

Desire-Oriented Theories of Welfare

Version of 17 March 2023

Written for: David Copp, Connie Rosati, and Tina Rulli (eds.),
The Oxford Handbook of Normative Ethics, O.U.P. – in preparation.

Desire-Oriented Theories of Welfare

Christoph Fehige and Ulla Wessels

1. Locating the Thoughts	1
2. Why Seek a Desire-Oriented Theory?	2
3. How to Build a Desire-Oriented Theory	5
3.1 Desires	5
3.2 Fulfilment	7
3.3 To Have or Not to Have a Desire	9
3.4 Counting and Aggregating	11
3.5 The Challenge of Finding Numbers	13
3.6 Further Issues in the Nexus of Desire, Fulfilment, and Welfare	15
4. Does Every Desire Count? The Field of Reservations	18
5. One Take on the Reservations	19
5.1 General Considerations	19
5.2 Specific Considerations	21
6. The Dynamics of Desire	23
Conclusion	26
Acknowledgments and Notes	27
References	30

Desire-Oriented Theories of Welfare

Christoph Fehige and Ulla Wessels

What is welfare? More or less equivalently, what is it for a person to be well off or to have a life that goes well? Normative ethics is one field in which the question matters, since many systems of morals assign a key role to welfare. Some of them see welfare as one or even the only value, and some see welfare at the centre of one or even the only duty (some duty of beneficence) or at the centre of one or even the only virtue (some virtue of benevolence).

This article is about answers that are desire-oriented in the following sense: they equate, or come close to equating, a person's welfare with the fulfilment of her desires. There is logical space for several such answers because the central terms "fulfilment" and "desire" are fairly elastic and the qualifier "or come close" opens up additional possibilities. The common feature of the answers is the focus on the fit between certain attitudes and the world. By and large, to say that a person is faring well is to say that things are not too different from the way she desires (prefers, wants, wishes, ...) them to be.

1. Locating the Thoughts

We begin with a word on the sources. Manifestos of the attitudinal approach that we are dealing with include: von Wright 1963, esp. secs. 5.9 and 5.11, Brandt 1966, Rawls 1971, secs. 15, 63, and 65, Sartorius 1975, ch. 2, Harsanyi 1977, secs. 7–8, Griffin 1986, chs. 1–2, Arneson 1990, Egonsson 1990, esp. chs. 2 and 3, Carson 2000, ch. 3, Fehige 2000, Lukas 2005, Wessels 2011, and

Goldman 2018, chs. “Desire Satisfaction” and “Objections”. Some authors from that list changed their minds – see Lassi Jakola’s report on the development of von Wright’s thought (Jakola 2017), Brandt 1982, esp. secs. 8–9, and Arneson 1999.

The approach is regularly mentioned and discussed as one of the ‘big three’ in the philosophy of welfare: in Parfit 1984, app. I, Kagan 1998, sec. 2.2, Bykvist 2010, ch. 4, Lin 2022, and numerous other publications. It is the topic of various excellent surveys, including Lukas 2013, Bykvist 2016, and Heathwood 2016.

Mainstream theories of rational decision-making comprise the approach more or less explicitly, for in those quarters the “utility” that possible outcomes have for an agent is understood as the corresponding of the outcomes to her preferences. That view of utility owes much of its standing in decision theory to John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, who developed a particularly powerful version of it (1944, sec. 2.1.1 and ch. 3). On the other hand, theories of welfare that are concerned with attitudes but not with the question whether reality conforms to the attitudes fall outside the scope of this inquiry. Such a theory has been advocated in a string of publications by Chris Heathwood. While his theory is a “desire-based approach to well-being” in his sense of that label (2021, sec. 4.3), it is not “desire-oriented” in the sense that is in operation here. So much for the contours of the school.

2. Why Seek a Desire-Oriented Theory?

The fundamental question is why something like desire fulfilment should call the shots – details aside, why look in that direction? Some people may find the direction obvious. Others may be willing to extrapolate from neighbouring contexts such as actions or projects. For example, perhaps to

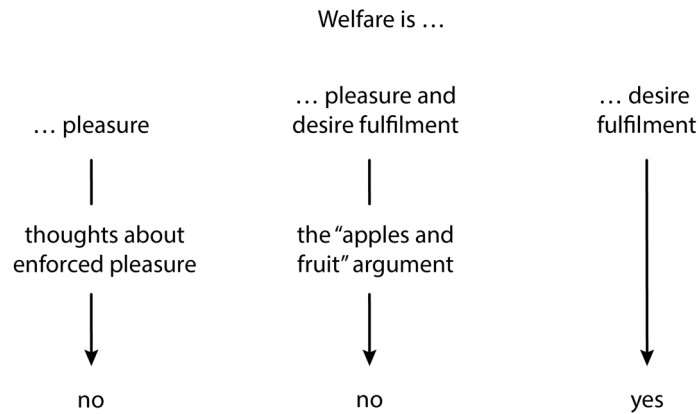


Figure 1: Three ways of meeting the cup-of-tea requirement and one way of assessing them.

say that a project is going well for a person is to say that it unfolds as she wants it to unfold. If so, the pull to apply the predicate “goes well” more or less uniformly suggests the step from projects to things in general: to say that they are going well for a person (and thus that she is well off) is to say that they unfold as she wants them to unfold.

