suggests a troubling sort of backwards causation, wherein a mere change in my current attitude to past events can change how good or bad they were for me, precisely at the time at which they occurred.

Many also believe that one can be benefited or harmed by events that occur after one's death.³⁶ If one of my central desires throughout my life was to leave enough behind in my will for my children to live in comfort and security after my death, it seems to matter to how well my life went for me whether this is the case. Again, if I dedicated my career to preserving certain rare manuscripts, and these go up in flames shortly after I pass away, this intuitively makes some difference to the prudential value of my life. These examples suggest, first, that the view according to which desire-satisfaction can only benefit one if the desire persists at the time at which its object obtains is implausible. For, in cases of posthumous desire-satisfaction, not even the *desirer* persists, let alone the desire itself. Further, when combined with the view that desire-satisfaction benefits a person at precisely the time that the desired states of affairs obtains, these cases suggest that one can be benefited at a time at which one does not exist. Perhaps this is not a non-starter, but it is certainly strange, and we should try to avoid it if we can.

³⁶ See, for instance, Feinberg (1984, pp.82-94), Griffin (1986, p.23), Grover (1989) and Parfit (1984, p.495).

We can block the unintuitive results with respect to both past-regarding and posthumous desires if we hold that desire-satisfaction can make a person's life go better, without that benefit being assignable to any particular time.³⁷ This does not preclude us from holding that when desires change or are lost over time what is good for a person correspondingly changes. It simply denies that in every instance where desire-satisfaction makes a difference to how well one's life goes we can pinpoint a precise time at which it does so. The intuitively odd results in the above cases all rested on the assumption that we can and must do this. In denying this assumption we can avoid the unpalatable results. Now, some may find the cure in this case worse than the disease. Those who take this line must either provide another story which can avoid the unintuitive consequences, or bite the bullet. It is important to see, however, that rejecting the relevance of posthumous desire-satisfaction is not enough to let such people off the hook, insofar as there is still the (less-discussed) matter of past-regarding desires.

I want, finally, to highlight one point that is often overlooked. Discussions of posthumous harm and benefit have tended to see these phenomena as posing a challenge specifically for desire-satisfactionism (or theories like mine that include a desire-satisfactionist element). However, any view which takes *achievement* to be part of what makes a person's life go well for them also has the consequence that events after one's death matter to one's well-being. Thus, the

³⁷ John Broome offers the following analogy while defending the view that benefits and harms need not be assigned a specific temporal location (2008, p.51): "Suppose the text of a book is shortened before it is published: the last chapter is cut out. The book is shortened by six thousand words, but all the earlier chapters are left intact. Then six thousand words are cut from the book; yet no words are cut from any page in the book. This is so even though every word in the book appears on a particular page. Moreover, had the book been published in the longer, uncut version, every word in the longer book would have appeared on a particular page. The number of words cut from the book is determined by comparing the whole book as it is, with the whole book as it would have been had it not been shortened. It is not determined by comparing any particular page with that same page as it would have been".

objective list theorist who reserves a place for achievement on their list of prudential goods must also address the problem of posthumous harm and benefit (if it is a problem). The only theories of prudential value that can confidently claim to avoid this kind of complexity are those according to which something must enter directly into a person's experience, if it is to benefit or harm the person. However, the reasons for rejecting such an experience requirement are so compelling that whatever intuitive advantage is gained by thus ruling out posthumous benefits and harms is sure to be outweighed.³⁸

3.9 - Conclusion

We now have a much clearer idea of how the subjectivist strand of DHT can best be formulated. Once more, I leave it up to the reader whether they wish to depart from the above conclusions, in the direction of either more or less inclusiveness. The central points this chapter sought to establish were a) that the subjectivist strand of DHT should be a version of DS*, b) that it should be understood according to the object interpretation, and c) that it should allow a person's desires to confer prudential value even upon states of affairs that lack any attitude-independent value. If we agree on this much, then we agree on the chief points. The task of the next chapter is to further motivate and develop the second, objectivist, strand of DHT. This allows us to finally integrate the objective and subjective elements of the theory, to form a single, maximally inclusive, approach to prudential value.

³⁸ Nozick (1974, pp. 42-3) famously argues against such a requirement via the experience machine thought experiment. Although there are issues with Nozick's framing of the case, when suitably refined, as for instance by Fletcher (2016, pp.14-16), I believe it is as close to a knockdown objection to the experience requirement as one can hope for in this area of philosophy.

Chapter 4 - The Objectivist Insight

4.1 - Introduction

In the previous two chapters, we explored the question of how the subjectivist strand of DHT can be most plausibly developed. The task of the present chapter is to motivate and fill in the other, objectivist, side of our new hybrid theory. I argue that there is an objectivist insight that any satisfying theory of prudential value must respect, and which can only be adequately expressed by incorporating a robustly attitude-independent element into our account. I show, moreover, that going hybrid in this way allows us to answer some of the most compelling objections to desire-satisfactionism.

I consider several ways in which we might supplement DS*, so as to embrace the objectivist insight. One type of view retains a *desire constraint* to the effect that one must desire something if it is to be basically good for one, but adjusts the value of instances of desire-satisfaction according to the attitude-independent value of the thing desired. The result is a *non-disjunctive* hybrid theory with both objective and subjective elements. One important aim of this chapter is to establish that DHT, which rejects the desire constraint, should be preferred to this kind of hybrid view. Those who accept our arguments against the *desire* constraint may yet be tempted to include an *enjoyment constraint*, to the effect that a person must enjoy or take pleasure in a substantively valuable object if it is to be a basic constituent of prudential value. When combined with DS*, the result is a doubly hybridized disjunctive theory, according to which there are two fundamentally distinct sources of prudential value, desire-satisfaction and the enjoyment of objects with attitude-independent value. I argue that we should also reject the enjoyment constraint. The disjunctive hybrid theory defended here is thus committed to the

staunchly objectivist claim that, as Richard Arneson has aptly put it, “the goods in an individual’s life need not be tinged with enjoyment nor colored by desire”.¹

We are left to wonder what, if anything, explains why certain things possess such attitude-independent prudential value. One route is to borrow the perfectionist’s explanatory story. However, there are a litany of convincing objections to perfectionism, some of which extend to any theory that is even partially perfectionist. Although these criticisms may not be fatal, it is worth exploring whether a non-perfectionist, objective list approach can better meet our needs.

There are at least two distinct ways of understanding the structure of such accounts. We may see the entries on the objective list as possessing attitude-independent prudential value in a primitive sense that does not admit of further explication. Alternatively, we might understand the theory to be appealing to some more fundamental evaluative notion. The objective element of prudential value may then be explained by the person’s standing in the right relation to things that possess this other (not itself prudential) kind of value. If we take the more basic value property to be goodness *simpliciter*, in accord with what we have called the locative account, this view emerges as a clear explanatory rival to perfectionism. A seeming advantage of the locative account is that it possesses greater explanatory depth than the primitivist approach. The primitivist view, however, has the notable advantage of avoiding any commitment to the existence of a controversial property like goodness *simpliciter*. I will briefly explain why I

¹ Arneson (1999, p.142). Arneson continues: “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” (italics my own). Despite the misleading suggestion that this is only a restatement of the claim we quoted above, it is quite possible to accept that claim while denying both (1) and (2). For the above-quoted claim bears only on the *necessity* of desire or enjoyment, not on their *sufficiency*. DHT, as defended here, does in fact hold that it is *sufficient* for something to qualify as intrinsically enhancing an individual’s well-being that it be desired or enjoyed. It is not, however, *necessary*.

favour the locative account, but I leave it open to those attracted to DHT to take a different approach to the attitude-independent prudential goods if they are so inclined.

4.2 - The Disjunctive Hybrid Theorist's Challenge

To begin, we should note something striking about the dialectical position we have found ourselves in. It is common for defenders of objective theories to make their case, at least in part, by arguing that it is only through the introduction of attitude-independent values that we can avoid adopting an overly permissive view of what is good for people. This style of argument is found in the work of, among others, Richard Arneson, Brad Hooker, Guy Fletcher and Richard Kraut.² Fletcher puts the point this way:

“[t]he mistake that the desire-fulfilment theory makes is that of allowing one's desires and attitudes to play an *unrestricted* explanatory role, one that goes beyond their being elements of well-being enhancers. The theory does this by treating our desiring something as being *sufficient* to *make* something good for us...The theory claims that things are good for us *because* we desire them. It is *this* feature of the desire-fulfilment view that gives rise to the 'scope problem' for these theories – namely that too many things come out as good for us.”³

The basic claim here is that DS* is fundamentally untenable, because over-inclusive. And the besetting sin of the theory, according to Fletcher, is that it is too laissez-faire in what it will allow to count as a basic constituent of a person's well-being. Fletcher's suggestion, moreover, is that this problem arises *precisely because* DS* allows a person's pro-attitudes to confer value on objects that lack attitude-independent value. If Fletcher is correct that it is this latter commitment that gives rise to the scope problem, then the most straightforward way to deal with this problem is to impose a substantive value constraint, such that nothing that does not possess some attitude-independent value can be a basic constituent of prudential value. This last, of course, is just the

² See Arneson (1999, 124-5), Hooker (2015, p.17), Fletcher (2013, p.216) and Kraut (1994, p.40-2).

³ Fletcher (2013, p.216).

claim that we have been calling *objective necessity*.

As we have seen, one can accept objective necessity while holding that prudential value also has a subjective element. However, as we argued in the last chapter, the imposition of an attitude-independent value constraint appears to forfeit what is most appealing in subjectivism. I have been arguing throughout that a commitment to the value-conferring power of a person's desires, far from a weakness in a theory of prudential value, is essential if such a theory is to preserve the subjectivist insight. If so, our theory of prudential value had best not incorporate any claim of objective necessity. It follows, then, that our argument for supplementing DS* with a commitment to attitude-independent prudential goods must take a quite different form from that rehearsed above.

In motivating the objectivist strand of DHT, we are not relying on the charge that subjectivism succumbs to the over-inclusiveness objection, so that its scope must somehow be reined in via an appeal to attitude-independent prudential goods. Although the theory does introduce substantive goods, this does not here serve to make the subjectivist side *less inclusive*, but instead makes the theory as a whole *more inclusive*. DHT states that, alongside those things that a person confers prudential value upon by caring about them (sufficiently and in the right way), are other things that are prudentially valuable regardless of the person's attitude to them. These latter are the attitude-independent (or substantive, or objective) prudential goods. DHT thus recognizes two distinct sources of prudential value, one attitude-independent (objective) and one attitude-dependent (subjective), and holds that *either* is sufficient to make something basically good for a person. That is, it is a hybrid that rejects both objective and subjective necessity.

To show that we should introduce attitude-independent prudential values into our theory *in just this way*, what we must show is that, although DS* expresses part of the truth about prudential value, on its own it is fated to be either *extensionally inadequate*, *explanatorily inadequate*, or both. It is to this task that I now turn. I will argue that there are considerations that strongly favour the inclusion of an objective element in our theory of prudential value, and which do not rely on the objection that subjectivism is over-inclusive. Of course, even if this point is granted, that does not yet constitute support for DHT, specifically. The argument will thus proceed in steps. First, I show that theories that exclude attitude-independent values fail to respect certain widely shared intuitions about well-being (that is, they offer implausible answers to both the explanatory and the enumerative questions in certain cases). Next, I show that hybrid theories that appeal to attitude-independent values but embrace subjective necessity (either in the form of a desire constraint or an enjoyment constraint) are extensionally inadequate, because under-inclusive. Coupled with our previous rejection of objective necessity, this points us towards a hybrid account that accepts neither objective nor subjective necessity, that is, towards the theory we are calling DHT.

4.3 - Attitude-Independent Values, Altruistic Desires, and Adaptive Preferences

In making the case for the inclusion of an objectivist strand in our theory, we will begin by picking up on a point made in the last chapter (section 3.7). We noted there that appealing to attitude-independent prudential goods does some work in dealing with the scope problem for DS*, even absent a commitment to objective necessity. Although the identification constraint allowed us to rule out of prudential relevance several of the desires that gave rise to over-inclusiveness worries, there remained cases like that of Gary. Gary's desire for his mother's last

years to be as bearable as possible surely satisfies the identification constraint. Nonetheless, in acting on this desire Gary is intuitively sacrificing his own well-being for the sake of his mother's, and a theory of prudential value should be able to make sense of this judgment. One strategy is to advert to other desires Gary possesses, which will be frustrated if he turns down the job offer so he can care for his mother.⁴ But this does not wholly do away with the problem, as the objector can still respond that, insofar as Gary decides to stay with his mother, the desire for her good must have counted for more (at least with him) than all these other desires combined. But if this is so, there is at least a plausible case to be made that this desire should count for more with the theorist as well. However, if we supplement DS* with a commitment to attitude-independent prudential goods, there is room to say that *even if* Gary's life contains more *desire-satisfaction related* prudential value in the case where he stays home with his mother, his acting to secure her happiness is a genuine instance of self-sacrifice. This is just because, in so doing, he is sacrificing various other prudential goods, for instance his own enjoyment of his life and the achievement of important career goals. Thus, if we think it important to draw a clear line between Gary's well-being and that of anyone else (including those he most cares about), this provides some initial impetus for going hybrid.

Another powerful objection to desire-satisfactionism, which we have yet to mention, is based on the observation that, in the world as it stands, many people's desires are formed and/or modified in response to straitened or oppressive circumstances. This has been called the *problem*

⁴ See Heathwood (2011). Heathwood's argument is admittedly quite compelling. If it turns out that DS* can deal satisfactorily with self-sacrifice on its own, this does little damage to our broader argument. We can sufficiently motivate the introduction of attitude-independent prudential values without relying on this point. I discuss it here only because various people do worry about this purported problem for DS*, and it is therefore worth stressing that, if it is a problem, it is not one for our theory.

of *adaptive preferences*, and it poses a formidable challenge to the desire-satisfactionist.⁵ It is worth noting that, even if we had not already rejected idealization, moving from an actualist version of DS* to a full-information or ideal advisor view does not do away with this problem. At least in many cases, it is not *lack of knowledge* about the features of one's situation that gives rise to adaptive preferences, but *such knowledge itself*. It may be eminently reasonable to desire only those things that one has some chance of obtaining. If one's desires are formed or modified based on a clear-eyed perception of what one can realistically expect, we lack any grounds for criticizing them on an idealized, any more than on an actualist, view. And yet, if we allow the satisfaction of desires that are *adjusted down* in this way to wholly determine a person's level of well-being, we seem forced to say that members of the most disadvantaged and oppressed groups, provided they have adapted their desires in response to these bleak conditions, are no less well-off than the most privileged among us. What is more, it appears that on a thoroughgoing desire-satisfactionist approach, anyone could in principle make her life go better simply by flicking a switch that would cause her to have fewer and easier to satisfy desires. Such implications are profoundly unintuitive, even offensive.^{6 7}

⁵ For more detailed discussion of this problem see Elster (1982), Nussbaum (2001), Qizilbash (2006), and Sen (1987). It is worth noting that both Nussbaum and Sen present this objection while arguing for the *capabilities approach*. Understood as a theory of prudential value, the capabilities approach has affinities with both perfectionism and objective list accounts. However, capabilities theorists often seem to be concerned more to give an account of the public indicators or markers of well-being, rather than of the basic constituents of prudential value themselves. Because of this complication, I have elected to set these approaches aside in what follows.

⁶ Baber (2010) argues that a thoroughgoing DS* can deliver intuitively plausible verdicts in such cases, so long as it considers, not only a person's actual desires, but also desires that the person has in *nearby possible worlds*. I cannot provide a full response to Baber's proposal here, but will only reiterate a point I made in the previous chapter, which is that any such move away from actualism comes at a significant cost.

