

Happiness, Pleasure and Belief

Edward Skidelsky

Abstract

This paper argues (against Fred Feldman) that happiness and pleasure are distinct states of mind because they stand in a distinct logical relation to belief. Roughly, being happy about a state of affairs *s* implies that one believes that *s* satisfies the description ‘*s*’ and that it is in some way good whereas taking pleasure in *s* does not. Feldman’s analysis of happiness in terms of attitudinal pleasure overlooks this distinction.

Keywords

Philosophical psychology; happiness; pleasure; Fred Feldman

1. Introduction

The English language distinguishes two mental states under the headings ‘happiness’ and ‘pleasure’. Counterparts, if not exact synonyms, can be found in many other languages.¹

Happiness is usually thought of as a deep and enduring emotion, such as might accompany

¹ Counterparts to ‘happiness’ and ‘pleasure’ include, in German, ‘Glück’ and ‘Vergnügen’, in French, ‘bonheur’ and ‘plaisir’, in Russian, ‘счастье’ (*schastye*) and ‘удовольствие’ (*udovolstviye*), and in Chinese, 幸福 (*xingfu*) and 快樂 (*kuai*le). These terms are not exact synonyms. The English word ‘happy’ tends to be used more freely than its cognates in other languages, many of which contain residues of an older, eudaimonistic understanding of happiness. Still, the paired terms mark out the same general distinction. See Wierzbicka [2004].

falling in love or the completion of an important piece of work. Pleasure, by contrast, is often fleeting and sensual. The experiences of sex and eating are standard examples.

Despite this widely recognised and entrenched distinction, some philosophers argue that there is no fundamental difference between happiness and pleasure, that happiness can indeed be *defined* in terms of pleasure. According to Fred Feldman [2010: 137], ‘to be happy at a time is to have a net positive balance of intrinsic occurrent attitudinal pleasure over intrinsic occurrent attitudinal displeasure at that time. More simply, to be happy is at a moment to be taking more pleasure than displeasure in things at that moment.’ Feldman makes it clear that he intends this as a real definition of the ordinary meaning of ‘happy’. ‘When it [the word “happy”] is used seriously as part of a description of someone’s mental state, it seems to me that it is generally used in such a way that its meaning would be made somewhat more precise and articulate but not seriously distorted if it were replaced by “takes more attitudinal pleasure than displeasure in things” [ibid.: 135].’

Let us call Feldman’s thesis ‘hedonism about happiness’. The central thesis of what follows is that hedonism about happiness is false. Happiness is categorially distinct from pleasure, because it stands in a distinct relation to belief. Feldman’s definition of happiness in terms of pleasure is made plausible only by a subtle equivocation on the meaning of ‘pleasure’, to be explored further at the end of this essay.

2. Preliminary clarifications

Before moving on to the main discussion, a couple of clarifications are necessary. First, I am concerned with the concepts of *happiness* and *pleasure* as they are understood by competent speakers of modern English. I am not concerned with the older meaning of ‘happiness’, still current among translators of ancient philosophy, as *eudaimonia* or wellbeing. I take

happiness, like pleasure, to be a state of mind – something that cannot by definition be affected by events taking place after one’s death or without one’s knowledge. Feldman also understands himself to be concerned with the ordinary modern meaning of ‘happiness’, and I assume with the ordinary modern meaning of ‘pleasure’ too, though he is less explicit on this latter point.

Secondly, I treat both pleasure and happiness as primarily *attitudinal* states, that is, as states directed towards an object, whether a thing, event or state of affairs. This is controversial, in both cases, and requires some words of justification.

Philosophers debate whether what makes an experience pleasant is the presence of a distinct sensation of pleasure or simply the fact that we take pleasure in it. The first is the sensational, the second the attitudinal view of pleasure. (A parallel debate takes place about pain.)

Attitudinal theories of pleasure vary according to their characterisation of the attitude in question. Candidates include *enjoying*, *apprehending as desirable*, *desiring to continue*, and *being pleased about*.² Among these, the most plausible is *enjoying*, since it implies least in the way of judgements and motives. If you take pleasure in a melody, you must at least be enjoying it, though you needn’t apprehend it as desirable, desire it to continue, or be pleased about it. I return to the issue in due course.