Another path begins with the following thought: every portion of a person’s welfare involves that the valence or positivity of something is suggested by a feature of her own mind. In simpler words, a person’s welfare involves that something is her cup of tea.¹ When we ask how a theory of welfare could meet the cup-of-tea requirement, pleasure and desire spring to mind, taking us to three claims about welfare that invoke them: welfare is pleasure; welfare is pleasure and desire fulfilment; welfare is desire fulfilment. The three are shown in figure 1. The next steps on the path are to strike claims one and two off the list.

Doubts about a monopoly of pleasure arise from scenarios in which pleasure is thrust upon a person against her will.² Suppose that your colleague Jeremy can sever the causal ties between you and most parts of your world, including your nearest and dearest and the matters you engage

in, and instead feed you an incessant stream of pleasant fantasies for the rest of your long life. The switch would take place unexpectedly and painlessly while you sleep. You have been aware of the option for quite a while but have always declined it; you have preferred being involved in real life, and having true beliefs about it, to pleasant fantasies. The preference would persist during the pleasant fantasies, even if you wouldn't suspect that it is not satisfied. Suppose that Jeremy initiates the process all the same. Does he thereby, all things considered, benefit you? Those who equate welfare with pleasure would have to say that he does, but many of us would beg to differ.

Doubts about a duopoly of pleasure and desire fulfilment – see the middle column of figure 1 – arise mainly on conceptual grounds. The complaint about the duopoly is not that pleasure doesn't count, but that there is no duality because pleasure is a special case of desire fulfilment. You can reach the "special case" view from various directions. On the one hand, you might approach the concept of pleasure, dig down there, and hit desires: to experience pleasure means, roughly, to be in a phenomenal state that you desire to be in.³ On the other hand, you might approach the concept of desire, dig down there, and find that, given any person and episode of pleasure, the person necessarily desires, *pro tanto*, to experience that episode.⁴ Either way, there goes the duality. For if pleasure is a kind of desire fulfilment, then listing them both, conjoined by an "and", is a communicative blunder akin to saying that the greengrocer next door sells apples and fruit. And thus the second claim from the trio drops out of the race as well, and only the third one – the claim that welfare is desire fulfilment – remains.

Should the conforming of the world to the person's *values* have appeared as a fourth option that meets the cup-of-tea requirement?⁵ Not if valuing something fails to entail desiring, for the requirement is met only if there is the affective warmth of desiring, the not-leaving-the-person-cold. However, if valuing entails desiring *plus some other attitude* (perhaps judging-

to-be-good, provided it is an attitude other than desiring), then value fulfilment qualifies as a further option. Desire-fulfilment theorists may then have to debate that option and to say why welfare need not involve the additional attitude.

What has been surveyed here is only the sketch of an argument. But even if the premisses, the inferential steps, and the conclusion all require more work, we are beginning to see how desire fulfilment could end up in the driver's seat. A theory is taking shape that rejects the monopoly of pleasure but respects pleasure along with the many other concerns that individuals can have.

3. How to Build a Desire-Oriented Theory

A good way of getting to know desire-oriented theories of welfare is to try to construct such a theory, looking at various options along the way. That is the plan for this section.

3.1 Desires

The principal task is to home in on a relevant understanding of desires and their fulfilment. Unless otherwise stated, talk of desires will be understood here as follows. In the first place, desires are intrinsic. A desire is directed at a thing for its own sake, not at a thing as a means to the fulfilment of other desires – a distinction that will be revisited in sec. 3.6.

Secondly, desires are affective. In essence, a desire that something be the case is the joy of imagining that it is the case, and the strength of the desire is, in some way, the strength of that joy.⁶ Only “in essence” because the full story is more complex. One complication stems from the relevant “imagining” of a potential desideratum; the full story comprises a viable and

suitably general understanding of a vivid mental representation of a state of affairs. Furthermore, the full story assigns a role also to the pain of imagining that something is not the case, and it proceeds comparatively. The question whether or how strongly a person desires a state of affairs has the shape: would she be in a more positive hedonic condition imagining that the state obtains than she would be imagining the opposite? If so, more positive to what extent?

A third feature of desire, and the comparative wording has already anticipated this, is its dispositionality. For you to desire at a certain time that something be the case it is not necessary that at that time you think of the matter. Your thoughts may well be elsewhere. To ask whether you desire is to ask, roughly, what would be the case if you thought of the matter. It is important to see what is and what is not involved in that dispositionality of desire. Included is the possibility that a person desires a state of affairs even though she has never given a thought to it. That sounds right. Attitudes can lie deep, unmanifested, and it would be inadequate of an attitude-oriented theory of welfare to turn a blind eye to those that do. Not included in the dispositionality that we are envisaging here is a switch from what people desire to what they *would* desire, a switch from actual desires to “hypothetical” or “idealized” desires.⁷ The honouring of desires that *are* dispositions is not the honouring of mere dispositions to desire, let alone of mere dispositions to desire under rather special circumstances.

By looking at desires *in the specified sense* – intrinsic, affective, and dispositional – we capture what is dear to a person’s heart, what matters to her. That is where welfare should dock. Very different understandings of desire may or may not have their place in very different contexts. For example, one may want to use the term “desire” for a disposition to behave rather than a disposition to feel and may then want to say that a thermostat

“desires” the temperature in your fridge to be constant. But that has little to do with welfare.