⁷ Barnes (2009) convincingly argues, with particular focus on the desires of those with physical disabilities, that objectivists (or hybrid theorists like ourselves) must be very careful about dismissing actual people's stated preferences as mere products of distorting adaptation. But note that, insofar as DHT accords independent prudential relevance to the satisfaction of all intrinsic desires that satisfy the

The challenge from adaptive preferences loses a fair bit of its bite when DS* is presented as only one strand of a hybrid theory that recognizes various attitude-independent prudential goods. On any such hybrid account, how well off a person is can no longer simply be equated with the extent to which her desires are satisfied, even if this is one element that goes toward determining her well-being level. We must now factor in the presence or absence of attitude-independent prudential goods as well. Provided we can generate a plausible list of such goods (more on this later, but at a minimum I believe such a list will include virtue, knowledge, achievement, interpersonal bonds such as friendship and familial or romantic love, and autonomy) we should also be able to deliver plausible comparative assessments of individuals' well-being.

4.4 Attitude-Independent Values and Common-Sense

There is a more general point that inveighs in favour of supplementing DS* with a commitment to attitude-independent prudential values. This is that, as discussed in Chapter 1, people's pre-theoretical judgments about well-being apparently involve a commitment to a plurality of substantive goods. Such appeals to 'common-sense' can of course only take us so far. Still, in constructing a philosophical theory of prudential value we must give some weight to people's intuitive judgments about their own well-being and (we have argued even more importantly) that of those they care about. Otherwise we do not even know where to start. Moreover, any theory we did generate would not be answerable to anything outside of itself. The upshot is that we cannot afford to simply ignore the deliverances of common-sense. And the folk theory of well-

identification constraint, whether or not they are adaptive, there is no need for it to be in the business of judging which are problematically adaptive and which are not. The point here is just that some are, and that this supports the inclusion of attitude-independent goods.

being, to the extent that there is one, seems to be (at least partially) objectivist with respect to both enumeration and explanation.⁸

As we argued in Chapter 1, the folk theory comes out most clearly when we ask ourselves what the person on the street would judge to be good for, and desire for the sake of, someone whom they love and care about, for instance their own child. This lies behind the general methodological principle we there called CP, which states that: If those who *love* and *care most* about person P believe that x is good for P (and desire x for P's sake), this constitutes solid *prima facie* evidence that x is in fact good for P. If this principle is plausible, as I believe it is, then it is a matter of great import what the content of these everyday beliefs about (and desires for) the well-being of our loved ones is. Again, I don't doubt that this will depend to an extent on the people involved. Still, I am confident that it will not generally be exhausted by a belief that it would be good for the loved one if their own desires (or some subset of them) were satisfied, and a subsequent desire that this be the case. This is not to deny that we want those people we care about to have what they themselves want, or that we take this to be good for them. But we also want other things for them, and take other things to be good for them. We surely want them to enjoy their lives, which suggests that at a minimum we also take pleasure to have prudential value. This might point us towards hedonism rather than a pluralistic objective list. But we also want the lives of those we care about to instantiate other things that we take to be in themselves valuable, such as certain interpersonal bonds (friendship, romantic love, familial love), virtue, knowledge, achievement and autonomy. Many of us, at least, would see a life that was very high in pleasure but that lacked these other things as in some way bereft. Likewise, a life that ranked very high on the scale of desire-satisfaction but very low in all these other areas (if we can even

⁸ See Rice (2013) for a defense of the objective list theory which makes much of this point.

imagine such a life for a human being) seems a sadly limited one. This is not to say that such lives could not be all things considered good for the person living them, in that they would contain more prudential value than disvalue. Still, if the attitude-independent prudential goods of friendship, love, virtue, important knowledge, achievement, and autonomy are not instantiated in a person's life, this constitutes an important deficit. If we now add pleasure as the final entry on this list (on the assumption that it cannot be reduced to desire-satisfaction), I believe we have a tolerably complete list of substantive prudential goods, and moreover one which takes its cue from our common-sense pluralism about well-being.

There are various responses that might be made to the above line of argument. It is just possible that our pre-theoretic intuitions about well-being are hopelessly confused and/or contradictory. If so, the task of the theorist of prudential value is, not to vindicate these intuitions (which may not be possible), but rather to separate the wheat from the chaff of common-sense.⁹ However, we should not assume in advance that common-sense pluralism is ineradicably confused. Rather, we should first do the work of constructing a coherent and plausible theory that answers as well as we can make it to our pre-theoretic intuitions (these being the best data we have to go on), before resigning ourselves to the fact that this cannot be done.

It is also possible that our apparent pluralism is only skin-deep. It may be that, in thinking about what is good for those they care about, people are failing to keep in mind the distinction between final and instrumental prudential values. This is not a distinction that forms part of our everyday conceptual apparatus, so it should not surprise us if non-philosophers tend to neglect it.¹⁰ Perhaps, then, it is just because friendship, love, knowledge, virtue, achievement, and autonomy are rich sources of pleasure for human beings that common-sense judges them all to

⁹ See Kraut (2007, p.2) for something like this suggestion.

¹⁰ This possibility is discussed in Fletcher (2016, p.54).

be good. If this were the case, then the intuitive data would ultimately support hedonism rather than a pluralistic objective theory. It might also be pointed out (and this is surely an apt observation) that the entries on the above list are things that creatures of our sort tend to desire. But if so, we might suppose that in providing such an enumeration of the things that we want for those whose well-being we are invested in, we are simply ticking off those things that we imagine would satisfy their most important desires. There is, admittedly, no way to conclusively establish that either of these reductive stories is false. However, there is also no reason to assume that one of them must be true. And as a matter of methodology, it behooves us to take people's judgments at face value, absent independent reasons not to. At least, this strikes me as the more respectful route.

To this last reply the skeptic about attitude-independent prudential goods may respond as follows. We do have *some evidence* that the pluralistic judgments of common-sense are not what they seem. This stems from the fact that, if we imagine ourselves in the same position as before, but stipulate that our friend does not desire any of the things on the purported objective list, our confidence that having these things makes her life go better seems to waver, if it does not entirely disappear. A defender of hedonism can similarly point out that, if we stipulate that our friend will not derive any pleasure from the entries on the list, it is much more plausible to deny that they are beneficial to her.

As we have seen, one can defend an approach to prudential value that has an objective element, while also granting that one must have some positive orientation toward the attitude-independent goods if they are to benefit one. This is precisely what those hybrid views which incorporate subjective necessity do. Thus the above observations (even if apt) do not help us to decide between a thoroughgoing version of DS* or hedonism, and this kind of hybrid view. The

case in favour of the hybrid approach might then be buttressed by appealing to the previously mentioned fact that lives that are high in pleasure and desire-satisfaction but lacking in the other proposed goods tend to be ranked rather low by common-sense.

I am not sure what common-sense really tells us about the value that friendship, virtue, knowledge, achievement, and autonomy would possess if they were neither desired nor enjoyed. The fact that our judgment that such things are good for a person becomes less assured when we imagine that the person is wholly indifferent to them does not show that we ascribe no value to these things in such cases. It may be that we simply find it hard to believe that a human being could truly possess such evident goods without responding positively towards them. Moreover, when it comes to at least some of these items (friendship and achievement, for instance), a case can be made that they *constitutively involve* certain pro-attitudes. We may not be assuming that a loved one must have some second-order pro-attitude, such as a desire for friendship, for a given friendship to be good for them. We may just be implicitly denying that anyone can genuinely experience friendship without being in some sense positively engaged with it.¹¹ The upshot is that our common-sense judgments do not give the lie to DHT, but they also do not favour it over other hybrid theories. The intuitive data does lend support to the idea that *some kind of* hybrid account is needed, so we should not consider this discussion of the folk theory of prudential value wasted. Still, we have yet to vindicate the way in which DHT, in particular, goes about incorporating this objectivist insight. What we must now show is that a theory which combines objective and subjective elements, while denying subjective necessity, should be preferred over those hybrid views that accept subjective necessity.

¹¹ Fletcher (2013 and 2016) has forcefully pressed this point. He offers a novel type of objective list approach, which accepts as a constraint on the objective goods it recognizes that they must be in this way pro-attitude-involving. Although I agree with much of what Fletcher says, I ultimately cannot endorse such a constraint, for reasons I discuss below.

There are two distinct questions that we must be careful not to run together. The first is, whether an item on the objective list must be *desired* if it is to count towards someone's good. The second is, whether the person must *enjoy or take pleasure in* a substantively valuable thing if it is to contribute to their well-being. Those that answer the first question in the affirmative are endorsing what we will call the *desire constraint*. Those that answer 'yes' to the second query accept what we will call the *enjoyment constraint*. Both are ways of accepting subjective necessity. They have very different implications, however.

One could accept the enjoyment constraint while still defending *a kind of* disjunctive hybrid theory, consisting of DS* and another strand that incorporates objective elements. The difference between such a view and DHT, as it is being developed in these pages, is that the latter strand is *itself* hybridized by means of a requirement that the attitude-independent goods must also be enjoyed. This theory, then, is a hybrid twice over.¹² Although I do not favour the enjoyment constraint, for the reasons explained below, it is nonetheless worth emphasizing that such a restriction can be integrated into a hybrid account with a disjunctive structure, albeit not the version of DHT defended here. If the reader is prepared to embrace any theory of prudential value that takes this novel form, I consider that a victory for my approach.

On the other hand, the desire constraint is not in this way reconcilable with the broader disjunctive hybrid framework. One can combine such a constraint with a commitment to attitude-independent prudential values in two ways. The first, taking seriously the arguments of the previous chapters, acknowledges that our desires can confer value upon otherwise valueless (or even bad) objects. However, it adds that desire-satisfaction is *even more valuable* when the object of one's desire is a substantive prudential good. The attitude-independent goodness here

¹² One can understand such a theory as a hybrid of DS* and the view, defended by Adams (2002) and Kagan (2009), that well-being consists in the enjoyment of the excellent.

acts as a kind of supercharger, lavishing bonus value upon states of affairs that would in any case have some prudential value *qua* desired. The resulting hybrid theory denies objective necessity, and to this extent is more appealing than joint necessity hybrids. A theory of this sort could still be interestingly novel, and might constitute a move in the direction of the sort of inclusive approach that we are recommending. Still, just insofar as it accepts the desire constraint, it is implausible. The second way of combining the desire constraint with an objectivist element is, of course, to adopt a joint necessity hybrid theory that includes a substantive value constraint. As we argued above, a constraint of the latter kind is incompatible with the subjectivist insight and should accordingly be rejected.

4.5 Against the Desire Constraint: The Case of Jessica

I will now argue that we should reject both versions of subjective necessity. I begin in this section by considering the desire constraint, which is both more clearly incompatible with DHT and less independently plausible. The best way to argue this point will be to look at specific instances of purported attitude-independent prudential goods, and see whether we really do think that these things have *no value at all* where the person does not desire them. What such an investigation reveals is that that *any theory which accepts the desire constraint* is bound to be extensionally inadequate, because under-inclusive.¹³ I want the reader, first, to recognize how extreme the desire constraint actually is. It entails, not just that the prudential value of the entries on the objective list is *enhanced* when they are desired, but that something *must* be the object of one of my desires if it is to contribute (basically) to my well-being *at all*. The hybrid theorist

¹³ Trivially, this will include DS* considered as a self-standing theory, and so the arguments that follow are also further arguments against a thoroughgoing desire-satisfactionist approach.

with whom we are arguing needs to insist on this point, on pain of giving up the game to our disjunctive hybrid approach.

Bearing this in mind, let us start by considering the case of knowledge. My claim is that at least some sorts of knowledge are basically prudentially valuable, and that this is so whether or not the knowledge is desired. To see why this is plausible, consider the case of Jessica. Jessica was raised in a fundamentalist Southern Baptist household. Homeschooled until the age of 18, she never received an adequate scientific education, and entered college quite convinced that the Earth and its denizens were created, roughly as is, by God six thousand years ago. It is now the end of Jessica's first year on campus, and she knows her previous belief to be false. Although Jessica values knowledge in the abstract, this is knowledge that she never sought and now fervently wishes she had never acquired, given the crisis of faith she is presently undergoing.

My own sense is that, even though Jessica did not desire this kind of knowledge in advance and is negatively disposed to it now, it is, at the very least, *pro tanto* good for her to know this important scientific truth.¹⁴ I hope the reader shares this intuitive response to Jessica's case. I can foresee several objections to it. Let me take them in turn.

First, the knowledge that creationism is false may have significant *instrumental* value for Jessica, insofar as remaining committed to such a widely-discredited view is liable to cause others to take her less seriously. We must, accordingly, take care that our judgment that Jessica is benefited by the knowledge does not rest on a confusion between final and instrumental value.

¹⁴ The case of Jessica also constitutes another counterexample to the principle that in Chapter 1 we called First Person Veto (FPV). FPV, recall, says that if person P (or an idealized version thereof) would not assent to the judgment that state of affairs x is basically good for P, then x cannot in fact be good for P. Jessica would not plausibly assent to the judgment that her new knowledge is good for her in the case described. If we nonetheless think that this knowledge is prudentially valuable, this is reason to reject FPV.

For of course even DS*, considered as a stand-alone view, can accord *instrumental* prudential value to all sorts of things one does not desire.

It is unlikely that such a confusion stands behind the intuitive verdict in this case, however. We can add to the example the detail that Jessica has always planned, and still plans, to return to her former creationist milieu and teach Sunday school when she finishes college. Given that this is her life plan, the scientific knowledge she possesses is likely to cause only conflict with those closest to her, as well as continued internal discomfort. Here we are imagining that the things Jessica most strongly, stably, and enduringly desires are a) to maintain harmonious relationships with her friends and family back home, and b) to be free from her own nagging doubts about her faith, and that these desires are central to her self-conception. The knowledge that creationism is a sham thus seems bound to thwart the satisfaction of the very desires that are most significant to Jessica's well-being, from the point of view of DS*. Here, Jessica's knowledge is clearly not *instrumentally* valuable for her (if anything it is *instrumentally disvaluable*). If we still hold that Jessica's knowledge is prudentially valuable in such a case, we must be according it final prudential value. And indeed, it does seem that knowing this deep truth about the world is to some extent good for Jessica even here. Plausibly it is not good for her all things considered. But remember that to undermine the desire constraint we need only establish that there is some *pro tanto* prudential value in the possession of such knowledge, even where it is not desired. Keeping this last point in mind, I suspect that most readers will share my judgment. Jessica's case thus provides intuitive support for the claim that knowledge is an attitude-independent prudential good.

There is a response that can be made on behalf of the defender of the desire constraint (or any other defender of the view that knowledge has only instrumental value). It might be claimed

that focusing in on an exceptional case like Jessica's, and simply stipulating that the knowledge is not instrumentally good for her, generates unreliable judgments. It is possible that our intuitive response to the above case is merely an artifact of our (usually reliable) belief that knowledge is useful for getting whatever it is that a person desires. When presented with a purported exception like that of Jessica, we may be unable to really convince ourselves that the case is as described. If so, despite seeming to ascribe final value to the knowledge in Jessica's case, we may instead be implicitly reiterating our general commitment to knowledge's instrumental value.

Although we cannot entirely rule out this possibility, I do not think it should greatly concern us. As a general point of methodology, it is good practice to take people's intuitive judgments about individual cases at face value, absent some independent reason not to do so. This does not require us to deny that folk intuitions about well-being at times rest on confusions, and so do not really reveal what they seem to, or that they are sometimes simply mistaken. It is nonetheless common ground amongst most philosophers working in this field that intuitions about particular cases are an important piece of data that we must work with in constructing a theory of prudential value. If nothing else, they are invaluable tools for arguing against proposed theories.

If our opponent has decided that such intuitions ought to be disregarded entirely, they will have thereby rendered whatever theory they favour, and every other theory of prudential value (as far as they are concerned) immune to case-based counterexamples. This has the look of a pyrrhic victory. If they are not counselling us to simply ignore intuitions about cases, our opponent has two moves available. First, they may reject the specific methodological principle suggested above. However, I do not think they should find this option attractive, especially if they are subjectivists. After all, one of the purported advantages of subjective theories is that

they are *non-paternalistic*, in that each of us is taken to have a distinctive kind of authority over our own good. Yet there is also something objectionably paternalistic in insisting that those who would aver that Jessica's knowledge is good for her, even in the above case, must somehow be confused about what they believe (whether because of an illicit slide from a general to a particular claim, or for some other reason). This is quite a different sort of paternalism from that which subjectivists accuse their opponents of, but it looks like paternalism just the same. If any part of the motivation for one's view is an anti-paternalist stance, this therefore seems an unpalatable move.