Both sensational and attitudinal views of pleasure face problems. The sensational view confronts the objection that pleasures form an open-ended and heterogeneous set, with no obvious common quality. What could unite the experiences of eating pickled walnuts, listening to Peking opera and perusing economic statistics other than the fact that some

² ‘Apprehending as desirable’ comes from Sidgwick [1874: 127]. ‘Desiring to continue’ comes from Brandt [1979: 38]. ‘Being pleased about’ comes from Feldman [2010: 109].

human beings take pleasure in them? On the other side, the attitudinal view faces the problem that some sensations seem to be simply pleasant, whether or not we take pleasure in them. A dedicated monk might find the touch of a woman's hand pleasant though he does not take any pleasure in it. Similarly, pains can be enjoyed without thereby ceasing to be pains.

L. W. Sumner [1996: 81-112] has suggested a sensible compromise. Pleasure, he argues, can refer *either* to a specific bodily sensation, typically associated with sex, warm baths and the like, *or* to a general attitude of taking pleasure in or enjoying. (Likewise, pain can refer either to a specific bodily sensation or to a general attitude of finding disagreeable or 'disenjoying'.) There is no necessary connection between these two types of pleasure: sensory pleasures are typically and unsurprisingly enjoyed, but they can always be disenjoyed, as the example of the monk shows. Any plausible version of hedonism about happiness is clearly going to focus on attitudinal, not sensory pleasure, since happiness rests on many things besides physical sensations and it is unclear how a sensation of pleasure that is not enjoyed could contribute to happiness. Feldman himself [2010: 109-10], while admitting the existence of purely sensory pleasures, couches his definition of happiness in terms of attitudinal pleasure alone. It is accordingly on attitudinal pleasure that I shall focus.

Happiness too is primarily attitudinal. Generally speaking, people are not just happy; they are happy *about* ... or happy *that* This is not to say that happiness is a purely intellectual state, without accompanying bodily feelings. Like any emotion, happiness is both attitudinal *and* felt in the body. Understanding how it can be both these things at once is a vexed problem in philosophical psychology, but not one that need concern us here.³

³ For a subtle attempt to do justice both the intentionality and the felt quality of emotions, see Goldie [2000].

This attitudinal understanding of happiness confronts three apparent counter-examples. Jane might be happy without being happy about anything because she is a) in a happy mood, b) a happy person, or c) a baby or an animal. Let me deal with these in turn.

Happiness as mood. Moods, in contradistinction to emotions, are sometimes said to lack objects. This would spell trouble for an attitudinal analysis of happiness, since there are clearly such things as happy moods. But is it true?

Peter Goldie [2000] has convincingly argued that moods are distinguished from emotions not by lack of object-directedness but by lack of specificity. As he puts it, ‘a mood involves feeling towards an *object* just as much as does an emotion, although ... what the feeling is directed towards will be less specific in the case of a mood [ibid.: 143].’ This must be right. When I’m in a happy mood I’m not happy about anything in particular but disposed to be happy about many things or about things in general.⁴ I warm to the dull old gentleman on the bus; I forgive the insult I received this morning; I may even, if I’m metaphysically inclined, start looking on the world as intrinsically just and beautiful. ‘The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy’ wrote Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* [1922: 88].

The existence of happy moods poses no threat, then, to the claim that happiness is attitudinal. We can simply treat happy moods as modifications, of varying degrees of generality, of

⁴ Matthew Rattcliffe [2008: 41] has argued, drawing on Heidegger, that some moods (‘existential feelings’ as he calls them) are not experiences of ‘entities in general’ but rather ‘ways of finding ourselves in the world, existential backgrounds that shape all our experience’. I don’t want to come to a view on this intriguing suggestion here. All I shall say is that if happiness does take such an ‘existential’ form, this is even less readily assimilable to pleasure than the more usual objectual forms, and so does not pose a problem for my general argument.

happiness about particular objects. This is (roughly) how Feldman himself [2010: 137-43] deals with the phenomenon of happy and unhappy moods.

All-in-all happiness. People are often said to be simply happy, without further qualification. ‘How’s Jane these days?’ ‘She’s very happy.’ Such ‘all-in-all’ happiness looks, on the face of it, non-attitudinal. But it is not really. If Jane is not happy about anything and has no tendency to be in a happy mood, it makes no sense to call her happy. All-in-all happiness is logically tied to happiness about specific things or things in general, which is not necessarily to say that it can be derived from this latter by means of some algorithm.

