

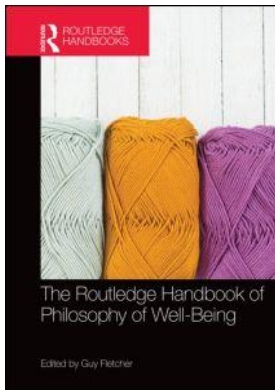
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 28 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook Of Philosophy Of Well-Being

Guy Fletcher

Hybrid theories

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315682266.ch13>

Christopher Woodard

Published online on: 10 Aug 2015

How to cite :- Christopher Woodard. 10 Aug 2015, *Hybrid theories from: The Routledge Handbook Of Philosophy Of Well-Being* Routledge

Accessed on: 28 Mar 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315682266.ch13>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

13

HYBRID THEORIES

Christopher Woodard

In many areas of philosophy we may be tempted to think that some opposing views each capture part of the truth. When this happens, we may try to make progress by combining features of these opposing views in new ways, to create hybrid theories.

Recently this has happened in the philosophy of well-being. Over the past 30 years or so, a number of prominent philosophers have suggested that hybrid theories are amongst the most promising theories of well-being. In most cases, they have suggested that well-being is in part a matter of the objective value of elements of the subject's life, but also in part a matter of her subjective evaluation of those elements. In this way, they have attempted to create a hybrid theory of well-being that combines features of more familiar subjective and objective theories. I will discuss a number of proposals of this kind below.

Proposals like this raise a number of important questions. One central question is whether hybrid theories of well-being form a genuinely distinct class. How, if at all, do they differ from pluralist theories of well-being? Another question is whether hybrid theories must always combine features of subjective and objective theories. Most of the prominent proposals have taken this form, but is there room for some other kind of hybrid? A third question concerns the prospects of hybrid theories. Their advocates hope that they will inherit all and only the admirable features of the parent theories, but of course offspring are not always so lucky. Might hybrid theories face special challenges of their own?

This chapter seeks to answer these questions, and to survey some notable recent proposals in this area. I will claim that hybrid theories are distinguished by a kind of holism; that they do not have to combine features of subjective and objective theories; and that they merit detailed consideration in future discussions of well-being.

Recent subjective–objective hybrid proposals

The most general motivation for a hybrid theory in any domain is that, for each of several alternative theories, one finds at least one of their features attractive. In light of these attractions one is tempted to try to combine those features in new ways. Let us briefly consider how this can happen in the most common kind of hybrid theory of well-being, namely the class of theories that combine features from both “subjective” and “objective” theories.

Subjective theories seek to explain what makes something a constituent of a subject's well-being in terms of that subject's psychological states (Lewis 1989: 113; Dorsey 2012: 407). Desire theories of well-being are subjective in this sense. According to the simplest form of desire theory, the constituents of a subject's well-being are the things that satisfy her desires, and what makes these things constituents of her well-being is the fact that they satisfy her desires (see Chapter 11, this volume). In this way, the desire theory attempts both to *identify* the constituents of the subject's well-being and to *explain* why these things constitute her well-being. The subjective character of the desire theory lies in the nature of the explanation it offers.

One common worry about this simple form of the desire theory is that people can desire the wrong things. This worry needs to be spelled out carefully. First, we are here talking about well-being, so "wrong" in this context must mean that people can have desires whose satisfaction would not contribute to their well-being. We must set aside other ways in which desires might be said to be for the wrong things, including especially the idea that satisfying desires can be morally wrong. Second, even the simplest desire theory can explain one way in which people can have desires whose satisfaction would not contribute to their well-being. If someone has very reckless desires—say, for riding a motorcycle at high speed while drunk—then the simplest desire theory will have to accept that satisfying this desire will be non-instrumentally good for her. But this theory can of course add that satisfying this desire is likely to be instrumentally *very* bad for her, since it is likely to lead to injury that will prevent her from satisfying many other desires. Overall, the satisfaction of this desire may greatly diminish her well-being by the desire theory's lights, even though according to that theory it is a constituent of her well-being (Heathwood 2006: 544–547).

More carefully specified, then, the worry about the desire theory is that people can desire things whose satisfaction would not make *any* contribution to their well-being. Philosophers have shown some ingenuity in constructing examples to illustrate this thought. For example, consider Richard Kraut's *icicle fanatic*:

[This person] has the project of knocking down as many icicles as he can before they melt. He hires a crew of workers and a fleet of trucks, so that he can reach icicles hanging from tall buildings; and this is how he spends his winters.

(Kraut 1994: 42)

To sharpen the example, imagine that the icicle fanatic gains no pleasure from knocking down icicles, even though it satisfies a strong desire of his. In Kraut's view, satisfying this desire does not contribute in any way to this person's well-being (Kraut 1994: 42 and 51 n. 8).

If a desire theorist were inclined to agree with Kraut's judgment about this case, she might try to modify her theory so that it accords with this judgment. Many desire theorists have claimed that what contributes to a subject's well-being is only the satisfaction of her informed desires, or those of her desires that would survive correction of error, or some other "idealized" set of desires (Sidgwick 1907: 109–111; Railton 1986: 54; see Chapter 11, this volume). However, there are several sorts of worry about this move. One is that it might not explain all of the judgments we would want it to explain. For example, it might not explain Kraut's judgment about the icicle fanatic, since as he specified that case it did not appear to involve any error on the part of the subject. Another worry is that idealizing versions of the desire theory involve a kind of closet objectivism. The thought here is that the focus on idealized desires makes sense only if we make the objectivist assumption that some things are more worthy of being desired than others, which would be incompatible with subjectivism (Kagan 2009: 254; Heathwood 2014: 213; but see Sobel 2009 for a reply).