If the general methodological point is deemed appealing even by the subjectivist, they will need to provide specific reasons for thinking that the judgment that Jessica's knowledge is valuable is confused, or otherwise not what it seems. But if we have been sufficiently clear in our stipulation that Jessica's knowledge is not in the above case instrumentally beneficial, and we nevertheless judge that it is good for Jessica to know the truth about creationism, I do not know what these reasons could be. The only thing objectionable about such a verdict (from the perspective of the subjectivist) is that, if correct, it conflicts with their theory. Surely the more principled approach is to take people's common-sense judgments in cases like this seriously. If we do so, and if I am right in supposing that my intuitive judgment in Jessica's case is the commonsensical one, we now have compelling *prima facie* evidence that knowledge (at least sometimes) has basic prudential value, even in the absence of a desire for it.

It is no doubt true that in most cases where knowledge is prudentially valuable it is either desired intrinsically, or conducive to the satisfaction of other important desires. As to the first point, if knowledge is indeed a substantive good, we should not be surprised to find that most of us recognize its value and therefore quite sensibly desire it. It is central to the view defended here

that human beings, as well as being *conferrers of prudential value*, are also quite adept at *recognizing the presence of attitude-independent value*. When we desire knowledge, it is reasonable to hold that in this case *the desire follows the value*, and not the other way around. That said, if it turns out that knowledge reliably helps us to acquire whatever it is that we most want, this does present a kind of puzzle for the theorist who also accords it final, attitude-independent prudential value. At least, such an apparent coincidence calls out for explanation.

We must be careful, however, not to just take for granted the instrumental value of knowledge. Jessica's case may not, in fact, be all that unusual. Various psychological studies have suggested that people with falsely inflated beliefs about their own characteristics and abilities tend to be happier and more successful than people who are scrupulously realistic in their estimations of themselves and others.¹⁵ We cannot rely too much on such (admittedly controversial) findings. I only wish to note that I, at least, do not find them all that surprising. False beliefs can, intuitively, be most useful in certain situations. If instances where knowledge (particularly self-knowledge) is not only not instrumentally beneficial, but instrumentally harmful, are at all common, there is no mysterious coincidence to account for. Moreover, knowledge of oneself and one's abilities is intuitively a *pro tanto* prudential good, even if it turns out to have harmful consequences as a matter of course. This lends additional support to the view that the prudential value of knowledge is (at least sometimes) final rather than instrumental.

It may be protested that in our response to Jessica's case we are conflating, not different kinds of prudential value, but prudential value and *moral or perfectionist value*. We may think that Jessica has an obligation to educate herself, and that to the extent that she does this it makes her life *morally* better. Moreover, we may be concerned about the impact of her previous false beliefs on other people (for instance, through their influence on her voting patterns), and be

¹⁵ See for instance Taylor (1989).

smuggling in such considerations, which seem irrelevant to how well Jessica's life is going *for her*. Finally, we may be confusing how good Jessica's life is *for her* with how good it is *as an instance of a human life*. These are all genuine confusions that we must be wary of. I am particularly sympathetic to the last concern, and it is one that I will raise myself later in this chapter. But none of these stories plausibly accounts for our judgment in the case of Jessica. Or, at least, they are not the whole story. Even when we are careful to cordon off these other factors, there is still some respect in which it seems clearly better *for Jessica* to have this new scientific knowledge.

A last question to consider is whether the intuitive response to Jessica's case is best explained by her new knowledge having final prudential value, or by her previous false belief having final prudential *disvalue*. We have so far been silent on the question of what the basic prudential *bads* are. But it could be the case that having false beliefs (especially about important scientific matters) is a substantive prudential bad, even if knowledge is not a substantive good. This would be an interesting (and perhaps a surprising) disanalogy, but it is not one we can rule out in advance. I will return to the question of what the negative side of a disjunctive hybrid approach should look like in the next chapter. For now, it is enough to note that the view that knowledge about the fundamental nature of the world has *no value* in the absence of a desire for this knowledge becomes highly implausible, once it is granted that false beliefs about the same things have substantive prudential disvalue.

Jessica's case provides us with sufficient reason to reject a desire constraint on the value of knowledge. In the next section I turn to consider the other attitude-independent goods.

4.6 Further Arguments Against the Desire Constraint

Knowledge, of course, is only one among many proposed substantive goods, and it is not one that every objectivist would wish to include.¹⁶ I began with it because it is here that we have perhaps the clearest case of an attitude-independent prudential good, among the most plausible candidates for the objective list. If we have made a convincing case that knowledge is basically prudentially valuable, whether or not it is desired, we have thus gone a good part of the way towards establishing our broader conclusion.

Recall, we are proposing to fill out the objective list with the following items: certain interpersonal bonds (friendship, romantic and familial love), virtue, achievement, autonomy and pleasure. As Guy Fletcher has usefully highlighted, at least some of these goods appear to involve some positive affective/attitudinal orientation as a part of their very nature.¹⁷ For instance, genuine friendship or love presumably cannot exist in the absence of certain pro-attitudes directed at one's friend or lover. Achieving a goal, at a minimum, requires that one desires the state of affairs one brings about. And pleasure surely cannot leave the person who feels it completely cold. Virtue and autonomy seem to have a closer affinity with knowledge, as I will discuss below.

It is important to see that one can grant that (at least some of) the entries on the objective list are constitutively attitude-involving, without giving up on the idea that they are (in an important sense) attitude-independent. For none of what was said above suggests that, for an item on the proposed list to be good for one, one must have some pro-attitude *towards that very good*. That is to say, the object of one's pro-attitude need not be the purported good itself, even if

¹⁶ Among recent objective list theorists, Rice (2013, pp. 14-5) and Hooker (2015, pp.22-3) include knowledge on the list but Fletcher (2013, pp. 214-6) does not. Perfectionists about well-being have tended to see at least some kinds of knowledge as basically prudentially valuable. Kraut (2007) is the most prominent recent example.

¹⁷ Fletcher (2013, pp. 216-7)

the good itself involves the having of certain pro-attitudes.¹⁸ While friendship, achievement, and pleasure all plausibly have pro-attitudes built in to them, it does not at all follow that one *confers value* upon these things by means of any pro-attitude. Indeed, the most plausible position is that, even if one has a higher-order *con*-attitude towards them, such things remain a *pro tanto* benefit to one.

Consider the following case. Jill, like Jessica, was raised in a rigid fundamentalist household. She has been led to believe that romantic relationships between women are sinful. Despite her desire to live up to the moral principles which have been firmly inculcated in her and in which she still believes, and despite making prolonged efforts to repress her feelings, she falls in love with Jacqueline. Jill never gives up the belief that she is doing something morally wrong in being with Jacqueline. Nor does she ever lose the desire to not be in love with her (if she could take an anti-love potion she would immediately do so). Still, in every other respect this is a highly rewarding, enjoyable, and mutually supportive romantic relationship. Jill simply always has a powerful higher-order desire *not to be in precisely this sort of relationship*.¹⁹

It is implausible to hold that the mere fact that Jill desires not to be in this relationship cancels out all the prudential value that the relationship would otherwise possess. There seems to be something inherently worthwhile about such a relationship, something that does not have to wait on any higher order subjective sanction to be good for a person. I would be surprised to find that this is not most people's read on this case. I suspect that some will be suspicious of this example precisely because they will find it hard to believe that there is not *some* desire of Jill's that is satisfied by being in this relationship. And of course, insofar as it is a rewarding,

¹⁸ On this point see Arneson (1999, pp.136-141), Fletcher (2013, pp.215-7 and 2016, pp. 59-75), and Rice (2013, pp. 11-14).

¹⁹ This case again pulls double duty, in that it also provides us with yet more reason to reject FPV. Jill would not plausibly assent to the judgment that this relationship, which she firmly believes is morally wrong and does not desire to participate in, is basically good for her.

enjoyable, and supportive relationship there are doubtless many such desires. But why anyone would feel entitled to assume that one of these desires must be a desire *for this very relationship*, I do not see. This just seems to re-describe the case, in such a way as to make it a different one. If the objector's claim is that our case, as previously characterized, is impossible, we can point out that there are relevantly similar cases which are clearly possible, because actual.

It may seem that, in making so much of the fact that Jill does not desire to be in *this precise relationship*, I am stacking the decks unfairly. For, granting this point, it may still be the case that Jill has *some* higher-order desire that is satisfied by her relationship with Jacqueline. Although Jill does not desire to be in such a relationship *with Jacqueline*, and indeed is averse to this state of affairs, she plausibly does have a more general desire *to be in a loving and supportive romantic relationship*, which happens to be satisfied by her relationship with Jacqueline (and perhaps could not be satisfied otherwise). If this is so, then even a defender of the desire constraint can seemingly deliver the verdict that this relationship is basically good for Jill.²⁰

This points to a general challenge for the line of argument we are pursuing. It seems that, for any case that might be presented as a counter-example to the desire constraint, once our opponent retreats to a high enough level of generality they will be able to postulate *some desire* that is satisfied by the obtaining of the relevant state of affairs. Even in Jessica's case it may be claimed that, although she does not desire *the knowledge that creationism is false*, she does have

²⁰ Lauinger (2013) presents a similar argument, in the course of defending a hybrid theory which incorporates a desire constraint. My objection to this argument is the same as that expressed below. If we fix it so that the desire constraint is trivially satisfied whenever a substantive prudential good is plausibly instantiated in a person's life, as Lauinger's view appears to do, this constraint ceases to be a useful tool for theorizing about prudential value. At any rate, one cannot just insist that whenever an attitude-independent good is instantiated in a person's life there must be some desire that is responsive to it. This would no doubt be a fine thing, but it would also be a quite spectacular stroke of luck. We are surely not entitled to assume that there will be such harmony between our desires and what is independently desirable.

a general desire *for knowledge*. To the extent that she has such a generic desire, Jessica's knowledge now also seems to satisfy the desire constraint, rather than serving as a counterexample to it.

Clever though it is, this maneuver preserves the desire constraint's plausibility at the cost of making it almost entirely trivial. If such a constraint is to do any theoretical work, it should not be the case that anything that could be proposed as a basic constituent of prudential value satisfies it.²¹ Yet this is the result that looms if we respond to cases like Jessica's and Jill's by retreating to an ever-higher level of abstraction in characterizing the person's desires. We must stop this slide at some point, but the question is where.

As far as I can see, the only way that the defender of the desire-constraint can reasonably do this in cases like Jill's and Jessica's is by privileging the absence of the more determinate desires (for *this relationship* and *this knowledge*) over the presence of the generic desires (for *a relationship* and *knowledge*). That is, the fact that Jill precisely does not want to be in a relationship *with Jacqueline*, and that Jessica specifically does not want to know *that creationism is false*, must be taken as cancelling out the more general desires, at least when it comes to satisfying the desire constraint. On this view, if a person has a desire for a given kind of thing in the abstract, but lacks any desire for a given instance of this kind, the fact that this person does not desire the specific instance is what is relevant, from the point of view of the desire constraint. I believe this is in line with what most advocates of such a constraint are trying to say. At any rate, something like this understanding of the desire constraint's function is called for if it is to be non-trivial. The defender of the desire constraint is thus forced, after all, to deliver the unintuitive

²¹ On the other hand, if the desire constraint turns out to be in this way consistent with a theory that is maximally inclusive in its response to the enumerative question, I am thus far more amenable to it. However, such a constraint still seems *explanatorily* wrongheaded, for reasons discussed below.

verdicts in the cases of Jill and Jessica. I now turn to consider whether the desire-constraint is any more plausible with respect to the other attitude-independent goods.

The case of Jill should also lead us to doubt that, if pleasure is to have basic prudential value, it must be desired. For given Jill's condemnatory attitude towards her relationship with Jacqueline, it is likely that she will also be ill-disposed to the pleasures that she derives from it. It may yet be that her relationship with Jacqueline is one of the greatest sources of enjoyment in her life. It again seems wrongheaded to hold that the rich and varied pleasures that attach to this relationship do not have any value for Jill, if she does not desire them at a higher level of reflection.

On our proposed list of attitude-independent prudential goods, this leaves only achievement, virtue, and autonomy to deal with. Take achievement first. Once more, it is implausible to hold that one must desire a given achievement if it is to be basically good for one. Consider, for instance the following example from Richard Arneson: "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 that she has thoughtlessly embraced. In these circumstances, her failure to endorse her achievement does not negate its value for her".²² Although Arneson puts things in more cognitive terms, we can plausibly add that Samantha had no desire to achieve this thing. Still, her achievement is intuitively good for her. Or now consider a modified version of Keller's Joan, one who actually succeeds in getting the law repealed. It is surely not the case that, for Joan's achievement to be prudentially valuable, she must desire not only that the law be abolished, but that *she herself achieve this end*. Perhaps Joan does not really care *how the law is overturned* or *by whom*, but only that it is overturned (indeed, this is the more plausible account of Joan's psychology given what we know about her

²² Arneson (1999, p.136). This example is another clear strike against FPV.

commitments). It would be strange to say that in such a case the achievement itself lacks any prudential value. The desire constraint should accordingly be rejected here as well.

Now for the case of virtue. For simplicity (and because I find it a plausible approach), I will assume that Thomas Hurka's recursive account is correct. On this view, virtue consists in being positively oriented towards things that are substantively good, and negatively oriented towards substantive evils.²³ The various virtues are then individuated according to whether they involve loving the good or hating the bad, and which specific goods or bads they are responsive to. We can make our case most impressively here by focusing on a virtue which consists in having the correct attitude towards the bad. I have in mind *compassion*, or being appropriately pained by the pain of others.

Consider, then, the case of Jake. Jake has been led, via a long series of hardships and disappointments, to the following conclusion. Other people are not at all to be esteemed, and are unworthy of compassion. It is thus Jake's fondest desire to be rid of the pain he feels at witnessing the vast suffering around him. And yet, he is a naturally compassionate person and cannot help being moved by the afflictions of others. The question now is whether Jake would be better off if he succeeded in ridding himself of his pesky softheartedness. Not *all things considered* better off, since thinking that it would be a net prudential gain if Jake achieved his desire is compatible with thinking that the virtue of compassion has *pro tanto* prudential value. The point I wish to press is just that there is *some important respect* in which it is better for Jake if he continues to be a compassionate person. As ever, we cannot be entirely confident that this judgment does not involve some confusion between prudential value and moral or perfectionist value. Still, as long as we are as clear as possible about the question we are asking, our intuitions in such cases deserve to be taken seriously. I find that the intuition that Jake would be *pro tanto*

²³ See Hurka (2001). Adams (2006) defends a very similar view.

worse off if he conquered his compassion does not desert me, even when I place the notion of *prudential value*, as distinct from other evaluative notions, as clearly as I can before my mind. I thus find myself pushed yet again to reject the desire constraint.²⁴

Autonomy, finally, is a rather special case. As I will understand it here, autonomy is the capacity to form and pursue one's own conception of the good without interference. It thus has fundamentally to do with what a person cares about, and so is closely connected to the subjectivist insight. Yet autonomy seems to have prudential value in its own right, and not only instrumentally, as a precondition for the successful pursuit of whatever one happens to desire. This is, in the first place, because the process through which one's desires are formed can itself be more or less autonomous. Indeed, this seems to be part of the problem with certain kinds of adaptive preference formation. The deferential wife, who after years of domination and abuse manages to convince herself that what she desires most is for her husband's will to be done in all things, is plausibly not autonomous, even if no obstacles are placed in the way of her pursuit of this goal.²⁵ Intuitively, both a) the extent to which one has decided for oneself what one cares about, and b) the extent to which one is able to pursue what one cares about in the absence of obstacles, matter to how well off one is. It is an extremely complicated question just what is required for desires to be autonomously formed, and we need not engage this matter here. The essential point is that it seems undeniable that the deferential wife would be better off if her desires were more reflective of her own free choice, and less reflective of her domineering

²⁴ I trust it is clear to the reader that our intuitions in Jake's case are, again, incompatible with FPV.