Of all the things a person can be happy about, those relating to his own life and circumstances seem to be especially relevant to the question of whether he is all-in-all happy. If Jane is happy about her family, job, neighbourhood and so forth, she is happy. If she is unhappy in these respects, joy over recent political developments in Burma will not make up the difference. Happiness is closely related, if not identical, to ‘satisfaction with one’s life as a whole’.⁵ Of course, there are people so absorbed in impersonal projects that they never reflect on their lives as a whole, and so cannot be said to be either satisfied or unsatisfied with them. Lenin was arguably such a person. Paul Erdős, the famously absent-minded Hungarian mathematician, may have been another. Such people can be happy about many things, but I’m not sure that they can be simply *happy*. Others may not share my intuition about this. Feldman [2010: 84] finds it obvious that a person ‘can have a happy life even though she never makes any judgement about her life as a whole’. I don’t find it so obvious. But my main contentions do not hinge on this.

⁵ This phrase, from Tatarkiewicz [1966: 1], expresses what has come to be known as the ‘whole life satisfaction’ view of happiness.

The happiness of babies and animals. It is sometimes said that babies and animals, lacking as they do language, are incapable of attitudinal happiness. Ordinary linguistic practice suggests otherwise. We have no hesitation in describing a baby as happy to see his mother, or a dog as happy to be going for a walk. The difficulty is justifying such statements. How do we know that the baby is happy to see his mother and not just any person? How do we know that the dog is happy to be going for a walk as opposed to a walk in the woods? In the absence of direct avowals, answers to these questions must take the form of counterfactual hypotheses as to what the baby or dog *would* feel were his mother to be replaced by someone else or the walk to take a different course. Counterfactual hypotheses are risky, of course. But they are not always groundless. Experiments can be undertaken. Conditions can be varied. The ascription of attitudinal states to adults is often based on similar processes of elimination.

Of course, there are some kinds of attitudinal happiness that babies and animals cannot feel, because they cannot think the corresponding thoughts. A dog cannot be happy that she hasn't been spayed. A baby cannot be happy that he is going on holiday. And neither baby nor dog can be happy about its life as a whole. Some have suggested, for reasons similar to these, that the profoundly mentally handicapped cannot be happy in the full sense of the term. They can be happy about many everyday things, but not about the more general or permanent aspects of their lives. Their happiness lacks, so to speak, a dimension of depth.

In conclusion, it is plausible that happiness is essentially attitudinal, even if the word itself does not always take an object. In what follows, I shall limit myself to overtly attitudinal happiness, assuming that other forms can be treated as modifications or derivations of this.

3. Happiness and Pleasure Contrasted

My next task is to show that happiness and pleasure are distinct concepts. To do this, I shall compare a number of paired sentences referring to the same event, one treating it as an object of happiness, the other as an object of pleasure. As will become clear, the paired sentences are systematically and interestingly distinct in meaning. I do not claim that *all* such sentences are distinct in this way. Happiness and pleasure are everyday, not technical concepts, so some vagueness and overlap is only to be expected. Nonetheless, I believe that the distinction I am drawing is real and central. I make no apologies, by the way, for this appeal to ‘ordinary language’. ‘Happiness’ and ‘pleasure’ *are* both terms of ordinary language, so any philosophical theory of happiness and pleasure needs to be faithful to the way in which these terms are typically used.

What English phrase best expresses attitudinal happiness? ‘Happy that ...’ is misleading here, for it is often just an expression of satisfied preference, equivalent to ‘glad that ...’. No happiness need be conveyed by ‘I’m happy that you had a good harvest in Ethiopia last year’.⁶ ‘Happy about S’ is better; it expresses, as I understand it, some *feeling* of happiness, however mild or insincere. ‘S makes me happy’ would also do, only it carries the distracting suggestion that S is the cause, not the object of my happiness. On balance, I have decided to go with ‘happy about S’ as the best expression of attitudinal happiness available in English.

What about attitudinal pleasure? ‘Pleased that ...’ is wrong for the same reason as ‘happy that ...’. ‘I’m pleased that *p*’ need not express any pleasure at all, only a preference for *p* over not-*p* together with a belief that *p*. (‘I’m pleased that we’re going out to dinner. It’ll be boring but we owe it to your parents.’ ‘I’m pleased that I received only three strokes of the cane.’) The same holds true of ‘pleased by...’, ‘pleased about...’ and ‘pleased to...’. ‘Take pleasure in

⁶ See Davis [1981:306]: ‘A person can *be* happy that *p* even though it does not *make* him happy that *p*.’

...’ and ‘enjoy...’ (phrases I take to be synonymous) are nearer the mark.⁷ Feldman himself in certain places treats ‘take pleasure in...’ as expressive of attitudinal pleasure. In others, his focus is on the phrases ‘pleased that...’ and ‘pleased about ...’.⁸ (This focus has fatal consequences for his theory, to be discussed later.) In what follows, I use the phrase ‘take pleasure in...’ to express attitudinal pleasure, occasionally replacing it, for stylistic convenience, with ‘enjoy ...’.