For these or other reasons, we may conclude that in order to explain our conviction that people can desire things whose satisfaction would not make any contribution to their well-being, we have to embrace an objective theory of well-being. According to such theories, the objective value of things enters into the explanation of which things are constituents of a subject's well-being.¹ We may then say that the icicle fanatic goes wrong by desiring something (knocking down icicles) that has no objective value.

Objective theories are really a large and diverse class. For this reason, it is hard to speak in accurate but general terms about them. Much depends on the details of any specific theory, including which thing or things it claims have objective value.² However, we can describe some general attractions of objective theories and some general worries about them. Among the chief attractions are that we can tailor an objective theory to match closely our firmest convictions about which things are constituents of well-being. We saw one instance of this a moment ago: in light of our conviction that icicle destruction is not a constituent of well-being, we can construct our objective theory of well-being in such a way that we do not attribute any objective value to this activity. In general, objective theories can be tailored to match any set of convictions about cases that we may have—if necessary, by distinguishing finely between cases in a way that is not constrained by psychological data about what people in fact desire.

Conversely, we may worry about the epistemological and metaphysical commitments of objective theories. Can we make sense of the idea of objective value, metaphysically? If so, can we hope to discover which things have such value, and in particular which things are constituents of well-being?

We must set these important issues aside. Whatever the truth about them, they cannot provide any reason to favor a subjective–objective hybrid over a purely objective theory of well-being. These are worries about the concept of objective value itself, and so they apply to any theory that makes use of that concept, including subjective–objective hybrids.

However, there is a different kind of worry about purely objective theories that may provide some support for a subjective–objective hybrid. According to the *alienation objection*, objective theories wrongly imply that something can be a constituent of a subject's well-being even though she lacks any positive attitude towards it, or even has entirely negative attitudes towards it (Railton 1986: 47).³

Now it is certainly the case that some versions of this objection fail with respect to plausible objective theories. For, as Guy Fletcher explains elsewhere in this volume (see Chapter 12), if an objective theory specifies only goods (such as friendship or happiness) that are themselves *constituted* by positive attitudes, the objective theorist can at least say that it is impossible to be well off, by her lights, without having these positive attitudes. So it is too crude to say that objective theories necessarily imply that someone can be very well off even though she is “left cold.” However, as Fletcher recognizes, this reply to the objection will not satisfy all. For one thing, some objective theories may specify at least some goods (such as knowledge, in Finnis's theory) that are *not* constituted by positive attitudes. Second, even if all of the goods specified are constituted by positive attitudes, we may still fear some alienation from those goods unless the subject has, in addition, some positive attitudes towards them. She may be happy but not value happiness, for example (see Chapter 12, this volume). In contrast, the desire theory guarantees that the subject has some positive attitude (a desire) towards the things that, it claims, constitute her well-being.⁴

Motivated by the worry about desiring the wrong things, we may see the appeal of an objective theory. But we may then worry about alienation, and see the appeal of the desire theory or of some other subjective theory. Rather than going around in circles, we may look for some alternative.⁵ One such alternative is the idea that subjective theories and objective theories each

have something right about them. And, in fact, something like this train of thought seems to have inspired several philosophers recently to propose a version of subjective–objective hybrid.⁶ These proposals have a common core, but differ in details. The structure that they share in common is expressed in the following claim:

1. 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.

According to this claim, there are two conditions for well-being: objective value and subjective engagement of some kind with that value. Each of these conditions is said to be necessary for something's being a constituent of well-being, and together they are said to be sufficient and to explain why the things that constitute a subject's well-being do so. Because the claims about necessity will be particularly important for us, I will refer to this as the *joint necessity model* for hybrid theories.

The joint necessity model enables us to distinguish hybrid views from pluralist views. Pluralism about well-being is the claim that there is more than one kind of constituent of well-being (see Chapter 27, this volume). For example, if we say that *pleasure* and *achievement* are both constituents of well-being, we are committing to pluralism about well-being. In contrast, standard forms of hedonism—recognizing pleasure alone—are monistic theories. How, if at all, do hybrid theories differ from pluralist theories? Are they a distinct class of theory? The joint necessity model gives us answers to these questions. Whereas pluralist theories propose multiple constituents of well-being, joint necessity hybrid theories usually propose multiple necessary conditions for a *single* thing's being a constituent. Thus they are typically special forms of monism.

This is worth emphasis since it will be important later. The crucial point is to distinguish between two issues (Fletcher 2009: 29–30). The first is whether some thing, *X*, is a constituent of some other thing, *Y*. We can ask this question about any pair of things. The second question arises only when *X* is a genuine constituent of *Y*. We can then ask what explains why *X* is a constituent of *Y*. These questions arise in the present context, when we are discussing the constituents of well-being. Pluralism answers the first question, asserting that there are multiple *constituents* of well-being. In contrast, hybrid theories are committed to the view that there are multiple *explaining conditions* of something's being a constituent of well-being. This is an answer to the second question, and it is quite consistent with the (monist) idea that there is only one constituent.