3.2 Fulfilment

From desires we move on to their fulfilment. It has become fairly common to use words like “fulfilment” in a thin sense: a desire that a person has is fulfilled if and only if the desired state of affairs obtains. This article follows suit, thus counting a desire as fulfilled even if events are not fulfilling in a richer, experiential sense.⁸ Sometimes the adjectives “thin” or “thick” will be added all the same, with “thin” as a reminder of the thinness and “thick” as a marker of something stronger: fulfilment plus some other item.

A telling example of fulfilment is the case of Mara the medical student, who desires to have a career as a physician. She studies hard and she graduates, but the day she starts practising, a chronic depression sets in, so that the years in the profession pass in disappointment and sadness. Even so, her desire to have a career as a physician is fulfilled. Mara’s gloom is one thing, and the fulfilment of her desire is another.

A theory of welfare that focuses on the thin fulfilment of desires invites various questions, which we can relate to Mara’s case. The most dramatic question is probably this: “What about Mara’s plight, her dark mood – does that not make a difference to her welfare?” It certainly does, but there is no tension between that making of a difference and a focus on thin fulfilment. We can count on the “apples and fruit” argument from sec. 2: pleasure is taken care of by its own set of desires, by desires to feel good. An account of welfare as desire fulfilment will register the absence of pleasure as the absence of the fulfilment of those desires and has thus no need to register it as the absence of the thick fulfilment of other desires, like the desire to have a career as a physician. We will return to that topic in secs. 4 and 5.1.

“Suppose that Mara’s desire has reversed, with her sadness a part of her new desiring. Her ex-ante desire to have a career as a physician has vanished, and the opposite desire – the desire not to have such a career – has emerged. Does the fresh desire not matter?” If it exists, it matters. By saying that Mara’s earlier desire is fulfilled we are not tending towards disrespect for her later desire. We remain on course to say that the fulfilment or frustration of the later desire, too, makes a difference to her welfare. There will be more on reversed desires in secs. 4 and 5.2.

“Presumably, Mara’s desire was one of these: the desire to *enjoy* having a career as a physician or the desire to have a career as a physician who *at the time of being a physician* desires to be a physician. If so, the desire is frustrated by a lack of enjoyment or by a lack of the desire ‘at the time’.” Yes, indeed – *if* there was a desire with a more specific content and that specific content does not materialize, then there is an unfulfilled desire and to that extent a decrease in welfare. The diagnosis is fully in line with a view of welfare as the thin fulfilment of desires.

The thoughts on the understanding of “fulfilment” carry over to the understanding of “frustration”, which is thin in the same way. The word signals just that the desired state of affairs does not hold. By building our theory of welfare from thin fulfilment and thin frustration, we obtain a comprehensive structure, in which separate things are kept separate and each receive their due. On the one hand, the thin notions of fulfilment and frustration allow in many cases for the possibilities that the desirer feels bad although the desire is fulfilled and that she feels good although the desire is frustrated. On the other hand, those hedonic states of hers also matter for her welfare. They do so because (see sec. 2) they in turn cannot fail to involve the fulfilment or frustration of desires.

3.3 To Have or Not to Have a Desire

Is it better for a person to have a certain desire that is fulfilled than not to have the desire? The desire-oriented approach does not have a uniform answer. While most desire-oriented theories are agreed that both fulfilled desires and non-desiring rank above frustrated desires, the agreement leaves open how the first two options compare to each other: desiring a state of affairs and obtaining it vs. not desiring it in the first place. The matter of contention is shown in figure 2.

Some vocabulary will come in handy. Let us call a fulfilled additional desire a FAD and a non-desiring a NOD. Our question is whether a FAD is better for a person than the corresponding NOD. If you reply “yes”, you are an orexigenicist. (Think of the generating of desire, with “orexis” as the Greek word for desire.) If you reply “No, the two are equally good for a person”, you are an antifrustrationist; you favour the absence of frustrated desires but do not favour one way of achieving the absence (going via FADs) over another (going via NODs).⁹

The question about the role of FADs resembles a well-known question in normative ethics and may be at the root of it.¹⁰ Consider a HAP, a happy additional person. Would the world be better if we created a HAP? Some say yes (because there would be more happiness), and some say no, claiming that in order to improve the world we would have “to make people happy, not to make happy people”. The population ethicist’s HAP is the welfare theorist’s FAD. The doubts about a particular way of increasing the amount of happiness in the universe (i.e., creating additional people who will be happy) resemble the doubts about a particular way of increasing the amount of fulfilment in one person’s life (i.e., creating additional desires that will be fulfilled).

	desire that p		force in welfare according to ...	
	p	$\neg p$... orexigenicism	... antifrustrationism
FAD	✓	✓	FAD	
NOD	–	✓	Y	FAD ~ NOD
NOD	–	–	NOD	Y
FRAD	✓	–	FRAD	FRAD

Figure 2: Two views on the force of fulfilled additional desires (FADs, first line of the table) in welfare. The force exceeds that of the corresponding non-desirings (NODs) according to orexigenicism (exceeding in force is symbolized by $>$) but equals it according to antifrustrationism (equalling in force is symbolized by \sim); both doctrines rank the corresponding frustrated additional desires (FRADs) lowest.