Here, then, are the sentences.⁹

A) *John was happy about Federer’s superb performance*

John took pleasure in Federer’s superb performance

John can only take pleasure in Federer’s superb performance by watching it, directly or on TV, whereas he can be happy about it after reading a report in the paper. John might take

⁷ Feldman [2010: 114] distinguishes attitudinal pleasure and enjoyment, claiming that the objects of enjoyment, in contrast to those of attitudinal pleasure, ‘are restricted to the present.’ I see no warrant for this distinction. Feldman himself treats ‘take pleasure in ...’ as expressive of attitudinal pleasure, yet this phrase is, as far as I can see, equivalent to ‘enjoy ...’. Certainly the objects of both are restricted to the present. I return to the issue at the end of the essay.

⁸ See Feldman [2010: 109]: ‘We attribute this sort of pleasure [attitudinal pleasure] to a person when we say that he is pleased about something, or when we say that he ‘takes pleasure in’ some state of affairs.’

⁹ Similar pairings can be constructed for other languages. Thus, for instance, pair B could be translated into German as ‘Die Hinrichtung von Dick Turpin hat Mary glücklich gemacht’ and ‘Die Hinrichtung von Dick Turpin hat Mary Spass gemacht’ or into Italian as ‘Mary era felice per l’esecuzione di Dick Turpin’ and ‘Mary piacque l’esecuzione di Dick Turpin’ I am informed by native speakers of German and Italian that these sentences have all the implications I have discerned in their English counterparts. The distinction I am driving at doesn’t seem to be a peculiarity of English.

pleasure in Federer's performance without caring or even knowing that it is Federer playing; his interest in tennis might be a purely aesthetic one. By contrast, if he is happy about Federer's superb performance he is presumably happy that it is *Federer* who is performing superbly. The two sentences have different truth-conditions. John might be happy about Federer's superb performance though he didn't take pleasure in it: he wasn't watching. Or he might have taken pleasure in it though he isn't happy about it: he's a Murray fan.

B) Mary was happy about the execution of Dick Turpin

Mary took pleasure in the execution of Dick Turpin

Mary cannot take pleasure in the execution of Dick Turpin unless she sees or otherwise experiences it, whereas she might be happy about it after reading a report or hearing a rumour. 'Mary is happy about the execution of Dick Turpin' implies that she thinks it in some way a good thing. If asked why she is happy about it she might reply 'it is what he deserves' or 'it will make the roads safe again'. 'Mary took pleasure in the execution of Dick Turpin' implies none of this. Mary might simply have relished the spectacle of a good hanging.

C) Susan is happy about drinking the Château Lafite

Susan takes pleasure in drinking the Château Lafite

Susan can only take pleasure in drinking the Château Lafite if she tastes it, whereas she can be happy about drinking it even if she doesn't taste it (she might be a wine snob with a heavy cold). 'Susan is happy about drinking the Château Lafite' implies that she thinks drinking the Château Lafite is a good thing to do, all things considered. 'Susan takes pleasure in drinking the Château Lafite' has no such implication; she might think it a terrible waste of money, yet

still take pleasure in it. Susan might even be said to take pleasure in drinking the Château Lafite not knowing that it is Château Lafite.

These examples suggest two rough, preliminary thoughts. First, pleasure, but not happiness, is essentially a way of experiencing an object. (Happiness is an experience, of course, but not a way of experiencing an object.) I cannot (logically) take pleasure in Federer's performance unless I witness it, but I can be happy about Federer's performance without witnessing it. Second, happiness, but not pleasure, is essentially bound up with beliefs about its object, in particular the belief that it is in some way good. Pleasure, in short, is an essentially experiential state. Happiness is an essentially doxastic state.

These are rough thoughts. Let me unpack them in more detail. I wish to defend the following six theses:

i. If one takes pleasure in s , one experiences s .

To take pleasure in a state of affairs s is to experience it in a certain way. This experience need not be direct. One can take pleasure in s by watching it on TV or even reading about it in the paper ('I've been enjoying the latest parliamentary drama in the pages of the *Times*'). Nor need it be tied to a particular sense modality. One can enjoy a cricket match, after a fashion, by listening to a radio commentary or by following a scoreboard outside the ground, as used to be common. (I suspect this is only possible because the pleasures of cricket are partly statistical. I'm not sure a tennis match could be enjoyed in this way.) Other pleasures are not sensory at all. Maths is a prime example. But it is still the *experience* of doing the maths that constitutes the pleasure. One cannot take pleasure in things one cannot experience, such as future events or merely possible events, though one can take pleasure in the thought of them.