²⁵ I believe the deferential wife example originates in Hill (1973, pp.5-6), and it has been often discussed since, for instance by Friedman (1985). Hawkins (2008), Sen (1987, pp.45-6), and Sumner (1996, pp.162-171) explicitly discuss this sort of case as a challenge to subjective theories of prudential value.

husband's whims. This is so even if she herself is by now so convinced of her husband's comparative rectitude that she does not desire this sort of autonomy.²⁶

This concludes our case against the desire constraint. If it is convincing, what it shows is that a hybrid theory that includes DS* as one of its strands should take a disjunctive form. This does not yet settle the question of whether the other strand of such a disjunctive hybrid theory should incorporate an enjoyment constraint.

4.7 Against the Enjoyment Constraint

The enjoyment constraint has undoubted appeal, and one can accept it while still preserving the disjunctive hybrid framework we are elaborating. However, the cases of Jessica, Jake and the deferential wife suggest that we should reject this constraint as well. Jessica, recall, not only did not desire her newfound knowledge, but is now distressed rather than pleased by it. This does not, it seems, cancel out its value for her. To put the point more generally, in the world we live in a great many important truths are also unpleasant ones. If the reader shares my sense that knowledge of such truths nonetheless has (at least *pro tanto*) prudential value, this is reason to reject the enjoyment constraint. Jake also does not take any pleasure in his own virtue (rather, the opposite is true). Once again, the sad truth of the matter is that virtue is not always pleasant, and indeed is sometimes painful. On the recursive account, after all, virtue does not just consist in being favourably disposed towards the good but also in disfavouring the bad. Even if, in a world where there were only substantive goods, the claim that virtue is always enjoyed might be sustainable, this is not how things now stand. We must, then, either give up the idea that virtue always has *pro tanto* prudential value or reject the enjoyment constraint. I believe the latter option is preferable. Finally, it seems that the deferential wife is better off in the case where her

²⁶ At the risk of belaboring the point, this also looks like another counterexample to FPV.

desires are autonomously rather than deferentially formed, even if she does not derive any enjoyment from this fact.

The cases of Jessica, Jake and the deferential wife also suggest that we should not follow Fletcher in restricting the entries on the objective list to items that constitutively involve pro-attitudes. For even if this is true of other plausible candidates for the objective list, it does not seem to be true of knowledge, virtue and autonomy. Of course, one might take this as *prima facie* evidence that knowledge, virtue and autonomy do not belong on such a list. But I don't see what would justify anyone in insisting on this point, once it is admitted that there are attitude-independent prudential goods. There are no independent grounds for assuming in advance that any such goods must at a minimum be pro-attitude-*involving*. This might be a happy result for purposes of responding to worries about alienation, or for making sense of the relationality of prudential value (although I am skeptical about how far such a constraint really helps with either task), but we cannot guarantee it in advance. Rather we must assess proposed attitude-independent prudential goods as they arise. And if we do this, we will be inclined to accord prudential value to knowledge, virtue and autonomy regardless of whether they fit any such pattern.

4.8 Why Not Perfectionism?

The above arguments were sufficient to illustrate why a theory that supplements DS* with a commitment to a plurality of attitude-independent prudential goods, while rejecting the enjoyment constraint as well as the desire constraint, is appealing. This still leaves us with some pressing questions about how the objectivist strand of DHT can best be developed. I begin here with the most fundamental issue, namely what, if anything, *explains* why the attitude-independent prudential goods have basic prudential value. In tackling this question, the natural

first step is to look at how the extant objective theories deal with this matter. There are two broad approaches worth considering here, *perfectionist* and *objective list* accounts.²⁷ Defenders of thoroughgoing objectivism generally fall into one of these two camps. The perfectionist camp is marked off by the kind of explanatory story it offers. The distinctive claim of perfectionism is that those things that are basically good for a person are so in virtue of the fact that they exercise, develop, or otherwise involve certain excellences of human nature. The alternative approach, by contrast, has traditionally been marked off by what it *does not* do. Objective list accounts are typically seen as refraining from giving any answer to the explanatory question.²⁸

We should not see these as the only two options, however. Surely one who takes there to be attitude-independent prudential goods, but who does not share the perfectionist's distinctive ambitions, need not thereby renounce the project of addressing the explanatory question. Thus, if we take perfectionism and the objective list approach to exhaust the conceptual space that the objectivist might occupy, we should not understand the latter view as committed to such quietism. Rather, when I refer to objective list accounts I have in mind all objective theories that reject the particular explanatory story that perfectionism offers.²⁹ This leaves room for objective list theorists to be more or less modest in their own ambitions. Indeed, in the next section I consider two ways of elaborating the objective list approach that are markedly different in how they deal with the explanatory question.

²⁷ Kraut, who in recent work defends a broadly perfectionist theory of well-being, prefers to call his account 'developmentalist' (2007, p.136). However, as perfectionism remains the more widely used term for this sort of approach, it will be convenient to follow standard practice and classify Kraut's view under this heading. We must only keep in mind that such theories need not see human *perfection* as either a realistic or useful goal. What marks them off, rather, is an emphasis on certain characteristic excellences of human nature. Scanlon, meanwhile, suggests that objective list approaches might better be called 'substantive good' approaches (1999, p.113). However, I will again stick with the standard terminology.

²⁸ See for instance Fletcher (2013, pp.214-5), Scanlon (1999, p.125).

²⁹ It is also open to us to treat perfectionism as just one instance of an objective list approach. However, perfectionism, as a tradition in the well-being literature, has developed in a way that is sufficiently independent of other objective accounts to justify giving it an independent hearing here.

The question before us now is whether the objectivist strand of DHT should take its cue from the perfectionist, or whether some sort of objective list account ought to be preferred. Let us therefore consider in more detail what a perfectionist approach to the attitude-independent prudential goods might look like. We will take Richard Kraut's theory as our model, as it is the most fully fleshed out in the recent literature.

Kraut's theoretical starting point is different from our own. He begins by asking, 'what is it, in general, for some thing *x* to be *good for* some entity *y*'? In the background is an assumption that there is only one such good-for relation, and that it is the same whether we are interested in what is good for an oak tree, what is good for a dog, or what is good for a human being. According to Kraut, this must be understood as a *suitability* relation. That is, *x* is good for *y* if and only if *x* is *suitable to* an entity of just *y*'s sort.³⁰

This somewhat vague idea of suitability is spelled out by Kraut via an appeal to the more familiar notion of *flourishing*. An organism flourishes when it does well or succeeds as precisely the kind of being it is, by developing the various characteristic excellences that are attainable by beings of this kind. To know what counts as a flourishing human (or oak tree) life, we thus need to begin from some idea of the specific nature of human beings (or oak trees). Kraut claims that the substantive upshot of such an investigation is that "a flourishing human being is one who possesses, develops, and enjoys the exercise of cognitive, affective, sensory, and social powers (no less than physical powers). Those, in broadest outline and roughly speaking, are the components of well-being."³¹

We now have in hand, in rough outline, a list of attitude-independent prudential goods, and it is one that agrees closely with our own, except insofar as Kraut endorses (or at least flirts

³⁰ Kraut (2007, p.87).

³¹ Ibid. (pp.136-137).

with) the enjoyment constraint. The question is whether a Kraut-style perfectionist approach can provide a promising explanatory account of DHT's objectivist enumerative claims.³² I will now argue that DHT should not attempt to ground its list of attitude-independent goods in this fashion.

The perfectionist line does have its attractions. Perhaps most importantly, it introduces a satisfying unity into our account, at least on the objectivist side. This is a clear theoretical virtue. Such an approach may even allow us to unify the two strands of DHT, or at least to draw an interesting parallel between them. Very sketchily, that story might go something like this. For each of us, there are two fundamentally distinct sources of prudential value. The first, attitude-independent source stems from certain features that we share with all members of the species *homo sapiens*. The second, attitude-dependent source stems from certain features that are (at least potentially) peculiar to us as individuals, namely our own desires. Although very schematic, this picture is intuitive as far as it goes.

Where I suspect that the (disjunctive) perfectionist is going to run into trouble is in attempting to fill out any such schema. The perfectionist approach is premised on two central assumptions. The first is that there is a human nature with some definite content. The second is that the content of this human nature explains why certain things are good for humans. Both assumptions are problematic.

Of course, at the most abstract level, perfectionism need not take any stand on *what* the content of human nature is. However, if it is to help us pick out the things that have attitude-independent prudential value, the perfectionist approach needs to say something about what our nature actually is. It might be thought that perfectionists could shrug off this burden by starting

³² We are not, therefore, assessing the merits or weaknesses of perfectionism as a complete theory of prudential value. This pre-empts some of the more obvious objections to a view like Kraut's.

from a commitment to a given list of substantive prudential goods, and then working back to find what they have in common (as opposed to deriving this list from an independent account of human nature). The problem with this latter strategy is not that it gets the direction of explanation the wrong way around (I also doubt that we can or should start from scratch in our theorizing about well-being) but that, if the appeal to human nature is even to yield a helpful elucidation of what the intuitive prudential goods have in common, this nature must be accorded some definite content.

In filling out a perfectionist account so that it does explanatory work, we thus need to identify certain core features of human nature. One reason for casting a suspicious eye on attempts to do this is the fear (quite understandable given the disreputable history of this notion) that they will have the effect of affirming and crystallizing harmful assumptions. We appear to lack a standard of human nature that is independent of our own judgments about what makes a given person an exemplary member of our species. But it is plausible that such judgments, which do not involve thinking directly about *what is good for another human being* but instead about *how good that human being is* (as measured up to some standard for the species), are especially likely to be contaminated by all kinds of biases (many of which are ableist, homophobic, racist, sexist, transphobic etc.).

The perfectionist may try to cut off such objections by offering an account of the core capacities of human nature (and so of which capacities it is prudentially good to develop and exercise) that does not rely on prior intuitions about what makes a person a good instance of a human being. Such an account would need to provide principled reasons for isolating only certain features of human persons as characteristic of them, in the sense relevant to prudential

value attributions. No perfectionist has yet offered a plausible candidate for this role, and I doubt that any is forthcoming.

One traditional strategy has been to appeal to the capacities that are *distinctive* of human beings. This strategy, famously, led Aristotle to identify the human good with the excellent exercise of rationality.³³ There are devastating objections to any perfectionist approach that relies on such a distinctiveness claim to isolate the relevant human capacities, however. First, the fact that something is a distinctive human trait or capacity does not plausibly suffice to ensure that it is worth exercising or developing. Human beings may be the only organisms with the capacity for willful cruelty, but if so, the exercise of this capacity is not thereby made valuable. Perhaps this problem can be solved if we remain at a higher level of generality in our characterization of the distinctive capacities. The distinctiveness criterion still faces a more intractable challenge, which is that it makes what is good for human beings contingent in surprising and implausible ways. Suppose we follow Aristotle in taking theoretical and practical rationality to be the only distinctive capacities of human nature. We then discover that there are rational extraterrestrials, and that we are therefore not *distinctive* in our possession and exercise of either form of rationality. It clearly does not follow that we have been mistaken all along in thinking that the excellent exercise of our rational capacities was prudentially valuable. There may, indeed, be no capacity that is distinctive of human beings. It is absurd to hold that, if so, nothing is good for us.

We cannot, then, isolate the prudentially relevant aspects of human nature by appeal to what is distinctive of our species. This puts the onus on the contemporary perfectionist to show that we can do this in some other, principled way. Thomas Hurka suggests that the capacities whose exercise is valuable in the perfectionist sense are just those that are essential to human

³³ NE Book 1, Chapter 7.

beings as living organisms.³⁴ There is no longer any appeal to distinctiveness here, and so we need not worry about ET overturning our theory. However, it is very difficult to pick out which traits are essential to humans in this way and which are not. Hurka's preferred theory takes practical and theoretical rationality, as well as certain aspects of our physical embodiment, to be the essential human capacities. This allows his theory to count physical achievements as valuable exercises of human nature, thereby helping avoid the charge of intellectual snobbery. Yet, I do not see what reason we have for isolating just these capacities, other than that they are the basis of a plausible list of goods. There are individual members of the species *homo sapiens* who lack either form of rationality. Plausibly, certain non-human animals possess both. We still do not seem to have a principled ground for taking these and only these capacities to be at the core of human nature.³⁵

Let me close on a note of caution. This is that we must be careful to distinguish prudential value from *perfectionist value*.³⁶ The perfectionist value of a human life concerns whether it is a good instance of such a life, relative to those we pick out as exemplars. This is most plausibly seen as a species of *goodness of a kind*. *Goodness for* is not, at least on the face of it, kind-relative in this way. It is certainly not so by definition. Thus, the perfectionist about well-being is making a substantive claim to the effect that the prudential value of a person's life tracks its perfectionist value. While this claim could be true, it is not conceptually true. Once we have prised apart these different concepts, however, it remains to be shown why how well my life is

³⁴ Hurka (1993).

³⁵ For similar criticisms of the appeal to essential capacities, see Kitcher (1999). Note that even if Hurka's list of essential capacities did prove to be independently plausible, and to map onto a plausible list of goods, the explanatory claim that when some capacity is essential to human nature exercises of it are prudentially valuable *precisely for this reason* remains dubious. For critical discussion of this latter claim see Dorsey (2010, pp.64-8).

³⁶ On this point see Haybron (2007, pp.16-9), Hurka (1993, pp.17-8), and Sumner (1995, pp.23-24 and pp. 78-80).

going for me should be taken to be species-relative in the way perfectionists claim. Someone like Kraut may see this as the only way to explain why, although the good-for relation is always the same, what is good for a particular organism varies depending on the comparison class. However, we need not accept either the claim that there is only one good-for relation, or the claim that the only way to make sense of certain goods as accessible only to humans is in terms of some kind-relative notion of goodness.³⁷ These positions require independent grounding. In the absence of compelling arguments for them, the worry that perfectionists are zeroing in on the wrong target remains pressing.

The above reflections should make us doubt that a perfectionist account of the attitude-independent prudential goods is the best way to go. The perfectionist approach, we have seen, is most plausible when it is not challenged to articulate what the content of human nature is. This might suggest that the perfectionist would do better to remain non-committal on the issue of what the relevant human capacities are. Perhaps, that is, we can be confident that there is a human nature even without knowing anything concrete about what makes it up. The perfectionist about attitude-independent prudential goods, understood in this light, is saying only that, whatever turns out to be substantively good for humans, the explanation of this goodness will be some generic fact about human nature. There is less to object to in such a minimal characterization of the perfectionist commitment, if only because it is so vague. However, what such an approach gains in plausibility it forfeits in explanatory power. Little to no theoretical work is being done by the appeal to human nature at this stage, it seems. What is more, I see no

³⁷ For extended criticisms of Kraut's claim that there is only one good-for relation see Behrends (2011) and Rosati (2009). No objectivist would deny that certain attitude-independent goods are only accessible to beings with certain capacities. The requisite capacities may, in turn, be ones that only humans have, and in this sense, we may characterize the corresponding goods themselves as 'distinctively human'. It does not follow that the explanation of *why* these things are good for human beings must appeal to the capacities that are distinctive of or essential to our species. See Arneson (2010, pp.737-8) for a defense of this point. I will discuss this matter at greater length in Chapter 5.

reason to assume in advance that if something is an attitude-independent prudential good its goodness must be explicable in even these minimally perfectionist terms. This is something that should be discovered (or not) by considering the various candidate goods.

Although nothing we have said above constitutes a knockdown objection to the perfectionist approach, the various thorny problems it faces make pursuing an alternative account reasonable. This is what I will do below.