It will help to look at a FAD in isolation, with some features ruled out that might interfere with our assessment. Suppose that near the main entrance of the Sydney Opera House there is a tree that is painted purple. Peter injects into Mara the desire that the tree be painted purple. The desire that Peter causes is purely implicit in the sense that Mara never thinks of the tree, but the relevant dispositions (see sec. 3.1) are in place. Mara will never see the tree. Neither the desire nor the colour of the tree has any *causal* impact on Mara's welfare; they play no role in causing pleasure or in causing the fulfilment of any other, non-hedonic desires. What is your assessment of the situation? Would you say that in causing the desire Peter has benefitted Mara, that Mara is better off with the additional desire than without? If you lean towards a negative answer, then you lean towards antifrustrationism.

The sample theory of welfare that is being developed here is antifrustrationist. Since it would be awkward to switch the terminology to "desire non-frustration", proceedings will continue in terms of "desire fulfilment", which is fine if everybody takes mental measures that keep the antifrustrationists on board. One such measure would be to think mostly of contexts in which the desires are fixed; in those contexts, welfare understood

as the absence of frustration and welfare understood as fulfilment will amount to the same. Alternatively, sentences like “Mara’s desire is fulfilled” can be read as suitably conditional: if Mara desires that p , p is the case. Should Mara not have the desire, the conditional is true.

3.4 Counting and Aggregating

Having presented the building blocks of welfare, we should try to assemble welfare from them. Principles that guide the assembling can be expressed compactly if we permit ourselves some jargon: to say that a desire “counts” is to say that its fulfilment is a piece of the desirer’s welfare. A powerful thought is that the following three principles are on the right track:

EDC Every desire counts.

ODC Only desires count.

ADCE All desires that count do so equally, in proportion only to their duration and their strength, and are processed in a summative spirit.¹¹

Some desire-oriented approaches would take exception to EDC; we caught a glimpse of that tendency in sec. 3.2 and will see more of it in secs. 4 and 5. Generally speaking, however, there is not a great deal of leeway with respect to EDC or ODC. The more an approach deviates from the “every” or the “only”, the less it will qualify as a desire-oriented approach in the sense that was sketched at the outset of this article. It will turn into an approach oriented towards *some special* desires (by denying the “every”) or into an approach oriented towards desires *and various other things* (by denying the “only”).

The third principle, ADCE, may sound innocent enough but has implications that need considering. If ADCE is correct, welfare remains constant whenever the overall amount of desire fulfilment does. It makes no

difference how a given overall amount of fulfilment is distributed over desires of various strengths, over a smaller or larger number of desires, or over time. For example, a very long life with the occasional fulfilled weak desire can, according to ADCE, be just as good as a life that is of normal length but has a high density of fulfilled strong desires.¹²

To be sure, a person can also have desires regarding the way in which desire fulfilment is distributed over her life. Perhaps she wants to get much of her frustrated desiring over and done with by the age of thirty, and perhaps she prefers one high-fulfilment year to a long sequence of low-fulfilment years. Such desires, too, would be processed summatively, along with all her other desires. ADCE is thus sensitive to distributive questions in the sense that it is open to further summands, which represent the fulfilment of contingent desires regarding the distribution. Critics, however, tend to ask for more: that the aggregation as such honour certain non-summative principles of intrapersonal distribution.

A third way between ADCE and hard-wired principles that depart from ADCE would be to give the desirer what we may call “aggregative autonomy”.¹³ We would classify certain desires of hers as aggregative (as concerning, in some way, the aggregation of the fulfilment of other desires of hers) and would then say: those aggregative desires do not have to compete, as they have to in a summative approach, with non-aggregative desires. They run the aggregation, unfettered. For example, if Mara desired the fulfilment of a certain desire of hers more strongly than that of several other desires of hers, although the others are jointly stronger, that aggregative desire of hers would settle the matter. The ideal of aggregative autonomy, however, comes with difficulties of its own. It is tricky to find and justify a precise characterization both of the “aggregative desires” and of the way to process them. One part of the task is to establish whether those desires, too, can conflict with each other and, if they do, how to aggregate their fulfilment in

turn. There is also the fundamental question whether privileging aggregative desires is a special case of privileging desires in virtue of their content.

Discrimination on grounds of content – a topic we will return to in sec. 5.1 – is normally deemed to be alien to the desire-oriented approach.

So much for an outline of one desire-oriented theory, with remarks on alternatives to its major tenets. The theory revolves around the thin fulfilment (sec. 3.2) of desires that are understood as dispositions to feel (sec. 3.1); it counts every such desire equally (sec. 3.4) and makes a distinctive claim on the welfare of desiring less (sec. 3.3).

3.5 The Challenge of Finding Numbers

Even with the three guiding principles presented in sec. 3.4, the step to a full-blown quantitative understanding of welfare remains a challenge. Two major problems are how numbers can represent the strengths of individual desires and how all those numbers can be merged, meaningfully, into one: what if there are more than finitely many of them?