I have said that reading reports of an event can constitute an experience of that event. This raises the question: at what point do reports provide one with an experience of the events reported as opposed to merely furnishing one with beliefs about them? The answer has to do with their distribution in time. Reading a succession of reports on a parliamentary drama as it unfolds can evoke the same feelings of tension and relief that one would feel were one there in person, and so be said to constitute an ‘experience’ of that drama. The same could not be said for a single summary report, though it might contain exactly the same information. This latter might suffice to make one *happy* about the affair, but only the former could provide *enjoyment* of it.

An apparent counter-example to the claim that if one takes pleasure *s*, one experiences *s* is the locution ‘take pleasure in/enjoy the fact that...’. I can enjoy the fact that David Cameron was humiliated in the Commons yesterday without experiencing David Cameron’s humiliation. I’m not sure that ‘enjoy the fact that...’ is good English, but in any case, it doesn’t controvert the thesis that pleasure is essentially a mode of experience.¹⁰ For if it means anything at all, taking pleasure in or enjoying the fact that *p* means enjoying *dwelling* on the fact that *p*, meditating on it, turning it over in thought. When I enjoy the fact that David Cameron was humiliated in the Commons I picture him flapping over his notes, his voice faltering, his face growing redder. (A 2013 Google search by me for ‘enjoy the fact that’ brought up, in first place, ‘I enjoy the fact that my wife sleeps with other men’.) To

¹⁰ Terence Penelhum [1964: 82] claimed that ‘I can enjoy the President’s speech, or listening to his speech, but neither he nor I enjoy the fact that he made the speech.’ See also Wayne Davis [1982: 244]: ‘Alan cannot enjoy the fact that he seduces young girls, (even though he does enjoy the act of seducing them).’ Perhaps linguistic conventions have changed. A 2016 Google search by me for ‘enjoy the fact that’ brought up 3,870,000 hits.

enjoy the fact that p is, in short, to enjoy *thinking* that p , and this kind of enjoyment is as much an experience as any other.

As confirmation of this, consider the difference between the following two sentences:

D) I take pleasure in the fact that David Cameron was humiliated

I am happy about the fact that David Cameron was humiliated

It is easy to imagine situations in which only one of these two sentences is true. A person might relish the thought of David Cameron's being humiliated while dreading its political consequences, or he might welcome its political consequences while feeling bad for the man himself. The general point is that happiness about p (or the fact that p) does not imply any pleasure in the *thought* of p , and *vice versa*, though of course the two things normally come together.

ii. It need not be the case that, if one is happy about s , one experiences s .

This is clear enough from the above examples. Being happy about a state of affairs s implies that one holds certain beliefs about the nature of s , but these beliefs need not be based on any experience of s , direct or indirect. They can be based purely on reports.

iii. If one is happy about s , one believes that s satisfies the description ' s '.

Suppose that Mary is happy about Dick Turpin's execution. Then someone informs her that there has been a muddle-up at the gallows; Dick Turpin has escaped and another poor wretch hung in his place. Mary's happiness evaporates. The event she thought of as the execution of Dick Turpin was not, in fact, the execution of Dick Turpin. 'I was happy about the execution of Dick Turpin', she might say, 'but now I realise that I had nothing to be happy about.'

In short, when we say that Mary is happy about the execution of Dick Turpin, we are using the phrase ‘the execution of Dick Turpin’ in an intensional sense. We need not be able to replace it with an extensionally equivalent phrase – ‘the execution of Mary’s brother’, say (assuming that Dick Turpin is in fact Mary’s long-lost brother) – without changing its truth-value; Mary would not be happy about *that* at all. And we can say legitimately say that Mary is happy about the execution of Dick Turpin even if, unbeknownst to her, Dick Turpin has not been executed. (It sounds a bit odd, perhaps, but no odder than ‘Timmy is looking forwards to the visit of Father Christmas’.) Happiness about *s* is always happiness about *s as s* or ‘under the description’ *s*. Happiness is a propositional attitude.¹¹

iv. It need not be the case that, if one takes pleasure in *s*, one believes that *s* satisfies the description ‘*s*’.