To help keep track of this distinction, let us use terms carefully. When discussing whether something is a constituent of well-being, we will stick to the term “constituent.” When discussing whether something contributes to the explanation of whether something is a constituent, we will stick to the term “factor” (short for “explanatory factor”). Thus pluralism is committed to multiple constituents, while hybrid theories are committed to multiple factors. In claim (1) above, for example, the factors are denoted by conditions (a) and (b).⁷

With this clarification in mind, let us briefly review some recent proposals that seem to fit the joint necessity model. Though the overall character of any such proposal will depend, obviously, on what the proposal claims to be objectively good (condition (b)), in practice most philosophers who have made these proposals have spent more time elaborating what is distinctive about their account of subjective engagement (condition (a)), as we will see. Here we will not try to capture all of the complexities of each view, but merely to point out some of their basic features.

First, there are several proposals that we might group together as all being versions of the idea that well-being consists of *enjoying the good*. Robert Adams and Shelly Kagan have made two of the most prominent proposals of this sort.⁸ Kagan's specification is as follows: “I am well

off if and only if there are objective goods in my life and I take pleasure in them, I enjoy having them” (2009: 255). Adams (1999) specifies a somewhat more complex idea, that well-being consists in “enjoyment of the excellent.”

Both note many difficult questions in elaborating the idea fully. For example, must the enjoyment be not only of the good, but caused in the right way by the good? If so, what exactly is the right way (Kagan 2009: 257–260)? To illustrate just one aspect of this issue, consider how much time could elapse between the good thing being possessed or achieved, and the enjoyment of it. On this question, Adams offers the following example: “Suppose [someone] has succeeded in swimming the English Channel. Perhaps the hours she spent in the water were mostly unpleasant, full of weariness, anxiety, and cold. Nonetheless, we may count her swimming the Channel as something that she enjoys in her life, if she savors the achievement” (1999: 96). As this example suggests, it is hard to believe that the enjoyment and the goodness must be simultaneous. Conversely, we might feel uncomfortable with the idea that someone has really enjoyed the good when the enjoyment and the goodness are separated by years or decades. Kagan and Adams each emphasize the necessity and the difficulty of answering questions of this sort in developing the idea of enjoying the good.

Some other authors have proposed a different kind of subjective–objective hybrid, in which the subjective factor is desiring rather than enjoying. According to these theories, well-being consists in the *satisfaction of desires for the good*. Joseph Raz and Richard Kraut both offer versions of this view.⁹ Raz’s version is that well-being is constituted by success in pursuing worthwhile goals (Raz 1986: Chapter 12).¹⁰ He uses “goals” to refer to “projects, plans, relationships, ambitions, commitments, and the like,” noting that he has in mind, roughly, long-term desires or objectives (1986: 291). According to Raz, people pursue their goals because they believe them to be worthwhile or valuable, and this has implications for their well-being. First, their well-being is not augmented just because their goals are achieved, if that was not through their efforts (1986: 298). Second, success in worthless goals does not contribute to well-being (1986: 298–299).¹¹ Kraut similarly claims that “there are at least three conditions that make a life a good one: one must love something, what one loves must be worth loving, and one must be related in the right way to what one loves” (1994: 44), and by “loving” he seems to mean a range of attitudes that include desiring.¹² Thus according to Kraut, the icicle fanatic does indeed go wrong by desiring something with no value.

It must be emphasized that there is some simplification in presenting these views as being different versions of the same basic idea. In many important details these views differ from each other, and for some purposes these differences dwarf the similarities. But it is true that, in different ways, they each embody the idea that well-being consists in appropriate subjective engagement with objectively valuable things.¹³ According to these views, the constituents of well-being are episodes in which these conditions are fulfilled.

Doubts about joint necessity

Joint necessity hybrid theories are subject to the following sort of objection. These theories claim that, in order for something to be a constituent of someone’s well-being, it must satisfy at least two conditions—typically, it must be something with which the subject is appropriately engaged (enjoying, desiring, pursuing), and it must be something with objective value. According to the objection, satisfying only one of these conditions is sufficient for something to be a constituent of well-being.

For example, Brad Hooker has made this sort of objection to Raz’s claim that well-being consists in successful pursuit of worthwhile goals (Hooker forthcoming). Hooker agrees with

Raz that the *best* lives contain successful pursuit of worthwhile goals. But, contrary to Raz, Hooker claims that mere subjective engagement (with the non-worthwhile), or mere worthwhile achievement (without the subjective engagement involved in pursuit), is itself sufficient for something to be a constituent of well-being. Hooker gives the following example:

Suppose Ajay has a life with a given amount of successful pursuit of worthwhile goals. (For the purposes of my argument, it doesn't matter whether this amount is high, or low.) Now suppose that Ajay is given an increment of *passive* pleasure, not pleasure from the pursuit of worthwhile goals. Maybe he is introduced to a drink he can savour each night right before bed. Or perhaps he is blessed with particularly pleasurable dreams each night. In either case, hasn't his well-being increased, admittedly only a little, but still increased? I propose that, of any two individuals with equally successful pursuit of equally worthwhile goals, the one whose life contained more pleasure, even if this pleasure is only of a passive kind, has had greater well-being.

(Hooker forthcoming, italics in the original)

According to Hooker, the achievement of worthwhile goods can contribute to a person's well-being even if she did not pursue them—and even if she resents or rejects them (Hooker forthcoming). With respect to both the subjective and the objective factors that Raz claims are jointly necessary, then, Hooker claims that each is individually sufficient for something to be a constituent of well-being.