As to the first problem, remember the thoughts on the strength of desire, from sec. 3.1. The decisive data are how pleased a person would be fully imagining that a certain state of affairs holds. One challenge for this approach is whether the counterfactual conditional succeeds in picking out the episode of pleasure that is to be invoked. Counterfactual conditionals are a murky business even at the best of times, but here some extra murkiness comes into play because, presumably, it takes a while to fully imagine that a state of affairs holds. Which moment in that process is privileged and provides the hedonic snapshot we will use? Another challenge is finding a telling number for the episode once the episode has been picked out. Pleasures do not come with numbers attached to them. At best, the task to metricize the strength of desire has been transformed into the task to

metricize the strength of pleasure – but has anybody performed that second task? The task that is at issue here is to make sense of numerical values, not just to verify them or to gain access to other minds.

Once we have the strength data, we may have too many of them. There will be infinitely many data if a life comprises infinitely many points of time, as it probably does, and we have to process for each point the information whether a certain desire exists at that point and, if so, with what strength. There could also be infinitely many data if the number of temporal points or intervals to be considered is finite but there are infinitely many desires in at least one such point or interval. If for at least one of those two reasons we have infinitely many data, it might be unclear what it means to proceed in the “summative spirit” envisaged by ADCE, because – this and that mathematical device notwithstanding – there is no helpful general definition of a sum of infinitely many real numbers.¹⁴ In short, we need to find a way of excluding or processing the embarrassment of riches.

It is tempting to respond to the problem of strength and the problem of infinity by pointing to the mainstream theories of rational decision-making, which we encountered in sec. 1. They may seem to have established the measurability of welfare. They comprise the claim that the “utility” of an outcome for an agent can be expressed in real numbers so that the numbers reflect the agent’s preferences. However, the claim needs to be met with caution. The proofs that go with it make assumptions about preferring – especially about the extent to which the preferring is rational – that don’t hold true of every person to whom we want to ascribe welfare. Furthermore, those proofs do not support interpersonal comparisons; statements of the kind that an outcome is much better for Mara than for Rose remain out of reach. Finally, the strength of a preference, as codified in those doctrines, has no connection to the strength that was sketched in sec. 3.1. The doctrines treat as the criterion of strength the agent’s willingness to take this or that risk even

though that willingness could be bizarre in the lights of the affective strength that constitutes how dear something is to a person's heart.

There is a culture in moral philosophy of proceeding as if people's welfare could be measured ("is twice as well off as") or could at least be compared ("is better off than", "would be better off if"). The culture of that "as if" permeates this article, the theory of welfare at large, and various strands of normative ethics. But perhaps that cheque is not covered because at least one of the two challenges presented in this section cannot be met. In that case, talk of amounts of welfare or of being better or worse off would often not be available, and our moral thinking would have to change significantly in order to accommodate that gap.

The problem is not peculiar to desire-oriented approaches. Theories that list friendship, love, knowledge, or pleasure as components of welfare are in the same boat. In some way or other, a qualitatively plausible theory of welfare will look at people's minds and will thus have, since minds are hard to metricize, difficulties in quantifying. If we resigned ourselves to not calling on desires, we would still risk having to do without numbers and in some cases without comparisons.

3.6 Further Issues in the Nexus of Desire, Fulfilment, and Welfare

This section brings up a selection of issues that are too important not to be brought up, but won't receive an extensive treatment in this article. One of them is the suggestion that *negative attitudes* be taken into account over and above desires because a negative attitude towards some state of affairs p differs from a desire that not- p and the two should be handled differently by an adequate account of welfare.¹⁵ Whatever the merits of that suggestion may be in relation to some notions of desire, it has no traction when applied to the one sketched in sec. 3.1. That notion attaches equal weight to bad and good

feelings regarding states of affairs and processes both kinds of feelings symmetrically and comparatively. Desire in that sense has respect for aversion built in.

Another suggestion is to equate welfare *not with the fulfilment of the desires but with the desiderata*. For example, given that Mara desires a state of affairs, the obtaining of that state itself, so the suggestion, qualifies as a portion of Mara's welfare. While that "object version" of a desire-oriented theory would ensure that every grain of a person's welfare is desired by her and in that sense resonates in her,¹⁶ it is not clear why we would want to ensure that particular form of resonance. The view that welfare is desire fulfilment meets the cup-of-tea requirement presented in sec. 2, and there is no reason to require more.

There is a temptation to invoke '*desires that are based, in some sense, on true beliefs*'.¹⁷ Doing so is one way of securing verdicts in matters of welfare that seem worth securing. For example, if Mara, who falsely believes that pineapples grow in Alaska, only has the 'uninformed desire' to go to Alaska in order to see pineapple plantations and then goes to Alaska, that combination is no good for her, because there are no pineapple plantations in Alaska. However, the appeal to intrinsic attitudes (see sec. 3.1) secures the same reasonable verdict about Mara's welfare, since the only intrinsic attitude in the Alaska case is Mary's desire to see pineapple plantations, and that desire is not fulfilled by her going to Alaska. Moreover, the appeal to intrinsic attitudes secures the reasonable verdict with less machinery (in particular, with a lesser role for beliefs) and with fewer follow-up problems regarding the number of attitudes that count.