4.9 The Objective List and the Explanatory Question

On rejecting the perfectionist framework, there are at least two distinct ways in which a believer in attitude-independent prudential goods might proceed. One avenue, mentioned above, simply denies that we can offer any informative, non-trivial explanation of why the things that are substantively good for people are so. When asked why thing *x* is good for person *P*, that is, we can only respond that it possesses attitude-independent prudential value. There is no deeper or more fundamental evaluative fact explaining why certain things have prudential value for a person. I will call this the *primitivist* approach to the substantive prudential goods.

I believe even the primitivist approach should not be understood as *wholly abandoning* the project of answering the explanatory question.³⁸ This becomes clearer when it is considered in the context of DHT. As we argued in Chapter 1, this theory is best seen as giving a pluralistic answer to the explanatory question. Notice that this is still the case, even if DHT takes over the primitivist's response (as far as it goes) to the question of what explains the prudential value of the items of the objective list. For any thing *x*, we can still ask, 'what makes it the case that *x* is basically good for person *P*'? And the answer is still different in different cases. Sometimes we

³⁸ On this point see Arneson (1999, pp.118-9). Although he here has the look of a primitivist, in Arneson (2010, pp.736-9) he appears to favour the locative account, which I turn to below.

have to appeal to the attitude-independent value of x , and sometimes we need only appeal to the fact that P has the right kind of desire for it. This much is common ground, whether we favour a perfectionist account of the prudential value of knowledge, friendship et al., a primitivist approach, or some other explanation. We can thus see that, at least when it comes to prudential values which have not yet been classified as either attitude-dependent or attitude-independent, there is some explanatory work being done even by the primitivist account. The more appropriate complaint, then, is that the explanation in this case stops earlier than the theorist has a right to expect. That said, explanations do need to come to an end somewhere.

It is important as well to guard against potential misinterpretation. Some of what was said above may have led the reader to suppose that the primitivist is positing a distinct objective list for each person. Although I suppose that this is a possible view (that is, there might be attitude-independent goods that are nonetheless not good for every person who possesses them) it is not the view under discussion, nor do I think it is tempting. The primitivist is thus still committed to the claim that the substantive prudential goods are good for individual people *because* they have the more general property of being good for *any person* who possesses them. DHT, of course, adds that other things are good for individual people because of their particular desires. So again, the two strands of DHT map on to two different sources of prudential value, one that is common to all persons and one that depends on a person's own pro-attitudes. This is shared ground whether we adopt a primitivist or a perfectionist approach.

Other things being equal, theories that are explanatorily deeper are doubtless to be preferred. It is thus worth exploring whether the fact that certain things have the property of being good for any person who possesses them can be plausibly grounded in more fundamental facts. If there is a story to tell here which is not susceptible to the objections that perfectionism

faces, but which nonetheless offers more explanatory depth than the primitivist approach, we will have good reason to favour it.

Fortunately, we do not have to start from scratch in formulating such an alternative. On the approach I have in mind, the presence of attitude-independent prudential goods is explained in terms of facts about what has a specific type of *objective, non-prudential value*. When it comes to such things as knowledge, pleasure, friendship, achievement, virtue, and autonomy, this view holds that these things are good for me because a) they are good *simpliciter* and b) they bear the right sort of relation to me.³⁹ I follow recent practice in calling this the *locative* account of attitude-independent prudential value.⁴⁰ The locative account, although long ignored, has had prominent defenders both historically and among recent theorists.⁴¹ Where the approach suggested here differs is that it would take the locative account to be just one part of the truth about prudential value. This difference helps in addressing some of the objections to this account.

Both aspects of the locative account, as set out above, demand clarification. With respect to (a) the question is how we should understand the type of value that is being invoked to explain why a given thing *x* is good for a given person *P*. It is interesting to note that the locative account breaks with the perfectionist approach only on this point. Perfectionists hold that for something

³⁹It is, of course, a burden on the defender of such a view to capture the essential relationality of prudential values. If one rejects *subjective necessity*, as I have argued we should, this seems to become an even greater challenge. There is, after all, a sense in which subjectivist accounts have the relationality already built in (and we could perhaps say the same about a Kraut-style perfectionist account). I consider this challenge further below.

⁴⁰This name for the account originates, I believe, in Kraut (2007, p.84). Kraut there launches an impressive fusillade against the view, which is continued in Kraut (2011). I consider some of his objections below, but the initial point to keep in mind is that his attack is squarely focused on approaches which take the locative account to be *the whole truth* about prudential value. The view considered here therefore escapes much of his fire. Fletcher (2012) defends what he calls the ‘Locative Analysis of *good for*’. Although I reject the account as an *analysis* of the relation or concept, much of what Fletcher argues in his paper can be taken on board here, if it is taken instead as an explanation of why there is an objective list, and why it contains the entries that it does.

⁴¹ See Moore (1903, p.99), Ross (1930, p.151), Fletcher (2012), McDaniel (2014).

to be good for a person, it must make the person's life a better instance of a human life. Thus, they are taking prudential goodness to be fundamentally related to goodness of a kind (which seems itself to be a kind of objective, non-prudential value). Accordingly, the perfectionist and the locative accounts both share the following broad schema: When it comes to such things as knowledge, pleasure, friendship, and achievement, these things are good for a person because a) they have *some kind* of objective, non-prudential value and b) they bear the right sort of relation to the person. Call this the *locative schema*.

If we do not go the perfectionist route because of the problems outlined in the last section, then we must think carefully about how to understand goodness *simpliciter*, so that this way of filling out the locative schema does not face similar objections. With respect to (b), we surely need to say something about what the relation is that must obtain between an objectively good thing and a person, if this thing is also to be good *for this person*. If the locative account proves unable to give a plausible answer to these questions, we may well be justified in staying with either a perfectionist or a primitivist approach.

There are reasons to be optimistic about the locative account's ability to discharge its obligations with respect to the above questions, however. First, let me address the issue of how to understand the objective non-prudential value to which the locative theorist is appealing. One likely explanation for the disfavour into which the locative account has fallen is the fact that its most prominent early defender, G.E. Moore, combined it with a controversial commitment to goodness *simpliciter* as a non-natural, unanalyzable property.⁴² Skepticism about Moorean goodness has tended to discredit the locative view by association. However, the commitment to goodness *simpliciter* that is required by the locative account is not a commitment to absolute goodness, understood in the Moorean way.

⁴² Moore (1903).

As Guy Fletcher highlights, in the course of his recent defense of a locative analysis, employing the notion of goodness *simpliciter* to help understand prudential goodness does not rule out a buck-passing or fitting attitude analysis of the former.⁴³ The locative account assumes that there is some such notion, but it is neutral with respect to whether it can be reduced to other, perhaps more naturalistically acceptable, terms. Granting that even the claim that the concept of goodness *simpliciter* is meaningful and useful is subject to dispute, the commitments of the locative account are thus more modest than one might have thought.

We must then ask what a bare commitment to goodness *simpliciter* does amount to. In general, in attempting to shed light on a given evaluative property, a fruitful strategy is to point to the kinds of attitudes that the presence of that property makes appropriate or fitting.⁴⁴ In the case of goodness *simpliciter*, the following claim is plausible:

If x is good *simpliciter*, then x is such that it is fitting for *every agent* to favour it (where the generic notion of favouring encompasses both having various pro-attitudes towards x and acting in various ways with respect to it).

If one holds that there is at least one x that satisfies the above conditions, then one is committed to the existence of goodness *simpliciter* (as I understand it). What, then, does this have to do with attitude-independent prudential value? The locative account proposes that what makes it the case that some things are good for person P independently of P's pro-attitudes is, in part, that these things are good *simpliciter*. That is, the things that have attitude-independent value for P are things that it would be fitting for everyone (including P) to favour. This is a plausible claim with respect to each of the substantive goods canvassed above. Of course, the

⁴³ Fletcher (2012, p.14 fn. 46).

⁴⁴ I am not here proposing a reductive *analysis* of goodness or any other evaluative concept in terms of fitting attitudes. I am pessimistic about the prospects for such analyses, although nothing I say here is incompatible with such a project.

proponent of the locative account will need to say more, insofar as there are things that it would be fitting for everyone (including P) to favour that are manifestly not good *for P* specifically. Attitude-independent prudential value is goodness *simpliciter* with something extra added. It is to that something extra which we now turn.

Prudential value is a fundamentally relational type of goodness.⁴⁵ This makes it incumbent on the defender of a locative approach to the attitude-independent prudential goods to provide a plausible characterization of the relation that must obtain between some objectively good thing and a person, if it is to be good for that person. Fortunately, I believe there is a satisfactory account of this sort already on offer. This is that provided by Fletcher.⁴⁶ He stipulates that for some objective good G to be good for some person X, G must be *essentially related* to X. This relationality clause imposes the following three conditions:

“1. G requires the existence of X in order to be the case.

2. G cannot persist in the absence of X.

3. G could not be the case without being X’s.”⁴⁷

I believe these conditions do an adequate job of distinguishing between goodness *simpliciter* and attitude-independent prudential value. Only if something is both good *simpliciter*, and related to X in the above ways, does it possess attitude-independent goodness for X. We have discussed the following substantive prudential goods: knowledge, pleasure, virtue, certain interpersonal bonds, achievement, and autonomy. When these goods are instantiated in a

⁴⁵ Rosati (2006, 2008, and 2009) develops this point most fully, in a series of fascinating papers.

⁴⁶ Fletcher (2012). The reader will note that I am here only borrowing the third clause of Fletcher’s purported analysis. The full analysis only succeeds by appealing to the very slippery notion of agent-relative reasons for attitudes, and for that reason alone I would be loath to accept it. Again, I do not claim to be analyzing anything here.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (p.5). It should be noted that Fletcher’s relationality clause (that is, his way of filling out the second part of the locative schema), could also be combined with a different account of the kind of non-prudential value involved.

person's life, they do seem in every case to meet the above conditions. Take, for instance, Samantha's achievement of writing a brilliant poem.⁴⁸ Insofar as it is *Samantha's achievement in writing the poem* (as opposed to the mere fact that the poem exists and was written by somebody) that is basically good for Samantha, this good cannot exist if Samantha does not exist, or without *being Samantha's*.

Taken in this light, the locative account is compatible with the view that everything that is good *simpliciter* is essentially related to some welfare subject. Thus, in appealing to this type of value we are not committing ourselves to the existence of goods that are *impersonal* in the sense that they float free of individual's lives. This goes some way towards allaying the worries of skeptics about Moorean goodness like Kraut.⁴⁹ The locative account does not need to be metaphysically extravagant. It also need take no side on the issue of whether goodness *simpliciter* is itself a reason-providing property (as noted above, it is compatible with a buck-passing analysis). Insofar as the belief in the *reason-providing powers* of this sort of goodness appears to be the real target of Kraut's attack, the locative account is untouched by his critique.

The locative account is not being presented here as the whole truth about prudential value. It would, indeed, be implausible to hold that *everything* that is good for a person must also be good *simpliciter*. Prudential value is evidently relational in a deeper way than the locative view alone can capture. This is, I think, precisely because of the role that the person's own pro-attitudes play, in conferring prudential value upon their objects. It would be strange to claim that things which inherit all their prudential value from one person's desires are thereby also objectively valuable, in the sense that it is fitting for every other person to favour them. DHT can accommodate the fact that some things that are good for people are relational in this deeper

⁴⁸ See Arneson (1999, p.136).

⁴⁹ Kraut (2011).

sense, which the locative account alone does not capture. It merely adds that there are also things that are good for a person just because they are good *simpliciter* and this person is suitably related to them. DHT thus incorporates both robustly objectivist and robustly subjectivist elements, without losing sight of the essential relationality of prudential value in either case. It does suggest that this relationality admits of a stronger and a weaker form, depending on the nature of the good in question. Yet this seems plausible.

The locative account boasts a further advantage. Many have found the relation between goodness *simpliciter* and goodness *for a person* so mysterious as to justify banning one or the other from philosophy.⁵⁰ Others, less extreme, have nonetheless claimed that one of these notions is wholly reducible to the other. Although the drive to simplify our ethical theories by minimizing the fundamental notions relied upon is an understandable one, I believe both notions play important roles. The partially locative account of prudential value considered here, if correct, entails that we cannot do without either type of goodness, or fully reduce either one to the other. If the proper explanation of why some of the things that are basic constituents of prudential value are so appeals to goodness *simpliciter*, we cannot discard the latter notion without misunderstanding the former. If other things that are basic constituents of prudential value are so for quite different reasons, unrelated to goodness *simpliciter*, we also need not fear that the former notion will collapse into the latter. I cannot claim to have established such an ambitious conclusion here, but I have tried to show that such a partially locative approach has some appealing features. If nothing else, I hope this will encourage further exploration of the relationship between goodness for and goodness *simpliciter*.

⁵⁰ The enemies of goodness *simpliciter* include, besides those already mentioned, Geach (1956), Foot (1985), and Thomson (1994). On the other side, again see Brewer (2009) and Hurka (1988 and 1993).

The main goal of this section was to establish the locative account as a reasonable approach to the attitude-independent goods. My somewhat tentative suggestion is that, when it comes to providing an explanatory grounding for DHT's objectivist strand, it is the most promising approach. Still, if the reader is sympathetic to the broader disjunctive hybrid framework but prefers one of the other alternatives, I do not insist upon this last claim.

4.10 Conclusion

This concludes the general exposition and defense of the new, inclusive theory of prudential value I call DHT. In the fifth and final chapter of this dissertation, I address some of the outstanding challenges that the disjunctive hybrid theorist must still grapple with. I also consider DHT's implications for some specific puzzles about prudential value.

Chapter 5: A Potpourri of Issues and Implications

5.1 Introduction

I have so far left various pressing challenges for DHT unaddressed. Insofar as the theory defended in this dissertation is in many ways a novel one, it was necessary to spend a fair bit of time establishing its general structure, and developing its two distinct strands, before we could proceed to tackle the finer details. The goal of this chapter is to tie up these theoretical loose ends, and to answer some of the questions that have most probably occurred to the reader.

I begin by reflecting on the form that the *negative side* of a disjunctive hybrid approach should take. Historically, philosophers of well-being have often treated the identification of the basic constituents of prudential value as exhausting their task. However, this is to leave the issue of what the prudential *bads* are unsettled. The importance of supplementing whatever account of well-being one favours with an account of *ill-being* has recently been pressed by Shelly Kagan.¹ Although one could in principle accept DHT's positive claims without committing to any specific account of prudential disvalue, I here take up Kagan's challenge on behalf of the disjunctive hybrid theorist. If we supplement DHT with an account of prudential disvalue designed to mirror the positive side of the story as closely as possible, we are led to some interesting conclusions. In particular, this approach implies that cases where the same thing (indeed, the very same feature of the same thing) simultaneously possesses both basic prudential value and basic prudential disvalue are possible. Although this may initially sound paradoxical,

¹ The term 'ill-being' is itself taken from Kagan (2014). Kagan's paper is thus far the most sustained treatment of the subject. The issue of what desire-satisfactionists, in particular, should say about ill-being is discussed at some length in Tully (2017), and more briefly in Heathwood (2015), Lin (2016), Lukas (2010), Sarch (2013), and Skow (2009).

if we are careful in how we formulate our claims, such cases do not constitute a compelling objection to this extension of DHT.

This last point leads to another question, namely; how are we to assess the comparative value of the disparate prudential goods (and now bads) that a disjunctive hybrid approach recognizes, so that we can make reasonable trade-offs between them? My response here is in line with that which any other enumerative pluralist might offer. Any proposed systematic ordering of the various basic constituents of prudential value (and disvalue) is, on such a pluralist view, going to come out as implausible. In the case of DHT, it does not matter for such comparisons whether what *explains why* something is prudentially valuable is that it is the object of the right kind of desire, or that it has attitude-independent value. Which of two prudentially valuable things is better for a person is a question that can only be settled by paying careful attention to the specificities of the case, rather than via some general appeal to the kinds of goods involved, or to the way in which their prudential goodness is explained.