Any hybrid theory that adopts the joint necessity model will be open to a form of this objection. This is the downside of the dialectical situation that, we observed, can often motivate interest in hybrid theories in the first place. Each of the parent views retains its own attractions and provides resources for an attack on the hybrid offspring. Thus, for example, the hybrid proposal that well-being consists in *enjoying the good* is vulnerable to the objection that all enjoyment makes *some* contribution to well-being, even if it is enjoyment of objectively worthless things. To see the appeal of this claim, imagine a life that contains many pleasures taken in worthless things, but nothing else of value, and compare it to a life that is otherwise the same except that it contains no pleasure at all. Don't we want to say that the worthless pleasures make the first life somewhat better? Similarly, this hybrid is open to the objection that possessing or achieving objectively good things makes some contribution, even if it is not enjoyed (Sarch 2012: 444–445). Again, we can compare lives that are alike except in the degree to which they contain unenjoyed objective goods to try to elicit the relevant intuitions. Parallel objections can be made to all hybrids that propose several conditions as jointly necessary.¹⁴

Faced with objections of this sort, defenders of joint necessity hybrids might try several replies. First, they may reject the intuitive judgments on which the objection rests. For example, they could simply deny that unenjoyed achievements contribute anything to well-being. This may seem flat-footed, but it is worth pointing out that, in one respect, it leaves the proponent of this sort of hybrid in no worse position than a straight hedonist would be, faced with the same example. We do not typically treat the intuition, shared by some, that unenjoyed achievements contribute to well-being, as a knock-down objection to hedonism. On the face of it, then, we should treat the present hybrid theory in the same way. Now it might be said in response that, faced with this example, the hedonist occupies a position that is more stable than the position of the hybrid theorist. For the hybrid theorist is inclined to view achievements as, in the right circumstances (i.e., when enjoyed), constituents of well-being, whereas the hedonist claims that they are never constituents. The hybrid theorist cannot offer the same uniform denial of the claim that achievements are constituents of well-being. However, this may appear to be unstable

only if we fail to take seriously the hybrid theorist's claim that both achievement and enjoyment are necessary conditions. So the weight of the objection is ultimately thrown back on the initial appeal to intuitions.

Second, the hybrid theorist may attempt to account for the force of the intuitions concerned without conceding that they tell us about the nature of well-being. One way to try this is to claim that they tell us about some other way in which lives can be valuable. Kagan does just this, in fact, when he claims that “[s]omeone’s *life* might be going fairly well, even though *she herself* is not particularly well off. That’s the situation we have, I suspect, if someone’s life contains objective goods, but the person takes no pleasure in their possession” (Kagan 2009: 257, italics in the original; see also Kagan 1994). This form of reply raises tricky questions about the validity of the distinctions between kinds of value of lives that it employs, and about the transparency of our intuitions. The objector may insist that her intuition is about well-being, not this other sort of value of lives.

Third, the hybrid theorist may claim that, at least with respect to some conditions, the satisfaction of one guarantees (or, makes highly probable) the satisfaction of the other. Adams makes a modest but interesting claim of this sort, when he notes that “[t]here may be relatively little enjoyment that is not enjoyment of excellence. In particular, the enjoyment of physical pleasure as such is normally an enjoyment of healthy life, which I believe is an excellence” (Adams 1999: 100).¹⁵ If that is correct, it will enable defenders of the view that well-being is enjoyment of the good to reconcile their view with the objector’s intuition in most, but not all, cases. Moreover, whereas Adams concedes that not all pleasure is enjoyment of the good, Kagan suggests an intriguing way of denying this, at least for sensory pleasures. For, he suggests, sensory pleasure might be thought to be, in *every* case, an instance of enjoying the goodness of one’s own body (Kagan 2009: 269–270). If so, one possibility on which we are invited by the objector to train our intuitions—the possibility of a life containing sensory pleasures, but where these are not taken in objectively good things—cannot arise.

However, even if Kagan is correct about sensory pleasures, this will of course not dispose entirely of the sort of objection we are imagining. The objector can point to other kinds of pleasure, such as the pleasure someone may take in counting grains of sand, and claim that, though not taken in anything objectively good, these pleasures are nevertheless constituents of well-being. More generally, hybrid theories that adopt the joint necessity model will always invite the objection that a constituent of well-being can exist even if only one (or at any rate, not all) of the explanatory factors in the model is instantiated. For that reason, hybrid theorists may wish to explore alternatives to the joint necessity model.

Holism

So far we have treated the defining feature of hybrid theories as being that they identify more than one factor, and claim of each that it is necessary in order for something to be a constituent of well-being. This was the “joint necessity” model that we found in several of the proposals that we have examined. Although it succeeds in distinguishing hybrid theories from pluralist theories, it is subject to significant objections, as we have just seen.

But in fact we can distinguish hybrid theories from pluralist theories in terms of a more general idea. We could focus instead on *holism*: the idea that the contribution each factor makes to explaining why something is a constituent of well-being, or a constituent of a particular value, depends on facts about the other factor(s). As it happens, Derek Parfit drew attention to the issue of holism in his influential discussion of the possibility of hybrid theories. He wrote:

Some Hedonists have reached their view as follows. They consider an opposing view, such as that which claims that what is good for someone is to have knowledge, to engage in rational activity, and to be aware of true beauty. These Hedonists ask, “Would these states of mind be good, if they brought no enjoyment, and if the person in these states of mind had not the slightest desire that they continue?” Since they answer No, they conclude that the value of these states of mind must lie in their being liked, and in their arousing a desire that they continue.