We now turn to two technicalities, the first of which concerns paradoxical cases of the following kind. What if the desire that is on Mara's mind right now is that the desire that is on Rose's mind right now be fulfilled, whereas the desire that is on Rose's mind right now is that the desire that is

on Mara's mind right now be frustrated? In that constellation, it seems that Mara's desire is frustrated if it is fulfilled, and vice versa, and that the same holds true of Rose's desire. That is funny business.¹⁸

However, theorists of welfare can wash their hands of such difficulties because the difficulties do not originate in the relation of desire fulfilment to welfare, but one step earlier, in undisciplined talk about desires and their fulfilment and frustration. Not only does the matter need to be sorted out there, with philosophers of mind and logicians as the main forces, but there is evidence that the matter can be sorted out there, with several kinds of solutions to choose from. That evidence stems from the work on a structurally identical puzzle in the theory of truth: the liar's paradox. And so, yes, theorists of welfare should insist that by some regimentation or other the relevant concepts be engineered to make desire come out "bivalent", which is to say: every desire is fulfilled or frustrated, and no desire is both. Theorists of welfare should see to it that only logically proper instances of desire, fulfilment, and frustration enter their factory and that a fault in the supply chain is not mistaken for a fault in their own production.

Finally, a remark on *the temporal side of things*. If on Monday, 10 March 2070, Mara desires to see bald eagles on Wednesday, 12 March 2070, and on the Wednesday sees them, then we may already say on the Monday, speaking in the present tense: "The state of affairs that Mara sees the eagles on Wednesday *obtains*. Today's desire to see them *is* therefore fulfilled, and that fact *is* part of the welfare of the person stage Mara-on-Monday." The statement does not assume backward causation,¹⁹ for the relevant relation between the events from Wednesday and the earlier obtaining, being fulfilled, or being part is not causal but constitutive. Again a comparison to truth may be useful. Given the actual course of events, the utterance that on 12 March Mara sees the eagles can be true on 10 March, although on 10 March Mara has

not yet seen the eagles. The timelessness of fulfilment or welfare is no more problematic than the timelessness of truth.

4. Does Every Desire Count? The Field of Reservations

How plausible is the claim that *every* fulfilled desire is a piece of the desirer's welfare? We have encountered the claim in sec. 3.4 and will now look at doubts that have been raised concerning certain kinds of cases. If we keep loyal to Mara as our example and let each class of cases stand for the doubt that applies to it, we get the following list of doubts:

- 1 The desideratum has no objective value.²⁰
- 2 The desideratum does not involve Mara.²¹
- 3 The desideratum involves harm to Mara.²²
- 4 The desire is bad for Mara or is caused by something that is bad for Mara.²³
- 5 The desideratum is posthumous.²⁴
- 6 The desire has ended or has even been reversed by the time that the desideratum covers.²⁵
- 7 Mara doesn't know, and will never know, whether the desire is fulfilled.²⁶
- 8 The desideratum involves pain for Mara (for example, disappointment) or at least no pleasure.²⁷

The wording of the list is a little rough, and attaining a satisfactory delineation of each relevant class of cases is a philosophical challenge in its own right. For example, what is the exact shape of doubt 3? One version of the doubt is "de dicto": What if Mara desires *that her welfare be lowered*? Another version is "de re": What if Mara desires something that *amounts* to a

lowering of her welfare? Yet another one is causal: What if Mara desires something that is *causally correlated* with a lowering of her welfare?

The connections and similarities that pervade the doubts are also worth exploring. There is structure, but not a simple one. Is doubt 5 a special case of doubt 2, with being dead as a special case of not being involved? Or of doubt 6, with dying a special way of ending one's desires? Do doubts 5 and 7 and 8 spring from a more general worry? That could be the worry that the obtaining of the desideratum would not reach the desirer's mind, or not in the right way. And those are not the only illuminating groupings that come to mind.

The dialectical status of the list is a further issue. The search for desires that don't count may well be conducted in a constructive spirit, rooted in the ambition to curate and fine-tune the desire-oriented view of welfare. Other ambitions and effects, however, are conceivable. If we kept finding classes of desires that don't count, the size of the haul would suggest that desire-oriented approaches are not on the right track.

5. One Take on the Reservations

The purest version of a desire-oriented doctrine opposes doubts like those reported in the previous section. It rejects all pleas for making exceptions and upholds the principle that every desire counts (EDC, as it was called in sec. 3.4). This section will indicate how such a stance can be informed by a variety of considerations, some wider and some narrower.

5.1 General Considerations

Of the devices that have a larger scope, one is the principle of *content neutrality*, which says: "The content of a desire doesn't matter; the content makes no difference to the weight that the fulfilment of that desire,

considered in and by itself, has in the desirer's welfare." It is hard to see why we would deny content neutrality once we are in the orbit of desire-oriented thinking. If with regard to a person's welfare it is the desiredness that breathes life into things, why would it do so for some things only? If one person desires to learn Sanskrit and another desires to iron parsley, the fulfilment of the desire has in both cases, pro tanto, the same standing in welfare.

A second consideration calls into doubt all *plus-x theories of welfare*. According to a *plus-x* theory, the trio of a desire, the obtaining of the desideratum, and some *x* is a piece of welfare, whereas the pair that remains if we take away *x* is not. Think of such a theory as implementing this or that reservation we are looking at, with the *x* blocking allegedly problematic features of the kind listed in sec. 4. Thus, *x* might be – but these are just examples – that the desirer experiences the obtaining of the desideratum or that she is pleased because she believes the desideratum to obtain.