Some may object that such an approach does not satisfy one of the desiderata for an adequate theory of prudential value, in that it fails to provide a standard metric for comparing the value of distinct prudential goods. Although I admit that if we could find a plausible metric of this sort that would be all the better, we should not be optimistic that one is forthcoming. DHT is in any case preferable to an account that imports an implausible metric, or that leaves out certain intuitive goods and twists the shape of the ones it does recognize, in pursuit of theoretical simplicity.

Finally, I consider the application of DHT to a pair of ongoing debates. One interesting issue, which we have so far touched on only briefly, concerns how to deal with welfare-subjects other than adult humans. DHT at once allows for a fair amount of enumerative and explanatory

convergence in its approach to the well-being of different kinds of welfare subjects, without eliding the important differences between such subjects. It can thus deliver intuitively plausible results when so applied, which, we will see, distinguishes it from some other popular theories.

The question of what makes a life meaningful (and of how meaning in life is related to prudential value) has also been a hot topic in recent years. DHT allows us to offer an appealing gloss on the relation between meaning in life and prudential value. The substantive prudential goods, it can say, are also what introduce meaning into a person's life. DHT can thus secure a close connection between meaning in life and prudential value, while maintaining the intuitive independence of these notions. For meaning cannot simply be equated with prudential value, insofar as only some of the things that are good for a person possess attitude-independent value.

These are but two examples of the potential of DHT to provide new and illuminating perspectives on vexed debates. I believe there are many other questions in ethics that we could apply this theory to, with similarly fruitful results. However, I stop here for now, in the hope that I have sufficiently illustrated DHT's appeal, and so laid the groundwork for such future explorations.

5.2 The Disjunctive Hybrid Theory of Ill-Being

The best explanation of why philosophers have given short shrift to the question of what makes a person's life go badly, is that they have been assuming that the negative side of the story would straightforwardly reflect the positive side. Suppose, for instance, that one is a hedonist. Although the claim that pain is the only basic prudential bad does not fall out immediately from the claim that pleasure is the only basic prudential good, it does follow quite naturally.² Suppose, instead,

² That said, even with respect to hedonism, things may not be so clear-cut. It is true that hedonists sometimes treat pain and pleasure as simply opposed mental states. But there are manifestly unpleasant

that one holds that the basic constituents of prudential value are all those states of affairs that the person has the right kind of desire for. Again, it might seem that the account of prudential disvalue will simply mirror the positive account, so that the desire-satisfactionist need not devote any special attention to this matter. However, by now things have already become more complicated.

This is because there are at least two, quite different, strategies for constructing a theory of ill-being that could complement desire-satisfactionism about well-being.³ The first, and the more popular, is what I will call *the frustration approach*.⁴ Just as the account of prudential value focuses on desire-satisfaction, this view holds that the account of prudential value should focus on *desire-frustration*. P's desire for x is satisfied if and only if x obtains, and frustrated if and only if x fails to obtain. The frustration approach says that whereas the satisfaction of the desire for x is basically good for P (provided the desire is of the right kind), the frustration of this desire is basically bad for P.

This approach strikes me as implausible. Admittedly, desire-satisfactionism does imply that, insofar as the states of affairs that one desires do not obtain, one's life does not go as well as it would have had they obtained. Desire-frustration is thus clearly *worse* than desire-satisfaction. However, *the absence of prudential value* does not yet amount to *the presence of prudential disvalue*. Intuitively, the lack of desire-satisfaction (which is all that I mean by desire-frustration)

mental states that we would not ordinarily call painful (consider a persistent itch). Perhaps, instead, we should take the opposite of pleasure to be *displeasure*, with pain as just one sub-type of the latter.

³ Kagan (2014, p.268-72) identifies the same two options. Where he differs is on the question of which way the desire-satisfactionist should go. However, note that Kagan's only objection to what I will call the *aversion approach* (an objection which I consider later in this chapter) is that, when combined with desire-satisfactionism's positive account, it allows for the same feature of the same state of affairs to be both basically prudentially bad and basically prudentially good. As I will argue below, this does not constitute a serious objection to an approach to the prudential goods and bads.

⁴ In the recent literature, Heathwood (2015), Lin (2016), Lukas (2010) and Tully (2017) favour this approach.

seems to be just such an absence. Moreover, it is easy enough to explain why one's life goes better when one's desires are satisfied without positing that their frustration is bad in itself. Here we must not be misled by terminology. *Frustration*, where this is understood as a type of mental state, is clearly prudentially disvaluable. But in the present context 'frustration' no more connotes a negatively valenced mental state than 'satisfaction' connotes a positively valenced one. If we suppose that I could be plugged into a machine that would produce in me 50 new desires, none of which are satisfied, it indeed seems that plugging in would make my life worse. However, this is only because the addition of so many unsatisfied desires would, almost inevitably, cause me to experience certain unpleasant mental states. If we stipulate that undergoing this procedure does not cause any displeasure, the claim that plugging in negatively impacts my well-being is no longer compelling. In sum, the view that desire frustration is a substantive prudential bad is not well-supported.

There is a more plausible way for the desire-satisfactionist to proceed, which I will call the *aversion approach*. The aversion approach identifies as basically prudentially bad, not the failure of states of affairs that one desires to obtain, but the *obtaining* of states of affairs that one is *averse* to. Aversion is here identified as whatever the negative attitudinal counterpart of desire is (we do not need to settle the question of the exact nature of this attitude). The strategy, then, is quite straightforward. We are merely switching a pro-attitude for the corresponding con-attitude, and in doing so the prudential valence of the state of affairs at which the attitude is directed is also switched. This approach to ill-being thus mirrors desire-satisfactionism's approach to well-being in an intuitive and orderly fashion.

Of course, we are interested in DS* as one strand of DHT, rather than in desire-satisfactionism as a complete account of prudential value. If we now formulate the aversion

approach so that it reflects DS*, so construed, it tells us that some of the things that are basically bad for P are so just because P has the right kind of aversion to them. We must still specify what is required for an aversion to be of the right kind. I believe the most plausible position is that the prudentially relevant aversions are all those that are intrinsic rather than instrumental, and that satisfy the identification constraint. The case for restricting the aversions that matter to how well off one is in these two ways (and in no other way) is the same as that for placing similar constraints on desires. I will not rehearse it again, but will only reiterate that aversions (no less than desires) must genuinely reflect what a person cares about if they are to have independent prudential relevance.

The subjectivist strand of the disjunctive hybrid approach to prudential disvalue is now before us. Insofar as the theory of prudential value has a robustly objectivist strand, we can reasonably expect that prudential disvalue will also have attitude-independent elements. And yet the task of identifying these attitude-independent elements of ill-being is not a straightforward one. It does not seem that we can simply flip the story we gave about the prudential goods, if only because some of those we have identified don't have any intuitive negative correlate. Still, although the reflections that follow are somewhat piecemeal, there are good grounds for holding that there is an objective list on the negative side of the prudential value ledger as well, and for placing certain items on it.

Some of the items on the list of attitude-independent prudential goods are easier to match with negative counterparts than others. Recall that the substantive goods proposed in the last chapter were as follows: pleasure, knowledge, achievement, certain interpersonal bonds, autonomy, and virtue. The first and last entries on this list are the most amenable to such treatment. In the case of pleasure, the natural move is to follow the hedonist and take pain to be

the equivalent prudential bad. And indeed, pain is as plausible a candidate for basic prudential disvalue as anything. Virtue, meanwhile, has its own intuitive mirror image in the form of vice. Once again, the view that vice is a prudential as well as a moral evil is independently attractive. So far, then, we do intuitively have substantive prudential bads corresponding to each good. However, the other four entries on our objective list are more challenging, if what we are after is a theory of ill-being that neatly reflects the positive account.

Kagan proposes that “the state in which you believe P even though P is false and you are believing in the face of overall evidence to the contrary” is basically prudentially bad.⁵ I agree that this claim is, in many cases, plausible. This could perhaps afford us the negative counterpart of knowledge. However, matters are complicated by the fact that, in other instances, being in such an epistemic state seems at most instrumentally, as opposed to finally, prudentially disvaluable. It thus appears that we need to factor in what one’s belief is *about*. Having unjustified false beliefs about the fundamental nature of the world and one’s relationship to it is intuitively bad for one, and not only instrumentally. Having unjustified false beliefs about *wholly trivial matters*, by contrast, is plausibly not bad for one at all. Moreover, having false beliefs about the fundamental nature of the world and one’s relationship to it is plausibly bad for one even if one’s beliefs *are justified*. Considerations of truth and falsity and considerations of justification thus seem to have independent intuitive significance, and their interplay is bound to be quite complicated. For there are various distinct epistemic states in this range that we now must give an account of. If knowledge has basic prudential value, it is plausible that states that fall just short of knowledge (that is, certain cases of unjustified true belief and justified false belief) also have some value, especially where the state falls short of knowledge through no fault

⁵ Kagan (2014, p.281).

of the agent. At least, we would not want to say that such states are all prudentially *disvaluable*, if for no other reason than that, if this were the case, a sure way to avoid allowing such prudential evils into one's life would be to refrain from forming any beliefs. This is evidently not a good strategy.

Except for the point about the object of one's belief, the above issues all arise from the fact that knowledge is what Kagan calls a 'structured good', in that it requires that several distinct conditions, whose obtaining is independent of each other, be met.⁶ For any such good, there is a burden on us to say how states that meet *some* but not *all* these conditions are to be viewed. We might wonder, for instance, how *unjustified true belief* and *justified false belief* compare, and whether one of these is always worse than the other. I do not pretend to know how to provide a prudential ranking of epistemic states, nor am I optimistic that we can do so even in principle, except on a case by case basis. Perhaps the most we can say with confidence is that at least some instances of false belief are basically prudentially bad, and that this badness is exacerbated where the false beliefs in question are a) unjustified, and b) about maximally general, deep aspects of reality. A state of false belief that meets these conditions is, if you like, the opposite of the basic prudential good of knowledge.

Achievement is likewise a structured good. Minimally, it requires setting oneself a goal, taking certain steps to bring about that goal, and succeeding in exerting one's will on the world in this way. The first two conditions can clearly be met in the absence of the third (remember our old friend Joan). Although both knowledge and achievement are structured goods, and thus inherit some of the same complexities, it is even more difficult to locate a plausible negative counterpart to the latter. Insofar as achievement has an intuitive opposite, it is failure. But we do

⁶ Ibid. (2014, pp. 281-2).

not, I think, want to say that failure is basically prudential bad. On the contrary, attempting to achieve some goal but failing to do so seems, at least in many cases, to be prudentially valuable, even if it is less good for one than succeeding in attaining one's goal (again think of Joan). Certainly, if we compare failing in some worthwhile endeavour to not attempting it at all, I doubt many of us would judge that the person who does not even make the effort is better off.

Achievement essentially involves the successful exercise of one's practical agency in pursuit of some end. Perhaps, then, to the extent that there is a corresponding prudential bad, it is *neglect* of one's agential capacities. Yet even this is best seen not as a substantive prudential evil but as the absence of, not just achievement itself, but also the subsidiary prudential goods involved in pursuing one's goals. We thus have both an interesting parallel between knowledge and achievement, and an apparent disanalogy. The value of knowledge and the value of achievement are both related to the successful exercise of agency (in the one case theoretical and in the other practical). However, at least in many cases, unsuccessful exercises of theoretical agency seem to be substantive prudential bads. This can be due either to a lack of justification or to a lack of fit with the world. Yet nothing similar seems to be true in the case of practical agency. Indeed, I cannot find a basic prudential bad corresponding to the basic good of achievement at all.

I am also not able to identify plausible prudential bads corresponding to friendship or to romantic and familial love. The natural move would be to take *bad relationships* (toxic friendships, dysfunctional familial relations, codependent romantic entanglements) to be basic constituents of ill-being. However, although these sorts of relationships often do make a person's life all-things-considered worse, this does not require us to identify the relationships themselves (as opposed to their various harmful effects) as substantive bads. Moreover, the view that it is

better for a person to have even toxic friendships, dysfunctional familial relations, and codependent romantic affairs than to have *none* of these things is a plausible one. Yet this does not square well with the claim that these are prudential bads (as opposed to inferior or degraded instances of prudential goods). If we think that one is better off having even *bad* interpersonal relationships than having *no* close interpersonal bonds, we might suppose that the basic prudential bad is instead the absence of such relationships. But again, this is to falsely equate the absence from one's life of certain prudential goods with the presence in it of prudential evils.

In the case of autonomy, it seems more likely that there is a substantive prudential bad in the vicinity. If we consider again the deferential wife, the fact that she is so dominated by her husband intuitively reflects not just the absence of the prudential good of autonomy but the presence of a basic prudential bad. Her circumstances, after all, are distinctly destructive of her identity and self-respect. Following standard English usage, we may call the prudential evil in this case *heteronomy*, where this should be understood to encompass not only external barriers to self-realization and self-respect but also internal, psychological ones.

The upshot of the preceding discussion is that there are fewer identifiable prudential bads than there are goods. We listed six attitude-independent prudential goods in the previous chapter. We have so far only been able to pinpoint four corresponding bads, namely pain, vice, some kinds of false belief, and heteronomy. There may be others, but it does not seem that we will be able to read them off from the positive account. It would, of course, have been neater and more convenient if we could present treatments of well-being and ill-being that were perfect mirror images. That said, one cannot reasonably impose this as a desideratum that the disjunctive hybrid approach, or any other approach to this topic, must meet. One of the recurring themes of this dissertation is that, when it comes to prudential value (and now disvalue), the truth is sometimes

messy. We must not overvalue theoretical simplicity, if this comes at the cost of getting things right. Rather than straining to make the negative and positive sides of our account correspond to each other more precisely, it is therefore better to push forward with the provisional list of attitude-independent prudential bads we now have in hand (allowing that we may find other intuitively plausible candidates, or need to refine the existing ones).⁷ This, then, roughly constitutes the objectivist strand of a disjunctive hybrid approach to prudential disvalue.

5.3 Kagan's Worry

Now that we have both strands of a disjunctive hybrid approach to ill-being before us, we can combine them with DHT itself to give a complete picture of the prudential landscape. An interesting, and perhaps surprising, consequence that emerges is that the same feature of the same thing can simultaneously be (basically) prudentially valuable and (basically) prudentially disvaluable. Kagan claims that this result is so troubling as to provide grounds for rejecting any approach to the prudential goods and bads that implies it. In this section I consider Kagan's worry, and argue that it shows only that we must be careful in how we understand the claims of the disjunctive hybrid approach. It does not constitute a compelling objection to this (or any other) treatment of prudential value and disvalue.

There are at least two distinct ways in which such a situation can arise on our approach. First, one can have the right kind of desire for something that is a basic prudential bad. The rejection of any kind of substantive value constraint on the content of the desires that are relevant to one's

⁷ We should, moreover, allow that there may be entries on the negative side of the prudential ledger that have no counterpart on the positive side (just as there seem to be certain basic prudential goods that cannot be matched with corresponding bads). I cannot here think of a plausible candidate, but I do not wish to preclude this possibility.

well-being is what allows for this. DHT is committed to accommodating the subjectivist insight, according to which in caring about something (sufficiently and in the right way) a person can confer prudential value upon it. In rejecting objective necessity, it says that this is so even if the object of one's desire lacks any antecedent value. Once the theory has gone this far, it has no principled grounds for denying that one's desires can confer prudential value even upon objects that are substantively *disvaluable*. If we compare a case where the object of one's desire is neither independently valuable nor independently disvaluable with one in which it has some slight amount of attitude-independent disvalue (and hold all else constant), it is implausible to hold that in the first case there is some attitude-dependent prudential value conferred and in the second there is none. We should therefore concede this point. Insofar as we hold that the substantive badness of (some feature of) a state of affairs, and one's having the right sort of desire for it, are independent sources of (respectively) prudential disvalue and prudential value, it follows that cases where (the same feature of) the same state of affairs is at once prudentially bad and prudentially good are possible.