Mary is at Tyburn enjoying the execution, as she thinks, of Dick Turpin. Someone tells her that there’s been a muddle-up in prison; Dick Turpin has escaped and someone else brought for execution in his place. Mary’s enjoyment of the event is unaffected. She has nothing against Dick Turpin. In fact, she knows nothing about him apart from his name. She just likes the spectacle of a good hanging. Indeed (to put the point the other way round) we can legitimately say that Mary is enjoying the execution of Dick Turpin even if Mary herself has no idea that the man whose execution she is enjoying is in fact Dick Turpin.

¹¹ The fact that ‘the execution of Dick Turpin’ in the sentence ‘Mary is happy about the execution of Dick Turpin’ is not a proposition needn’t trouble us, for it can easily be converted into one without change of meaning: ‘Mary is happy about the fact that Dick Turpin has been executed’. The same is true for all the other examples above.

In short, when we say that so-and-so takes pleasure in or enjoys *s*, the phrase *s* is often being used in a purely *extensional* sense. We can replace it with any referentially equivalent phrase without changing the sentence's truth value. (Admittedly it sounds odd to say that Mary enjoyed the execution of her brother, or that Oedipus enjoyed sleeping with his mother, but both things might still be true, in one important sense.) Conversely, we cannot say that Mary enjoyed the execution of Dick Turpin unless Dick Turpin was in fact executed. (We can say that she enjoyed the fact that, as she thought, Dick Turpin was executed, but that, as we have seen, is another thing entirely.) Enjoyment of *s* is not always enjoyment of *s as s* or under the description *s*. It is not always a propositional attitude.

Why do I say 'not always' rather than simply 'not'? The answer is that there is another type of enjoyment ('enjoyment of fact' as distinct from 'enjoyment of substance', to use Elizabeth Anscombe's terms) which *is* conditional on its object being thought to satisfy a given description.¹² Let us suppose that Mary is accompanied by her friend Chloe, whose brother has been killed by Dick Turpin. Chloe takes a vindictive delight in Dick Turpin's death. She is enjoying, we might say, *the execution of her brother's murderer*. Should she discover that the man on the gallows is not her brother's murderer, her enjoyment must cease. Another example from Anscombe is 'Jane is enjoying talking to the most handsome man present'. On a natural interpretation of this phrase, Jane's enjoyment of the man's company must wither the moment her eyes alight on a more handsome man. Both these sentences pick out the object of enjoyment intensionally, not extensionally; they do not imply that Chloe is enjoying the execution of Mary's long-lost brother, or that Jane is enjoying talking to the biggest

¹² See Anscombe [1967]. Wayne Davis [1981: 310] makes a similar distinction between what he calls 'epistemic happifying' and 'non-epistemic happifying'. However, he treats this as a distinction within, not between, pleasure and happiness, mental states he regards as identical.

crook in the room. However, the feeling they describe is still one of pleasure, not happiness, since its object is essentially experiential. Chloe can only take pleasure in the execution of her brother's murderer if she experiences it, whereas she can be happy about it without experiencing it.

v. If one is happy about *s*, one believes (on pain of irrationality) that *s* is in some way good.

Thesis 5 is based on the thought that the object of happiness is always some perceived good, personal or general. In scholastic terms, goodness is the 'formal object' of happiness, just as danger is of fear, a gift of gratitude, and so forth.¹³ Such formal objects stand in a relationship of justification to their corresponding emotions. To realise that the object of one's happiness is not in fact good is to see that it gives one no reason to be happy. For instance, if Mary finds out that Dick Turpin was not a brutal murderer but a gallant Robin Hood type figure, her happiness over his execution should melt away. His execution is no cause for happiness.

¹³ This thesis must be distinguished from the 'guise of the good' hypothesis, according to which the rational agent always pursues ends he regards as good. It might seem vulnerable to a parallel counter-proposal, though, which is that happiness about a state of affairs *s* implies only a desire for *s* and a belief that *s* obtains; it does not commit one to a further belief that *s* is good. I'm not sure that this counter-proposal succeeds, but in any case it does not undermine the contrast I am drawing between happiness and pleasure. For even if we want to rephrase Thesis 5 as 'if one is happy about *s*, one desires *s* and believes that *s* obtains', it is clear that enjoying *s* implies no such desire. Mary, in the example below, does not desire the execution of Dick Turpin, but she is not behaving irrationally in nonetheless taking pleasure in it. For further discussion, see Velleman [1992].