This reasoning assumes that the value of a whole is just the sum of the value of its parts. If we remove the part to which the Hedonist appeals, what is left seems to have no value, hence Hedonism is the truth.

(Parfit 1987: 501–502)¹⁶

As Parfit notes, we might instead believe that the value of a whole depends in a more complex way on the nature of its parts.¹⁷ One version of this idea is expressed in the joint necessity model. For example, we might believe that the awareness of true beauty increases the contribution to well-being of aesthetic pleasures, even though mere awareness, with no accompanying pleasure, has no value. According to the holist, the fact that some feature of a person’s life (for example, awareness of beauty) contributes nothing to her well-being when taken by itself, does not entail that it does not contribute anything to her well-being when some other condition (for example, taking pleasure in the awareness) is satisfied.

However, the joint necessity model is just one way, and a particularly strong one, of employing this more general idea. The joint necessity model claims that the contribution of factor X is *zero* whenever factor Y is absent. If we focus on holism rather than joint necessity, a much broader range of possible structures for hybrid theories opens up. In particular, we can explore a large variety of possible structures with the following features:

1. The contribution to the subject’s well-being of each amount of factor X depends on facts about at least one other factor Y (holism).
2. The contribution to the subject’s well-being of each amount of factor X is not zero when the amount of Y is zero (denial of joint necessity).

To illustrate, consider the following toy theory, which is a possible version of the idea that well-being is enjoying the good. Call the amount of enjoyment that the subject S takes in something, E . Call the amount of goodness of this thing, G . According to this theory, S ’s well-being, W , is the sum of the contribution made by her enjoyment, E_c , and the contribution made by the goodness she engages with, G_c . So far, this is straightforward and does not involve any form of holism. But according to this theory, E_c depends on G , and G_c depends on E , and in these ways it is holist. These relationships are shown in Figures 13.1 and 13.2.¹⁸

These figures depict the idea that this theory is holist without conforming to the joint necessity model. According to this theory, enjoyment contributes to the subject’s well-being even when the enjoyment is taken in something with zero value; and engagement with goodness contributes to the subject’s well-being even when it is not enjoyed at all. So neither enjoyment nor objective value is a necessary condition of something’s being a constituent of the subject’s well-being. Nevertheless, the contribution of each of these factors increases as the other factor is present to a higher degree.

The purpose of this example is merely to illustrate that holism does not entail joint necessity. The simple relationships between the factors represented in this theory may well not be very plausible, all things considered. But if, as I have suggested, the basic commitment of hybrid

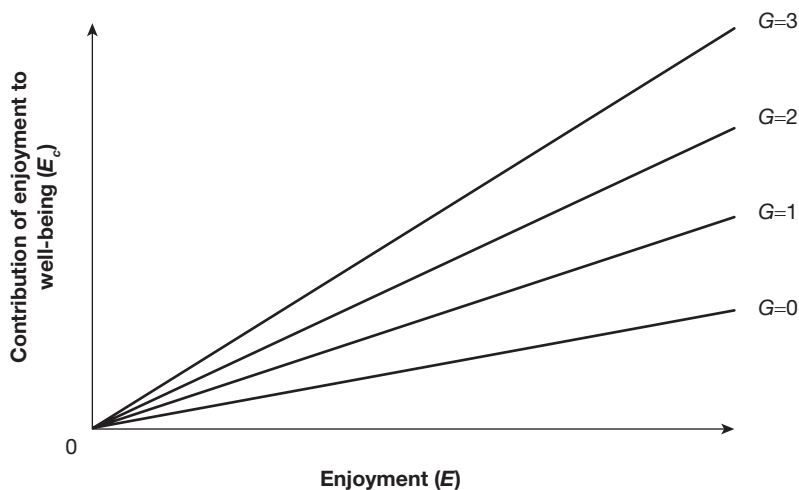


Figure 13.1 Contribution of enjoyment to well-being.

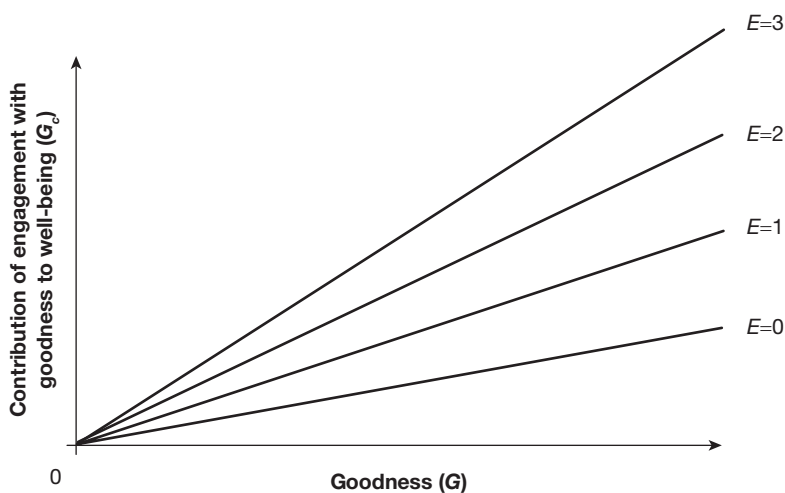


Figure 13.2 Contribution of engagement with goodness to well-being.

theories is to holism and not to the joint necessity model, there is ample scope for exploring other possible theories which posit more complex relationships between the factors (Kagan 2009; Sarch 2012). Hybrid theories of well-being need not accept the joint necessity model.