Recall that we also placed no substantive constraints on the contents of one's prudentially relevant aversions. It thus seems that one can also confer prudential disvalue upon any object by having the right kind of aversion toward it. In cases where the object of one's aversion has attitude-independent prudential value (and I again see no principled reason to rule out such cases), we will again have to say that this object is at once basically prudentially good and basically prudentially bad.

The specter thus arises of the disjunctive hybrid approach issuing conflicting verdicts in certain situations. Suppose that one of David's most central desires is to see his bitter business rival Joshua come to ruin, precisely so that he may rub Joshua's failure in his face. David does

not himself take any steps to bring about Joshua's downfall, but only because he fears the repercussions. Nonetheless, at long last a stroke of good fortune hits, and Joshua loses most of his money to a sophisticated email scam. It seems that twisting the knife on his rival in this case is, in some respect, good for David. After all, in doing so he is satisfying one of his fondest desires (that is why it made sense to call Joshua's misfortune a stroke of good luck, from David's perspective). Once objective necessity is denied, it is difficult not to conclude that the satisfaction of David's desire is at least *pro tanto* good for him. However, the desired state of affairs (namely, David's tormenting of Joshua) may simultaneously be *pro tanto* bad for David. Torturing a fellow human being in this way is a paradigm case of a vicious action. If we were correct in the previous chapter in identifying vice as a substantive prudential bad, we thus have an instance of a state of affairs that is at once a basic prudential bad and a basic prudential good (due to the very same feature).

To illustrate the other side of the apparent problem, we can return to the case of Jill discussed in Chapter 4. Recall that Jill is in a loving, committed, mutually supportive and rewarding romantic relationship with Jacqueline. However, she has been brought up to believe that such relationships are sinful. We can, it seems, imagine that Jill not only does not desire to be in this relationship, but is actually averse to her romantic involvement with Jacqueline. It does not seem to follow that being in this otherwise healthy relationship has no prudential value. Yet there is clearly also prudential disvalue in being in a romantic relationship to which one is averse. Jill's relationship with Jacqueline thus seems to be at once basically prudentially valuable and basically prudentially disvaluable.

Kagan protests that “the idea that a *single* feature of a single object could be both intrinsically good and intrinsically bad for you simultaneously”⁸ is intuitively unacceptable, so that any approach that implies it is a non-starter. Although presented as an objection to the aversion approach, if Kagan is correct that this is an unpalatable consequence, it also serves as an objection to our disjunctive hybrid treatment of the prudential goods and bads. And this is so regardless of whether we take our cue from the aversion approach or from the frustration approach. In either case, we must allow for situations in which the (same feature of) the same object is simultaneously a basic constituent of prudential value and a basic constituent of prudential disvalue.

The worry here is overblown. For notice that nothing prevents the disjunctive hybrid approach from delivering a verdict about whether a given state of affairs is *all things considered* prudentially valuable or disvaluable, in cases like the two above. This will have to be done by comparing the degree of prudential value or disvalue arising from one’s desire or aversion (a function presumably of the intensity of the desire or aversion, along with other factors such as its duration) with the attitude-independent prudential badness or goodness of the object. In some cases, it may be that these will cancel each other out, so that the object of the relevant pro- or con-attitude is all things considered prudentially neutral. More often, one or the other side will outweigh the other. In such cases the prudential value or disvalue that is outweighed does not cease to exist, and so the state of affairs remains *pro tanto* prudentially bad even if it is all things considered prudentially good (or vice versa).

Responding to Kagan’s challenge thus requires only that we take careful note of the distinction between *pro tanto* and all things considered prudential value and disvalue. I concede

⁸ Kagan (2014, pp. 270-1).

that if our account ever gave the result that the same feature of the same state of affairs is both an *all things considered* prudential good and an *all things considered* prudential evil this would be a damning indictment of it. However, this is not something the disjunctive hybrid approach need ever say. It is committed only to the view that states of affairs that have *pro tanto* prudential value can also have *pro tanto* disvalue. This is not so surprising, nor does it constitute a serious problem for the account, provided it can render plausible verdicts about what is *all things considered* best for a person.

5.4 The Question of Weighing

If the disjunctive hybrid approach is to deliver any all things considered verdicts at all, it must be possible to compare the prudential value of distinct states of affairs, including sometimes comparing attitude-independent prudential goods with those that are grounded in the person's desires. The process of making such comparisons is liable to be a complicated and inexact one, but alas that is par for the course in the evaluative domain. Still, we surely do want the theory to render clear and definitive overall judgments in *at least some* cases, if only where one or the other verdict is intuitively obvious. There are times when we do know what is all things considered best for a person, and the disjunctive hybrid account had best accommodate this fact. The alternative would be to remain at the level of *pro tanto* judgments, and in every case to stay silent on the issue of how the various prudential goods and bads trade off against each other. This is an unappealing resting place. Some degree of comparability is thus assumed by the disjunctive hybrid approach as it is being developed here. Bear in mind that this is a very minimal assumption, however. All it requires is that there is a single scale of prudential value/disvalue, on which each prudentially good or bad thing falls somewhere. That does not yet tell us anything

about how to weigh these various goods and bads against each other.

One temptation we should certainly resist is any claim to the effect that either one *source* of prudential value (attitude-dependent or attitude-independent) or one *kind* of attitude-independent prudential good (for instance, pleasure or virtue) always trumps another. Such a proposal may be especially alluring when we are faced with cases in which the same object has both attitude-dependent prudential value and attitude-independent prudential disvalue (or vice versa). It is consistent with the denial of objective necessity (and even with the view that desires can confer prudential value on objects that are otherwise disvaluable) to hold that desires enter in as tie-breakers between states of affairs that are equal with respect to substantive value, but can never make the obtaining of the substantively worse state of affairs all things considered prudentially better.⁹ The tie-breaking view clearly fails to accord sufficient prudential relevance to what a person cares about. Yet without going so far as to endorse this view, one could still hold that, although one can confer some *pro tanto* prudential value upon a state of affairs with attitude-independent prudential disvalue, one can never make such a state of affairs all things considered good for one.

And yet, even this position is unsustainable. Thus, suppose we compare two states of affairs, the first of which is substantively neutral, and the second of which possesses some small amount of attitude-independent prudential disvalue. If one of a person's central desires is that the latter state of affairs obtain, it is hard to believe that it would nonetheless be better for the person if the former obtained. We should be suspicious of such claims of lexical priority. The same point extends to comparisons between the various attitude-independent prudential goods themselves.

⁹ Bykvist (2010) expresses support for the tie-breaking view. Sobel (2016 [1997], p.70) discusses a similar view, according to which "the agent's preferences are (perhaps even) sufficient for determining her good in some contexts deemed matters of "mere taste" ...".

The key point to bear in mind is that all the prudential goods which DHT recognizes can be present in a life to wildly varying degrees. The defender of the view that one of them is lexically prior to any other must hold that any amount, however negligible, of the one always outweighs any amount, however large, of the other. Such a position proves untenable.

It is worth mentioning here a closely related claim that may be tempting, even to those who reject the general priority of one source of (or kind of) prudential good over another. In a forthcoming paper, Theron Pummer points out that one of the consequences of a pluralist approach to prudential value is that *lopsided lives* are possible.¹⁰ These are lives that instantiate certain goods to a very high degree, but are either very low or completely lacking in others. Pummer argues that the possibility of lopsided lives (he focuses particularly on those that are lacking in pleasure but high in other basic prudential goods) poses a problem for the enumerative pluralist. I will not discuss the details of the argument here, except to note that the problem Pummer points to only arises if one holds the view that the *overall* prudential value of any life that is sufficiently low in *one of* the prudential goods cannot exceed finite limit X. If the amount of this one prudential good in the life falls below some given magnitude (M), the claim is that this imposes a definite cap (X) on how good that life can be overall, regardless of how bounteous it may be in the other prudential goods. Indeed, even if we continue increasing the level of each of the other goods *ad infinitum*, the life's overall prudential value can never rise above X. We will call this the *capping view*.

Pummer suggests that pluralists should find the capping view intuitive, at least in the case of pleasure.¹¹ I suspect he is right that, at a rough intuitive level, many do make such judgments.

¹⁰ Pummer (Forthcoming).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

However, once we start to think more reflectively about the issue, I trust most of us will agree that this view is implausible. For, as Pummer points out, the capping view makes our verdicts about someone's overall well-being absurdly oversensitive to very small differences in the level of one specific good.¹² This is because, even though it makes no general claim about one prudential good being lexically prior to another, the capping view introduces such priority wherever the level of the specified good in a life falls below *M*, and the overall prudential value of the life reaches *X*. The priority asserted, moreover, is that of *whatever amount of the one good would be sufficient to reach M* (no matter how small this may be) over *any amount of all the other goods combined*. This is even less plausible than the general claim that a given good is lexically prior to some other. The lesson we should draw is that wherever a lexical element is introduced into our theorizing about prudential value, and however big a role it plays, it should be rejected. Pluralists should not see the fact that a life is low or even completely lacking in any one prudential good as imposing a cap on how good it can be overall for the person living it. We can, though, say that such a life could always be improved by the addition of the good in question (or by an increase in the amount of it). This should be enough for us.

The above paragraphs predominantly served to rule out certain claims, namely general lexical priority and the capping claim. They told us little about how we should go about weighing either attitude-independent and attitude-dependent prudential values, or different kinds of attitude independent goods, against each other. I doubt that we can conclude very much in general about how to make such trade-offs. I am confident that no basic constituent of prudential value is lexically prior to any other, either in general or after some limiting point, for the reasons sketched above. I am also confident that there is no general priority of attitude-independent over

¹² Ibid.

attitude-dependent values, or vice versa. Beyond this, however, confidence quickly runs out. We will always have to look at the particular instances of the prudential goods and bads in question, and decide on a case-by-case basis which outweighs the other. If the inexactitude that this introduces is taken to undermine the account, this is a fault that our approach shares, to some extent, with every other version of enumerative pluralism.

Some, indeed, have taken such considerations to count very strongly in favour of enumerative monism. Thus, Ben Bradley argues as follows:

“...[P]luralists must tell us, for example, how to compare the effect on well-being of a certain amount of pleasure with the effect of a certain amount of knowledge...To the extent that the pluralist refuses to tackle these questions she abandons the philosophical project of understanding well-being; she admits defeat. A theory that tells us that A, B, and C are intrinsically good, but does not tell us why those things are on the list or how to weigh them, does not give us what we initially wanted out of a theory of well-being. We wanted enlightenment, but we are provided instead with a list, and are told not to look any deeper. This is not theorizing, but a refusal to theorize. In what follows I will not treat pluralism as a distinct theory, since in the absence of a weighing principle, we do not have a theory with any testable implications at all.”¹³

Bradley’s position here is a distinctly uncharitable one, however. Even if he is correct that the lack of a general principle for comparing the various prudential goods and bads is a relative drawback of pluralist approaches, this cannot constitute a decisive objection. For it may well be that, upon correct identification of the basic constituents of prudential value, we will find that they do not admit of such a standard metric. Surely, we cannot just stipulate that there must be one. Otherwise, we may allow ourselves to be led, by the antecedent conviction that any acceptable theory will include a comprehensive weighing principle, to an overly narrow account of the basic constituents of prudential value themselves. Moreover, it is not as if our approach denies that we can compare the value of the various goods it admits, or that there is always some

¹³ Bradley (2009, pp. 16-17).

right answer to the question of what is all things considered best for a person. It simply denies that in engaging in such comparisons, and seeking such answers, we can rely upon any one-size-fits-all principle.

It is instructive to compare Bradley's objection to pluralist approaches to a common objection to the pluralist deontology of W.D. Ross.¹⁴ Thus, some of Ross's critics complain that he does not offer a moral theory at all, but simply an unconnected heap of duties.¹⁵ DHT (and pluralist theories of prudential value in general) may similarly be accused of providing only an unconnected heap of prudential goods. However, just as the truth about morality may be too complicated to be reduced to any single factor, the same may be true of prudential value. And just as on the Rossian view we can't say that one *source of moral reasons* always trumps another, but must consider all the morally relevant factors before we can know what our all things considered duty is, so we can't say that one *source of prudential value* or one *kind of prudential good* always trumps another. Rossian pluralism is, at the very least, a reasonable approach to the question of how our moral duties are determined. I don't see, then, how we can rule out in advance that a similarly complex web of considerations might need to be appealed to, in ascertaining what is all things considered best for a person.

5.5 DHT and the Well-Being of Other Beings

One desideratum on any theory of prudential value is that it not issue implausible results when applied to welfare subjects other than adult humans. Eden Lin has recently argued that

¹⁴ As most fully developed in Ross (1930).

¹⁵ This way of phrasing the objection is borrowed from McNaughton (1996). For a brief but clear statement of this worry about Rossian pluralism see Heathwood (2007). Ross's *prima facie* duties are, of course, strictly speaking neither *prima facie* nor duties. Rather, they should be understood as distinct sources of moral reasons, all of which play a role in determining what one's actual duty is.

sophisticated versions of subjectivism (namely, those which appeal to pro-attitudes requiring a level of cognitive complexity that human infants and non-human animals appear to lack) are unable to satisfy this desideratum.¹⁶ In this section I consider this objection, and show that even if it vitiates certain thoroughgoing subjectivist theories, it does not touch DHT. DHT not only survives the test cases of babies and animals unscathed, but gives more plausible results than several of its competitors.

It is at least arguable whether all sentient beings have desires. Even if babies and most non-human animals do have desires of a comparatively crude sort, they do not plausibly possess anything like the more cognitively involved pro-attitudes that sophisticated subjectivists invoke. Such subjectivists thus seem to be backed into a corner, where they must choose between the absurd claim that nothing is prudentially valuable for beings that lack sufficiently sophisticated attitudes, or the unintuitive (and in other ways problematic) claim that their well-being is entirely discontinuous with ours.¹⁷

DHT, insofar as it recognizes both attitude-dependent and attitude-independent prudential goods, can accommodate what seems right about sophisticated subjectivism without running into these problems. Recall that the subjectivist strand of DHT, DS*, incorporates an identification constraint on the desires it deems prudentially relevant. Although I do not wish to rule out that babies and some other animals may have desires that satisfy this constraint, it is evident that a being could be sentient (that is, could experience pleasure and pain) without having any such desires. Such beings clearly have a welfare, however. DS*, if considered by itself, would thus be susceptible to Lin's charge. However, we are not here considering DS* on its own, but as one

¹⁶ Lin (2015).

¹⁷ Again, see Lin (2015) for discussion of the implausible consequences that follow from this latter claim.

strand of DHT. It is therefore open to us to recognize only desires that satisfy the identification constraint as sources of attitude-dependent prudential value. So, long as there is at least one other source of prudential value, which *is* accessible to all sentient beings, the subjectivist strand of our theory introduces no new difficulties. The idea of value-conferring that plays such an important role in DHT as applied to adult humans will simply not enter into its treatment of animal and infant well-being, if these entities lack the relevant kind of desires.

It is important to see that, insofar as DHT admits sensory pleasure as a distinct source of prudential value, it does not face objections of the sort that haunt thoroughgoing versions of sophisticated subjectivism.¹⁸ One datum that any theory of prudential value should accommodate is that there is substantial overlap between the well-being of an adult human and that of a cat or of a human infant. DHT, in taking pleasures to be basic constituents of prudential value, can accommodate at least this degree of convergence between the well-being of adult humans and that of other welfare-subjects. When we reflect on what is good for our cats and our babies, we find that, just as pleasure is among the most immediately apparent constituents of our own well-being, it is also the primary, and perhaps the sole, constituent of infant and animal well-being. Moreover, at least when we consider the simplest sensory pleasures, they seem to be good for us *in precisely the same way and for the same reason* that they are good for these other sentient beings. Indeed, I believe part of the historical appeal of hedonism lies in its ability to capture this commonality. When it comes to sensory pleasure (and pain) all sentient creatures, regardless of cognitive sophistication, are in the same boat.