I add the proviso ‘on pain of irrationality’ in acknowledgement of the fact that it is possible to be happy about a state of affairs one does *not* think good. Consider a woman who embarks on an affair knowing that it will probably end in misery and destroy her marriage into the bargain. She has no good reason to be happy about the affair, yet she is happy about it – ‘absurdly happy’, as we might say. Emotions can be what Goldie [2000: 78] calls ‘cognitively impenetrable’: one can feel towards things as being a particular way ‘whilst at the same time believing them not to be so’. Emotions and beliefs can come apart, even if they ought in all consistency to move together.

The phenomenon of happy moods suggests a qualification of this connection, for the thoughts associated with such moods are typically ‘entertained’ rather than strictly believed. Take this description of a happy mood, from Virginia Woolf’s *Room of One’s Own*:

And thus by degrees was lit, half-way down the spine, which is the seat of the soul, not that hard little electric light which we call brilliance, as it pops in and out upon our lips, but the more profound, subtle and subterranean glow which is the rich yellow flame of rational intercourse. No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anyone but oneself. We are all going to heaven and Vandyke is of the company – in other words, how good life seemed, how sweet its rewards, how trivial this grudge or that grievance, how admirable friendship and the society of one’s kind, as, lighting a good cigarette, one sunk among the cushions in the window-seat [1977: 12].

Clearly, Virginia Woolf does not *believe* that life is good and so forth, nor is she rationally committed to any such belief; rather, she entertains these thoughts because she is in a happy mood. To describe this state of mind as irrational would be absurdly solemn. (Should we

reprove Virginia Woolf for entertaining without seriously believing the thought that the rewards of life are sweet? What could it mean to believe such a thing anyway?) Still, moods are not entirely exempt from the demands of rational justification. On occasions when the rewards of life are visibly not sweet, it is best not to feel towards them as if they were, even playfully. Someone whose happy mood cannot be dented even by the death of a close friend or a declaration of war is either emotionally stunted or in denial. And a metaphysical pessimist must regard the thought that life is good, even if entertained only occasionally and light-heartedly, as an unfitting response to cosmic desolation. Conversely, if life is the gift of a benevolent God, black moods must be regarded as a form of ingratitude.

vi. It need not be the case that, if one takes pleasure in *s*, one believes (on pain of irrationality) that *s* is in some way good.

Suppose that Mary is enjoying the execution of Dick Turpin when a bystander tells her that he is not in fact a brutal assassin but a noble defender of the poor. Mary believes this, yet her pleasure in his execution is undiminished. She simply enjoys the sight of someone being killed.

Mary's pleasure in an event she thinks bad may be reprehensible, but it is not obviously irrational. Many people enjoy without qualm or inner conflict things they do not think good or think positively bad. Refusal to enjoy such things is a mark of character, not a requirement of reason. It is frivolous, but not incoherent, to say 'I enjoyed the destruction of the World Trade Centre, though I thought it a wicked and pointless act.' By contrast, the statement 'I was happy about the destruction of the World Trade Centre, though I thought it a wicked and pointless act' is puzzling; if one was happy about it, one surely thought it good in some way.

Of course, if practical rationality includes virtue, as has been argued by Warren Quinn [1993: 210-217] and Philippa Foot [2001: 52-65], and if virtue involves taking pleasure in what one ought, as Aristotle taught, then taking pleasure in things one believes to be bad is *ipso facto* irrational. I shall not try to assess this set of ideas here. I shall only say that *if* there is any irrationality involved in taking pleasure in things one believes to be bad, it is distinct from the stronger kind of irrationality involved in being happy about things one believes to be bad. The happy adulterer described earlier was a divided soul, rather as someone frightened of mice or heights is a divided soul. In Goldie's [2000: 78] words, she was 'feeling towards things as being a particular way, whilst at the same time believing them not to be so'. Nothing like this is involved in the case of Mary. A pleasure-seeker may be cynical and frivolous yet utterly self-possessed.

Let me summarise. Happiness and attitudinal pleasure are distinct states of mind. To take pleasure in *s* is necessarily to experience *s*; to be happy about *s* is not necessarily to experience *s*. To be happy about *s* is necessarily to believe that *s* satisfies the description '*s*'. To take pleasure in *s* is not necessarily to have such a belief. To be happy about *s* is to be rationally committed to a belief that *s* is in some way good. To take pleasure in *s* is not to be committed to any such belief.

4. Hedonism about happiness

Let me return to the question with which I opened this essay: the question of hedonism about happiness. Fred Feldman [2010: 137] has argued that 'to be happy at a moment is to be taking more pleasure than displeasure in things at that moment. Happiness in an interval is the integral of happiness at moments within the interval. ... Happiness in life as a whole is happiness in the interval that is your whole life.' I needn't dwell here on the details of this

theory, for if I am right, any attempt to define happiness in terms of pleasure is doomed from the outset. It involves assimilating one type of mental state to another quite different type – a kind of category mistake.