Subjective–subjective and objective–objective hybrids

So far the theories we have considered have all been subjective–objective hybrids. However, other kinds of hybrid theory are possible.

First, there could be subjective–subjective hybrids. This possibility makes sense if we distinguish between different kinds of subjective evaluation. For example, we may distinguish between a subject’s values as expressed in her *desires*, and her values as expressed in her *affective states*. Someone can

be doing well in the respect that she is getting what she wants, but nevertheless doing badly in the respect that she is miserable or depressed. If we take seriously the idea that there is more than one kind of subjective evaluation, we might want to explore possible hybrid theories of well-being that combine these kinds. Just as one possible theory of well-being is that it consists of *enjoying the good*, another possible theory is that it consists of *getting what you want and enjoying it*.

Jennifer Hawkins has proposed a subjective–subjective hybrid of this sort with an interesting structure (Hawkins 2010). She appeals to two kinds of subjective evaluation: informed preferences, and affective state. One interesting feature of Hawkins’s proposal is the way she suggests that we combine these evaluations. First, we should rank possible lives for a subject according to her affective state in those lives. Next, we should identify a certain threshold, which is defined as being the point below which her affective state is bad enough that the subject’s evaluative judgments are distorted (for example, she is sufficiently depressed that she believes that everything in her life is worthless). Hawkins calls this point on the affective spectrum the “*limiting line for affect*” (Hawkins 2010: 66). The theory that she proposes then ranks the subject’s possible lives in the following way. Above the limiting line for affect, the subject’s informed preferences have priority over her affective states; but below the limiting line, her affective states have priority over her informed preferences. Thus, to put the view in the terms we have been using, the contribution to the subject’s well-being made by an improvement in either factor (degree of satisfaction of informed preferences, or affective state) depends on the subject’s overall affective state. This is a kind of holism, and one that does not conform to the joint necessity model.¹⁹

Obviously, other subjective–subjective hybrid theories are possible. These might employ different distinctions between kinds of subjective evaluation than the one Hawkins draws, or make different proposals about the importance of these kinds of evaluation for well-being overall, or both.

Objective–objective hybrids are also possible. One way they could arise is by identifying more than one objective good, and then claiming that the contribution made by at least one of these to well-being depends on facts about another. For example, suppose that we claim that the constituents of well-being are *knowledge* and *virtue*. We might believe that knowledge alone has some value, and that virtue alone has some value, but that together they have enormous value. We might then claim that the contribution to well-being made by an increment of knowledge depends on the subject’s degree of virtue (and, let us suppose, vice versa). This would be to introduce the kind of holism about different factors that we earlier identified as the distinctive feature of hybrid theories.

A second kind of objective–objective hybrid is possible. Consider the suggestion made by Brad Hooker, that one of the constituents of well-being is *important knowledge* (Hooker forthcoming).

Important knowledge may itself be a hybrid good. For one thing, important knowledge seems to involve a kind of subjective engagement with (knowledge of) the objectively good; so it involves two factors with a structure that resembles the subjective–objective hybrids we discussed earlier. Second, it is plausible to think that the importance of a piece of knowledge depends both on the value of the object of the knowledge (knowing the structure of the universe matters more than knowing some elementary math, which itself matters more than knowing Audrey Hepburn’s favorite color), and on the degree to which it is known (in what degree of detail, with what degree of understanding of underlying principles, and so on). Third, it is plausible to think that the contribution of these two factors to the importance of a piece of knowledge is holist in the way we discussed earlier: the difference made by an increment in the degree to which something is known depends on the importance of that thing, for example.

If we endorse those three claims, then we have a hybrid theory of important knowledge. A theory of well-being that incorporates such a theory of one constituent good would inherit this hybrid component. If it has no other hybrid features, we might say that it would be a *partially* hybrid theory.

Prospects

Hybrid theories of well-being claim that the constitution of well-being depends in some holistic way on several factors. As we have seen, these theories form a large and diverse class. The factors they appeal to may be some combination of subjective features, or of objective features, or of both. The precise combination of features identified will of course matter enormously for the character of the resulting theory. Moreover, holism is consistent with very many possible functions from each factor to overall well-being. Furthermore, two theories may agree about the relevant factors *and* about the function from them to well-being, yet disagree about some other important matter, such as what exactly it takes for each factor to be instantiated, or what it takes for them to be instantiated together. Or they may agree in their account of well-being (faring well), but differ in their account of ill-being (faring badly). Or they may agree about all of these things, but disagree in their scope (whether the account applies to children or non-human animals, for example). And so on.

This enormous diversity suggests two things. First, those who are interested in developing or defending hybrid theories of well-being must try to answer many questions. They should not think of their task as limited to identifying the factors they think combine to constitute well-being. As Kagan emphasizes, this is only the beginning: many very difficult questions follow (Kagan 2009). Second, the diversity of hybrid theories suggests that they are not likely to share many characteristics as a class. This should make us very suspicious of claims of the form “all hybrid theories solve this problem” or of the form “all hybrid theories suffer this defect.” For example, we noted that one possible motivation for subjective–objective hybrids is the worry that purely objective theories may be alienating. However, consider the following example, due to Chris Heathwood. He writes:

Imagine a hybrid theory according to which the music of Miles Davis is most worthy of being enjoyed while the music of Madonna is only somewhat worthy. Suppose that we want to reward a friend for some favor, and that our friend would be ecstatic to attend a performance of Madonna’s music but would only mildly enjoy attending a performance of Miles Davis’s music. We want to do what would give our friend the best evening for her. So long as we describe the case properly, the hybrid theory will imply that we benefit our friend most by sending her to hear Miles Davis’s music rather than Madonna’s. But that seems wrong, and is not how we conceive of rewarding people and benefiting friends.