¹⁸ This is so whether pleasure is best understood as an attitude-independent prudential good or as reducible to desire-satisfaction. If the latter, we must simply extend the scope of DS* to include pleasures, as well as desires that satisfy the identification constraint. In any case, the status of pleasure as a basic prudential good is non-negotiable on any defensible version of DHT.

As to the other attitude-independent prudential goods that DHT recognizes, at least some of these items are plausibly only accessible to some welfare-subjects, and in certain cases only to adult humans. Note that this is a quite different claim from the perfectionist's assertion that prudential value is inherently kind-relative. If friendship, achievement, autonomy, virtue, and knowledge enhance the well-being of adult humans but not that of other sentient beings, this is plausibly because beings must possess sufficient cognitive sophistication to realize such goods in their lives. This is quite compatible with holding that the presence of these goods in the life of any sentient creature *would* enhance its well-being, just as it *would* enhance the well-being of any sentient creature with desires that satisfied the identification constraint to obtain the objects of these desires, and just as it in fact enhances the well-being of any sentient creature when it feels pleasure. The prudential goods that are *accessible* to a given organism do, on this view, depend to some extent on what the organism is like. However, the divergence here arises from practical considerations, as opposed to being built into the very nature of prudential value.¹⁹

Alternatively, the disjunctive hybrid theorist might simply hold that the content of the objective list is different depending on the kind of organism we are talking about, and that this fact is not susceptible of further explanation. This would be in the spirit of the primitivist approach discussed in Chapter 4, whereas the approach discussed in the previous paragraph fits better with the locative account (insofar as, if something is good *simpliciter*, it is natural to suppose that it is also good for any creature in whose life it is instantiated). As long as the primitivist recognizes that at least one of the entries on the list (namely pleasure) is shared between humans and other animals, they can secure the necessary overlap between the well-being of adult humans and that of other welfare subjects. As discussed in the last chapter, I find

¹⁹ Cf. the similar claim in Arneson (2010, pp.737-8).

the primitivist approach less satisfying. However, I present it here as an option that is wholly compatible with DHT.

The picture sketched so far should be a broadly appealing one. DHT does not have to rely on any bold claims about the relationship between prudential goodness and goodness of a kind (although the perfectionist route remains open to those who prefer it). And yet, it is still able to capture the fact that certain prudential goods are, at least as far as we know, instantiated only in human lives. Moreover, unlike hedonism or a thoroughgoing objective list view, it can capture the way in which we are, again as far as we know, unique among the animals in our capacity to confer prudential value upon objects. It does the latter without thereby committing us to the unintuitive result that the well-being of adult humans and that of our fellow creatures is wholly discontinuous, either when it comes to explaining why the things that are good for us are so or when it comes to enumerating these goods. For again, pleasure is good for me for the same reason and in the same way that it is good for my baby and my cat. This strikes me as an important insight of hedonism which DHT does well to preserve.

5.6 DHT and Meaning

Although the stereotypical picture of the philosopher that prevails among laypeople is of a figure afflicted by tormenting reflections about ‘the meaning of life’, this is not a matter that has been much discussed within the Anglo-American philosophical tradition.²⁰ However, the question of what (if anything) makes a life meaningful has received more attention of late. Susan Wolf has

²⁰ A note on terminology: As it is doubtful whether life itself is even the sort of thing that admits of a meaning, I prefer to talk instead about individual lives ‘being meaningful’ or (even better) ‘containing meaning’. I borrow from Wolf (2010) the idea that there can be meaning *in life* in this latter sense even without there being a meaning *of life* in any grand cosmic sense.

been the most eloquent and persistent advocate of the view that meaning in life is a phenomenon that deserves to be an object of philosophical study.²¹ In this section, I argue that DHT can help secure the plausible result that meaning is both highly relevant to the prudential value of a life, and distinct from prudential value in an important sense. One way it might do this is by taking over Wolf's own hybrid account of meaning in life as subjective engagement with things that have attitude-independent value.²² However, Wolf's requirement of subjective engagement is not, I think, plausible. I thus prefer a different approach, which sees meaning as entering in with certain of the attitude-independent prudential goods we have separately identified, regardless of whether the person has any pro-attitude towards them. Such a view better reflects common intuitions about the relationship between well-being and meaning in life, while preserving the distinctness of these notions.

When we ask how well a person's life is going, there are multiple distinct dimensions along which we may evaluate it. As we have already had occasion to point out, the relationships between these dimensions are not clear-cut, and it is sometimes difficult to know which of them we are relying upon in delivering our verdicts. We have been focusing on the prudential dimension. However, prudential evaluations are themselves closely connected with certain other modes of assessment. One of these is moral. We evaluate people's lives, as well as people themselves, as morally good or bad. I have argued that moral virtue is one of the basic constituents of well-being, and vice one of the basic constituents of ill-being. Insofar as virtue is just one of several attitude-independent prudential goods, and there is also the subjectivist side of the story to consider, the moral and prudential evaluation of a life can obviously come apart. It is possible that a life could rank very high from the perspective of morality but very low from that

²¹ In Wolf (2010) and Wolf (2016), among others.

²² As developed most fully in Wolf (2010).

of prudence. Yet this is not to say that prudential evaluation and moral evaluation are wholly separable. They are not and cannot be, if moral virtue is part of what makes a life go well for the person living it.

What I wish to suggest is that meaning in life should be taken to be related to prudential value in a somewhat similar way. One element of a life's going well, overall, for the person living it, is its being meaningful. However, as meaningfulness is not all there is to prudential value, rankings of lives on the meaningfulness scale and the prudential scale can again come apart. This might, then, suggest to the reader that meaningfulness should have appeared on the list of prudential goods enumerated above. The reason it did not is also the reason why, I think, the question of meaning in life has seemed so special and so pressing. The meaningfulness of a life seems to reflect, and indeed to be constituted by, the presence in that life of a variety of attitude-independent prudential goods. An assessment of the degree of meaning in a life is thus not best seen as ascribing to it a certain amount of some distinct, separable prudential good. Rather, such assessments involve a more synoptic judgment about how rich one's life is in various goods on the objective list.

Once we have started down this road, it is tempting to identify the meaningfulness of a life straightforwardly with the attitude-independent prudential value it contains. However, there is a complication that prevents us from taking this step. When one considers our list of substantive goods, one of them seems to stand out as lacking any plausible connection to meaning in life. Where the presence in a life of friendship, love, virtue, achievement, autonomy and important knowledge does intuitively contribute to how meaningful the life is (even if one does not take this to be all there is to meaning), the presence of *pleasure* does not seem to be tied to meaning in life in the same way.

As we have noted several times, pleasure is an outlier among the attitude-independent goods for a different reason, namely that its status as attitude-independent is open to question. This is because some accounts of pleasure make it reducible to desire-satisfaction. We have so far tried to remain neutral on the matter of how pleasure can best be analyzed by leaving it on the objective list (albeit with a question mark attached). One way of making meaningfulness and attitude-independent prudential value track each other exactly would be to give up this stance and exile pleasure from the list. However, we do not need to take such an extreme step, in order to explain why pleasure does not contribute to a life's meaningfulness. For even if pleasure is a substantive prudential good, it is a distinctive one, in that ascriptions of pleasure need not go beyond one's own mental state. Pleasure does not seem to constitutively involve the kind of connection between oneself and the outside world that other attitude-independent goods involve, that is. One can plausibly see the presence of this connection between self and world as accounting at least in part for the prudential value of these goods, as well as for their contribution to the meaningfulness of one's life. We now seem to have learned something more about what these varied goods have in common, and thereby enriched DHT itself.

The way in which our account of meaning in life will run follows naturally from what was said above. If meaningfulness is just equated with the presence of certain attitude-independent prudential goods in a life, and these goods do not (we have argued) require the sanction of any pro-attitude, then neither will meaningfulness itself. Now, I think this is a salutary result, both because it offers a clear way of distinguishing evaluations in terms of meaningfulness from all things considered prudential evaluations, and because it is independently plausible. One feature of our intuitive notion is that meaning in life often arises from surprising sources, including activities and relationships that the person is not themselves positively disposed to. The

staunchly objectivist approach to meaningfulness I am suggesting can accommodate this phenomenon very well, whereas any view that imposes a subjective engagement constraint struggles to do so.

It should, nonetheless, be emphasized that one who favours a Wolf-style hybrid account of meaningfulness could also combine it with DHT. The main difference here is that, on such a view, meaningfulness would itself incorporate elements from both strands of the disjunctive hybrid. One would still be able to draw a clear distinction between prudential value and meaningfulness. Thus, whether or not one agrees with the specific approach to meaning in life I have proposed, it is an advantage of DHT that it can account for the importance of judgments of meaningfulness, and tightly connect them to prudential assessments, without forfeiting the independence of these two modes of evaluation.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed some of DHT's dangling threads, and considered some specific applications of this new approach to prudential value. I have shown that, when applied to such issues as ill-being, the well-being of infants and non-human animals, and meaning in life, DHT performs as well as (and in some cases considerably better than) its chief competitors. I have not here considered all the potential objections to the theory, although I console myself with the thought that, regardless of one's favoured theory of prudential value, this looks to be a Sisyphean task. I have, however, shown that some of the objections that might most naturally have occurred to the reader can be satisfactorily addressed, provided we formulate DHT with sufficient care.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I argued that all extant theories of prudential value are either a) *enumeratively* deficient, in that they are unable to accommodate everything that, intuitively, is a basic constituent of prudential value, b) *explanatorily* deficient, in that they are at least sometimes unable to give a plausible story about what *makes* a given thing prudentially valuable, or c) both. In response to this unsatisfactory state of the literature, I presented my own account, the *Disjunctive Hybrid Theory* or DHT.

DHT answers to and remedies each of the above inadequacies in a way that no other approach can. Although it follows other recent accounts in combining elements from objective and subjective theories, ours is a hybrid theory of a quite new kind. This is because it denies both *subjective necessity* (the constraint that, if thing x is to be basically good for person P, P must have some pro-attitude toward x) and *objective necessity* (the constraint that, if thing x is to be basically good for person P, x must have some attitude-independent value). The rejection of both necessity claims is called for if we are to move beyond the enumerative and explanatory limitations of existing accounts.

We should reject subjective necessity because, as I argued at length in Chapter 4, it rules out, as basic constituents of prudential value, certain things (such as Jessica's knowledge and Jill's relationship) that no theory should rule out. Moreover, even if a theory that accepts some version of subjective necessity (whether it be in the form of a *desire constraint* or an *enjoyment constraint*) can be made to deliver the right enumerative results, it still gives the wrong explanation of why things like Jessica's knowledge and Jill's relationship are prudentially valuable. Knowledge and romantic love (as well as virtue, autonomy, achievement, friendship, pleasure, and perhaps certain other items) are basically good for any person because they have

attitude-independent prudential value. This is the *objectivist insight* which any satisfying theory of prudential value needs to capture, and which comes into conflict with any version of subjective necessity. Thoroughgoing subjective theories such as desire-satisfactionism, along with any hybrid theory which endorses subjective necessity, are for this reason inadequate.

We should reject objective necessity because there is also a *subjectivist insight* that theorists of prudential value cannot afford to ignore. The subjectivist insight is that *a person can confer prudential value upon things by caring about them (sufficiently and in the right way)*. This is so, moreover, even if these things lack any independent value. As I argued in chapters 2 and 3, the best way to capture this insight is to hold, with the desire-satisfactionist, that P's *desires* are (in at least some cases) themselves original sources of prudential value. Evangeline's desire to meet William Shatner is sufficient to make the state of affairs in which she meets William Shatner basically good for her. Insofar as this state of affairs lacks any attitude-independent value, however, objective necessity would rule it out as a basic constituent of her good. Again, even if a theory that accepts objective necessity could be made to deliver the intuitively right enumerative results, it would leave something important out of its explanation of why meeting Shatner is good for Evangeline, namely the *value-conferring* role of Evangeline's own desires. Thoroughgoing objective theories such as perfectionist or objectivist list accounts, along with any hybrid theory which endorses objective necessity, are on these grounds inadequate.

Granting that the subjectivist strand of DHT should be modelled on desire-satisfactionism, it remains crucial that this be done in the right way, as I showed in Chapter 3. We should, first, insist upon an *object* rather than a *combo* interpretation of the desire-satisfactionist axiology, on pain of losing our grip on the subjectivist insight. What is more, if our theory of prudential value is to be extensionally and explanatorily adequate, it should focus

on a person's *actual* (as opposed to idealized) desires, and reject any *substantive* constraints on the contents of the desires that have prudential relevance. On the other hand, an *identification constraint*, to the effect that for a desire to confer prudential value upon its object it must be sufficiently enduring, stably held, and integrated into one's self-conception, is justifiable on grounds internal to the subjectivist insight itself. A constraint of this last sort can also help in dealing with the intuitive *scope problem* for desire-satisfactionism, thereby ensuring that DHT can offer a plausible enumeration, as well as a plausible explanation, of the basic constituents of prudential value.

The general thrust of this dissertation is toward a theory of prudential value that is *maximally inclusive*. As we saw in Chapter 1, the *under-inclusiveness objection* to which DHT is thus responding is one reliable source of intuitive counterexamples to proposed accounts of prudential value. This objection also has a mirror image, which we called the *over-inclusiveness objection*. Moreover, every theory of prudential value thus far defended has been the target of both types of objection, at different points and from different angles. I am not so bold as to suppose that I, alone, have here hit on an account that is not subject to either of the foregoing objections. What I do think can fairly be claimed for my account is that, more than any other extant theory, DHT does not intuitively *leave anything out*, either at the enumerative or at the explanatory level. At least with respect to the under-inclusiveness objection, then, the theory performs better than any other. Admittedly, it would be preferable if we could somehow produce a theory that would easily dispense with both types of intuitive counterexample at once, as opposed to girding itself against the one while rendering itself vulnerable to the other. However, I doubt this can be done. The wiser course may then be to focus on disarming just one of the above objections, and to structure one's theory's accordingly, only later proceeding to fortify the

general structure as well as one can against the other. This has been our strategy in the preceding pages.

Why, then, do I opt to concentrate on the under-inclusiveness objection, rather than its opposite? Although the special concern for inclusiveness shown here may be in part a matter of philosophical temperament, I have also argued that it is grounded in a methodological principle that would in any case be plausible. According to *the care principle* (or CP): If those people who *love* and *care most* about person P believe that x is good for P (and desire x for P's sake), this constitutes solid *prima facie* evidence that x is in fact good for P. This principle is, in turn, justified by two underlying considerations. The first is that, in constructing a theory of prudential value, we have no better data to start from than the common-sense judgments of ordinary people. The second is that people's common-sense judgments about well-being generally come through most clearly when they are reflecting on what they want (or should want) for those whom they love and care about. My claim is that when we take these considerations, and the principle derived from them, seriously, we find ourselves pushed toward a theory like DHT.

One point I want to stress in closing is that the broad approach laid out here is expressly meant to be a flexible one. In embracing DHT, one is committing only to an account with the following structure: *Thing x is good for person P if and only if x is either a) cared about (sufficiently and in the right way) by P, b) a bearer of (the right kind of) attitude-independent value, or c) both.* The fact that both disjuncts are so underspecified, which prompted us to spend so much of this dissertation unpacking them, can also be taken as an advantage. I tried to give the most plausible construal I could of each strand of DHT. If problems arise for my specific approach to either strand, it may be that the theory will need to be modified in certain ways to better express its two core insights. DHT is quite capable of adapting in this way without giving

up what is distinctive and appealing about the theory. My hope, of course, is that it will prove not only flexible but fruitful, in that it will help philosophers of well-being to see that the respective insights of subjectivism and objectivism can be combined in a way not previously considered. If I may be permitted to quote from the concluding passage of my own favourite work of philosophy, I believe that here “it is not irrational to have high hopes”.¹

¹ Parfit (1984, p.454).

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