Given a *plus-x* theory, we can extrapolate the story of Jeremy the imposer of pleasure, which was told in sec. 2. We can construct a pair of scenarios. In the "pure-fulfilment scenario", most of your strongest desires are fulfilled, but the fulfilment is not accompanied by the extra ingredient *x*; in the "have-some-*x*-instead scenario", most of your strongest desires are frustrated, but some weak ones are fulfilled, and their fulfilment is accompanied by the extra ingredient *x*. You have thought of the two scenarios for quite a while but have always declined the have-some-*x*-instead scenario; you have taken the side of your desires and have preferred living the pure-fulfilment scenario. Suppose that somebody imposes the have-some-*x*-instead scenario on you all the same. Does that person thereby, all things considered, benefit you? There is a pull towards a negative answer, and thus away from the *plus-x* theory and from the reservations that the theory is designed to cater for.

Thirdly, *spot but leave aside the bad things in the vicinity*. To say that a desire counts is only to say that considered in and by itself the corresponding instance of desire fulfilment amounts to an increase in the desirer's welfare. The qualification "in and by itself" leaves open the possibility that, if Mara desires p , and p is the case, a lot goes on that is bad for her – bad in the sense that other desires come to be frustrated. They can be frustrated, directly or indirectly, by her desire that p or by the fact that p obtains or even by the very combination of the two. Since in all such cases the desire-oriented approach will register the negativity under the heading of the other desires – the frustrated ones –, the negativity is no reason to withdraw the claim that the original desire counts.

In sum, at least three devices are at our disposal: the principle of content neutrality, the move against "plus x ", and the focus on the status of a fulfilled desire "in and by itself". The devices can be made to bear on the reservations that were presented before. Doubt 8, for example, the doubt concerning fulfilment without pleasure or even with pain, is under fire from all three devices; there was a partial preview of that action in the section on thin fulfilment (3.2). As to the larger scheme of things, even if the moves against the doubts from sec. 4 cannot all be rehearsed here, checking which of the three devices go a long way towards seeing off which of the doubts from that section is recommended. The clearance is considerable.

5.2 Specific Considerations

The force of the general devices should not blind us to the individual comments that the doubts deserve. Again, we have to confine ourselves to examples.

Doubt 2, we recall, applies to desires for things that don't involve the desirer. One underlying thought is this:

“Suppose that Mara acts on strong purely altruistic desires, donating most of her income to the fight against hunger. That looks like a self-sacrifice. However, if the fulfilment of the strong purely altruistic desires counts as part of Mara’s welfare and a self-sacrifice involves an all-things-considered decrease of the agent’s welfare, then her action doesn’t come with such a decrease and fails to qualify as a self-sacrifice. In order to avoid that implausibility, we had better deny the ‘counts as part of her welfare’ claim.”

The plea is not compelling because there are two alternative measures each of which spares us from building exceptions into the theory of welfare. One option is to say: a self-sacrifice by a person involves the non-maximizing of the fulfilment of her *non-altruistic* desires. That requirement does not prevent us from classifying Mara’s action as a self-sacrifice. A second option is to wonder why it would be objectionable to withhold that classification. Once we understand the relations between welfare, desire fulfilment, and self-sacrifice, what harm is there in denying that Mara makes a self-sacrifice? We can still say that, by donating, Mara acts fully in line with morality: altruistically, praiseworthily, virtuously, or, if that’s where we’re coming from, in accordance with her moral duties.

Doubt 6, which is about the ending and reversing of desires, should be seen in the light of doubt 5, which is about desires with a posthumous content. Assume that we have already discarded doubt 5 and hold that the fulfilment of a desire matters even if the content is posthumous. Now consider, for some state of affairs p , the following constellation: for a while, a person desires that p (let’s call the person stage of hers that has that desire the “early person stage”); later she no longer desires that p or even desires that not- p ; some time after that change of desires, p comes about. In our quest for the welfare of that person, two premisses point the way:

- (1) The fulfilment of the early desire is part of the welfare of the early person stage.
- (2) The person's welfare includes the welfare of all her person stages.

Premiss (1) is hard to deny since the assumption has been put in place, for the purposes of discussing doubt 6, that desires with a posthumous content count. The assumption supports the premiss because, for the person *stage* in our story, the content is posthumous; the person stage passes away before the thing that it desires comes about. Premiss (2) is indisputable. Jointly, the two premisses entail that the fulfilment of the early desire is part of the person's welfare.

The bigger picture that emerges is that the fulfilment of desires that come and go is part of the desirer's welfare. The even bigger picture, which cannot be completed here, would be that the fulfilment of every desire is part of the desirer's welfare, with no exceptions. We have heard doubts about that "every" in sec. 4, and we have now heard some of the considerations that can be marshalled against them.

6. The Dynamics of Desire

Desires can arise and perish and can also be made to do so – and all that in various ways. Some significant aspects of the dynamics of desire have already been treated, especially in secs. 3.3 and 5.2, but some have not.