*(Heathwood 2010: 652–653)*²⁰

Heathwood is right that some hybrids would have this implication; hence they may fail to address the worry about alienation. But others would not have it: in particular, those that give priority to the subject’s degree of enjoyment over the quality of the music. Hybridizing—even of a specific sort, such as going for some version of the theory that well-being consists of *enjoying the good*—does not result in a class of theories with uniform characteristics. It neither produces theories that uniformly solve some problem nor produces theories that uniformly suffer some defect.

The upshot is that we should take the trouble to elaborate and evaluate specific hybrid theories in detail. There is no shortcut to doing this. We are only now beginning to explore these possible theories of well-being, and we may yet find that the truth lies somewhere in their midst.²¹

Related topics

Monism and pluralism, atomism and holism.

Notes

- 1 See Woodard (2013: 798–800). Fletcher (Chapter 12, this volume) defines objective theories in a different way, in terms of attitude-independence. These rival definitions each have their own merits. My definition is narrower, since it picks out one way in which a theory may seek to explain why something is a constituent of well-being without appeal to the subject's attitudes—namely, by appeal to objective values. Fletcher's definition would treat the proposal that biological facts alone explain which things are constituents of well-being as an objective theory, while mine would not. A downside of my definition is that the concept of objective value is not entirely clear.
- 2 Or, indeed, on whether it is defined in terms of attitude-independence rather than objective values (see note 1). I am grateful to Guy Fletcher for discussion of this point.
- 3 For a different way of specifying the subject-relativity of well-being, see Tiberius (2007: 375–376).
- 4 This is true so long as the desire theory takes the “object” form (according to which what is good for the subject is the object desired), not the “combo” form (according to which what is good for the subject is the combination: the object and its being desired). See Bradley (2014: 235).
- 5 My account of this dialectical situation is indebted to the account given by Kagan (2009: 253–255).
- 6 See Griffin (1986: Chapters 2–4); Parfit (1987: 501–502); Kagan (2009: 253–255). For a quite different argument for a form of hybridism, see Hurley (1989: Part 1).
- 7 The fact that a proposed constituent (such as pleasure) may be very closely related to a proposed factor (say, pleasurable-ness) can make it hard to keep hold of the distinction between constituents and factors. Here I take the basic commitment of hybrid theories to be to multiple factors, but some hybrid theories may in addition claim that well-being has multiple constituents. Some versions of the idea that well-being consists in enjoying the good might, for example, claim that enjoyment and goodness are both constituents. Others might claim that both are parts of a single, complex constituent, enjoying-the-good. Others might claim that there is a single, simple constituent (for example, enjoyment), but that the other factor plays an enabling role (so that, for example, enjoyment is a constituent only when it is correctly related to the good).
- 8 See also Feldman (2004: 117–122). Parfit (1987: 502) briefly discusses a subjective-objective hybrid, but it is not clear whether it is a version of *enjoying the good*, or of *satisfaction of desires for the good* (see below), or instead a more complex view: *enjoying the satisfaction of desires for the good*.
- 9 Griffin (1986: Chapters 2–4) also argues for a view about well-being that in some sense incorporates parts of an informed desire theory and parts of an objective list theory. But this is because he challenges the distinction between objective and subjective theories of well-being. He writes: “it would be better if these terms . . . were put into retirement. But if they are not, if the question ‘Subjective or objective?’ is pressed, then the answer has to be ‘Both’” (Griffin 1986: 3).
- 10 This is a simplification of Raz's view. First, note that he distinguishes between self-interest and well-being, treating self-interest as mainly a matter of a subject's “biological” needs, and well-being as mainly a matter of her goals (1986: 294–299). Second, though, he allows that how someone is faring in terms of biological needs matters to her well-being (1986: 296–297). As a result, Raz claims only that “success and failure in the pursuit of our goals is in itself the *major* determinant of our well-being” (1986: 297, italics added). The remarks in the text are concerned only with the role of success in pursuit of goals in well-being, according to Raz.
- 11 Raz can be interpreted as offering a deeper explanation of this claim. The explanation is that well-being is a matter of success in practical life, which involves success in practical reasoning; and success in pursuit of worthless goals is a failure of practical reasoning, because it involves failure to recognize the goals as worthless (1986: 299–307). Here I leave that explanation aside, and focus on the hybrid aspect of Raz's claim. I should also note that Raz does not, so far as I am aware, explicitly say that success in worthless goals contributes *nothing* to well-being. He says: “a person's well-being depends on the value of his goals and pursuits . . . To the extent that [the person's] valuation is mistaken it affects the success of their life” (1986: 298–299).
- 12 In later work, Kraut claims that desire fulfillment “is not even part of the account” of what makes something a constituent of well-being (2007: 146). Note also that in this later work Kraut refers to (and rejects) a “hybrid” form of the desire theory, according to which some things are good for us because we want them, while other things we should want because they are good for us (2007: 118; cf. Griffin 1986: 28–30). This is not the sense of “hybrid” theory with which we are concerned, however; it amounts to holding that the desire theory is true of some goods, while an objective theory is true of others.