The problem with Feldman's hedonistic theory of happiness can be stated simply: it is possible to take more pleasure than displeasure in things while all the time being unhappy. Not only is this possible, I suspect it is quite common. Imagine a man in his mid-thirties, single, childless, directionless. When he thinks about his life, he feels depressed. But he doesn't think about his life too often. He immerses himself in various leisure pursuits: fine wine, extreme sports, casual affairs. On the whole, he enjoys himself. But he is not happy. Conversely, imagine a couple struggling with triplets. Their life contains few pleasures, yet they love their children and have hope for the future. They are not enjoying themselves. But they are happy.¹⁴

What has gone wrong? Feldman's error is twofold. First, he concentrates solely on what I have called 'all-in-all' happiness, ignoring attitudinal happiness. This is a mistake, since, as I have said, all-in-all happiness is logically dependent on happiness *about* various facts, in particular facts concerning one's own life. Had Feldman taken note of attitudinal happiness, he might have realised that it is a state fundamentally different from attitudinal pleasure.

Feldman's second mistake concerns pleasure. He explicates attitudinal pleasure with the aid of phrases such as 'pleased that...' and 'pleased to...', concluding that it must entail belief. 'If Tom is pleased to be living in Massachusetts, then he must think that he is living in Massachusetts [2010: 115].' This is true, but as I have said, 'pleased to...' and 'pleased that...' are not necessarily expressions of *pleasure* at all. To be pleased that *p* is simply to

¹⁴ I am indebted to a reviewer of the paper for this example.

have a preference for p over not- p together with a belief that p . Attitudinal pleasure is more exactly expressed by the phrases ‘take pleasure in...’ and ‘enjoy...’, neither of which entails belief. Susan can take pleasure in drinking Château Lafite without believing that it is Château Lafite.

Feldman’s insistence that pleasure is a propositional attitude also causes him to overlook its experiential character. If (to borrow his examples) John is pleased that he will spend his golden years in Massachusetts or that 1937 ends long before 2037, neither of which things he can experience, it seems to follow that pleasure is not a mode of experience [2010: 114]. But we can run the inference the other way: the fact that we can be ‘pleased that’ p , where p is not something we can experience, only goes to show that ‘pleased that’ and other such phrases do not express *pleasure*. The crucial point is that we can only ‘take pleasure in’ or ‘enjoy’ what we experience. Feldman, as some of his critics point out, has over-intellectualised pleasure.¹⁵

However, Feldman is not entirely consistent in his rejection of the experiential character of pleasure. In certain places, he suggests that attitudinal pleasure is expressed not only by ‘pleased that ...’ and ‘pleased to ...’ but also ‘takes pleasure in ...’ and even ‘enjoys ...’. For instance, Feldman tries to persuade us that ‘Otto’, the ‘rigid Kantian moralist’ who dutifully visits his sick neighbour in hospital, is not feeling attitudinal pleasure since he does not ‘enjoy’ or ‘take pleasure in’ the visit.¹⁶ He neglects to mention that Otto might well be *pleased that* he is visiting his sick neighbour, meaning simply that he is glad to be fulfilling his duty.

¹⁵ See Mason [2007] and Zimmerman [2007].

¹⁶ Feldman [2010: 117]. Feldman’s use of the verb ‘enjoy’ in this context is puzzling, since he claims elsewhere that enjoyment is not the same as attitudinal pleasure. See footnote 7.

Overlooked in this discussion is the fact that ‘pleased that ...’ and ‘takes pleasure in ...’ mean quite different things. ‘Pleased that ...’ implies belief but not necessarily experience; ‘takes pleasure in ...’ implies experience but not necessarily belief. Feldman needs both phrases. He needs the first to show that attitudinal pleasure is unlimited in its objects, else it would not be a plausible constituent of happiness; and he needs the second to show that it is essentially experiential, else it would not be recognisable as pleasure. But of course, no one mental state can be both unlimited in its objects *and* limited to objects of experience. Feldman’s ‘attitudinal pleasure’ is a mishmash. *Real* attitudinal pleasure is always pleasure *in* some object of experience, and as such is categorially distinct from happiness.¹⁷

University of Exeter

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¹⁷ I am grateful to Giovanna Colombetti, Shane Glackin, Michael Hauskeller, John Hyman, and Dale E. Miller for their comments on earlier drafts.

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