- 13 Darwall's view also fits this schema, though like Raz he claims that it is true only of the "major" constituents of well-being: "a good human life consists of activities that involve the appreciation of worth and merit. I do not claim that appreciating these values is the only source of human good. I only claim, somewhat vaguely, that it is the major source" (1999: 179–180). Wolf's account of meaningfulness in lives is complex, but she says of it "We may summarize my proposal in terms of a slogan: 'Meaning arises when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness'" (1997: 211).
- 14 See Sumner (1996: 158–159) for another version of this style of objection, addressed to the claim that well-being consists in veridical happiness. In fact, of course, this kind of objection is just an instance of an even more general objection, to which *all* theories of well-being are subject: namely, that they get the extension of the concept "constituent of well-being" wrong.
- 15 Similarly, Lauinger (2013) claims that normal subjects desire the basic objective goods, in defense of a desire/objective good hybrid theory.
- 16 Parfit's subsequent discussion suggests that he thinks that the joint necessity model either is entailed by holism or that it is the most plausible version of it: "Each [side in the debate] put forward as sufficient something that was only necessary" (1987: 502).
- 17 Strictly, Parfit seems to run together two different assumptions: (a) the value of a whole is the sum of the value of its parts (additivity); (b) the value contributed by each part is independent of facts about the other parts (independence). (Note that we should remember the distinction between constituents and factors in applying these ideas.) Kagan (1988: 14–18) distinguishes the assumptions, though he thinks they go naturally together. For simplicity I will focus on holism, understood as the denial of independence, though we should remember that holism could also arise through the denial of additivity. See also Dancy (2004: Chapters 9–10) and Raibley (Chapter 28, this volume) for discussion of different kinds of holism about value.
- 18 These graphs are modeled on those used by Kagan (2009: 267–269) and Sarch (2012).
- 19 Hawkins suggests (2010: 62–66) that this theory reflects appropriate concern with two distinct motivations for subjectivism: wanting to give authority to the subject's evaluative perspective (as is the traditional aim of desire theories), and wanting to give authority to the subject's experience (as is the traditional aim of hedonism).
- 20 Heathwood frames the example in terms of a concern with paternalism. See also Arneson (2006: 31–32).
- 21 I am very grateful to Guy Fletcher, Alicia Hall, and Valerie Tiberius for helpful comments on earlier drafts.

References

- Adams, R.M. (1999) *Finite and Infinite Goods. A Framework for Ethics*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Arneson, R. (2006) "Desire Formation and Human Good," in S. Olsaretti (ed.) *Preferences and Well-Being*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 59, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 9–32.
- Bradley, B. (2014) "Objective Theories of Well-Being," in B. Eggleston and D. Miller (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 220–238.
- Dancy, J. (2004) *Ethics Without Principles*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Darwall, S. (1999) "Valuing Activity," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16: 176–196.
- Dorsey, D. (2012) "Subjectivism without Desire," *Philosophical Review* 121: 407–442.
- Feldman, F. (2004) *Pleasure and the Good Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fletcher, G. (2009) "Rejecting Well-Being Invariabilism," *Philosophical Papers* 38: 21–34.
- Griffin, J. (1986) *Well-being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hawkins, J.S. (2010) "The Subjective Intuition," *Philosophical Studies* 148: 61–68.
- Heathwood, C. (2006) "Desire Satisfactionism and Hedonism," *Philosophical Studies* 128: 539–563.
- Heathwood, C. (2010) "Welfare," in J. Skorupski (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 645–655.
- Heathwood, C. (2014) "Subjective Theories of Well-Being," in B. Eggleston and D. Miller (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 199–219.
- Hooker, B. (forthcoming) "The Elements of Well-Being," *Journal of Practical Ethics*.
- Hurley, S.L. (1989) *Natural Reasons*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kagan, S. (1988) "The Additive Fallacy," *Ethics* 99: 5–31.
- Kagan, S. (1994) "Me and My Life," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, 94: 309–324.
- Kagan, S. (2009) "Well-Being as Enjoying the Good," *Philosophical Perspectives* 23: 253–272.

- Kraut, R. (1994) "Desire and the Human Good," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 68: 39–54.
- Kraut, R. (2007) *What is Good and Why. The Ethics of Well-Being*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lauinger, W. (2013) "The Missing-Desires Objection to Hybrid Theories of Well-Being," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 51: 270–295.
- Lewis, D. (1989) "Dispositional Theories of Value," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 63: 113–137.
- Parfit, D. (1987) *Reasons and Persons*, Reprint with corrections, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Railton, P. (1986) "Facts and Values," *Philosophical Topics* 14: 5–31. Reprinted in his book, *Facts, Values, and Norms. Essays Toward a Morality of Consequence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 43–68. Page references are to this reprint.
- Raz, J. (1986) *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sarch, A.F. (2012) "Multi-Component Theories of Well-Being and Their Structure," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 93: 439–471.
- Sidgwick, H. (1907) *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed. London: Macmillan, 1962.
- Sobel, D. (2009) "Subjectivism and Idealization," *Ethics* 119: 336–352.
- Sumner, L.W. (1996) *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Tiberius, V. (2007) "Substance and Procedure in Theories of Prudential Value," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 85: 373–391.
- Wolf, S. (1997) "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 14: 207–225.
- Woodard, C. (2013) "Classifying Theories of Welfare," *Philosophical Studies* 165: 787–803.