Most importantly, the message of desire-oriented approaches is not that, if we want to act in a person's interest, we should take her desires as given and shape the world in accordance with them. Both sides, the desires and the world, are up for shaping. The approach to benefiting is to make use, on either side and without preconception, of the possibilities for desire fulfilment that there are.

When changing a person's desires in order to benefit her, we should bear in mind the limit, though, that is set by her identity. A change of desires that we can effect could be so thorough that it would turn the desirer into a different person. The new desires would then not be desires of the original person's and would not figure in the fulfilment of *her* desires and thereby not in *her* welfare.²⁸ Desire-oriented approaches thus combine respect for the shaping of desires with respect for an important distinction: to boost the welfare of a given person is different from erasing the person and creating a new one with more welfare.

Several critical questions about desire-oriented approaches to welfare relate to the dynamics of desire. In particular, what about a situation that is bad for a person *but also causes desires in her* – “*adaptive desires*” – *that are in line with the situation*? Desire-oriented theories, it has been suggested, might get tricked by the adaptive desires into the misdiagnosis that the situation is good for the person.²⁹

Consider as an example a society in which it is unusual and also frowned upon for a rural woman to learn to read and write. Mara is such a woman, and the conditions have shaped her intrinsic attitudes so that she desires not to learn to read and write. Now the campaigners for literacy arrive and succeed. Mara ends up learning. The reproach to desire-oriented theories is that they are committed to saying: Mara has not been benefited; due to the desires of Mara's that the campaigners find upon their arrival, including Mara's adaptive desire not to learn, there would have been at least as much welfare if the non-learning had continued.

However, the reproach misrepresents what a desire-oriented theory is bound to say. Such a theory is bound to say: the campaign benefits Mara *because* being able to read and write helps a lot. It helps fulfilling desires for food, health, security, and enjoyment. There is no dissent here about the benefit, only an insistence that we do not lose sight of the “*because*” clause.

Indeed, the political and psychological shake-up needs to be justified – and often is justified – by a target state that involves more fulfilment of the desires that Mara had, has, or will have (where the “will have” includes the possibility that she will have them due to the shake-up itself). Otherwise we would push a way of life and not Mara’s welfare

Another critical question is concerned with *insatiability*. People tend to keep developing fresh desires, and there may be something grim about that process. It seems that, no matter how hard you work to fulfil your existing desires, the amount of desires that require your attention will never diminish, so that all that work is in vain. You run and run but seem never to get anywhere. In sum, does saying that welfare is desire fulfilment commit us to saying that your welfare will never increase?

The challenge seems particularly pressing for antifrustrationists, for they cannot point (see sec. 3.3) to a growing amount of welfare constituted by the growing number of fulfilled additional desires in your life. However, there are several other things that antifrustrationists can reply. In the first place, if the amount of welfare in a human life really were unincreasable, a theory of welfare should say so. Let’s criticize the human condition and not criticize true statements about it. Secondly, the claim that life is a game you cannot win is hardly outlandish; it has had thoughtful followers over the ages.

Thirdly, the unincreasability of welfare may well be doubted within an antifrustrationist framework. While trying to fulfil the desires you have, you can also try to keep down the number and strength of fresh desires that carry a risk of remaining unfulfilled or of being fulfillable only at the cost of the frustration of other desires of yours, and you can try to make a habit of at least delaying the emergence of fresh desires of that kind. Since jointly those endeavours will make it more probable that one day you will leave life with fewer unfulfilled desires and thus with more welfare, not all hope is lost. Yes,

it may be dispiriting to think that desire is like the Hydra: cut off one head, and new ones tend to grow and get at you. Even so, Hercules and Iolaus found a way.

Conclusion

Perhaps to say that a person's life goes well is to say that she gets what she wants. Can we progress from that simple thought to a mature theory of welfare, which takes the wind out of the sails of the main objections? This article has documented parts of the process.

Some business is unfinished. The attitude at the heart of the enterprise (sec. 3.1) should be characterized more precisely; all available expertise regarding dispositionality, imagining, mental content, and the directedness, or aboutness, of hedonic states should be brought to bear. The conceptual truth that pleasure is desired (sec. 2) should also be carved out in more detail; the specifics of that connection can make a considerable difference to the standing that pleasure has in a desire-oriented theory. Moreover, the tendency to thrust on individuals a purely summative aggregation of the fulfilment of their desires (sec. 3.4) should be reviewed; alternatives should be developed and discussed. There is also the question whether a desire-oriented view – or indeed any view in which the mind plays a central role – will ever arrive at a satisfactory quantitative account of welfare (sec. 3.5). If not, that may be the price that we have to pay, and a price worth paying, for getting the qualitative dimension right.

Acknowledgments

More people have given us a hand regarding some aspect or other of this article than we can list here, and we are grateful to every one of them. Special thanks go to Steve Buckle, Thorsten Helfer, Ulrich Nortmann, Helge Rückert, and Stephan Schweitzer.

Notes

- 1 For requirements of valence, resonance, etc., see also Heathwood 2021, sec. 2.3.2, and this article, sec. 3.6. The path via the cup-of-tea requirement to desire fulfilment bears some similarity to the path paved in Parfit 1984, app. I; the literature abounds with variations.
- 2 Most notably, from the experience machine, which is the model for the story about Jeremy that we are about to tell. See Hawkins 2016, Lin 2016, and their references; for recent doubts about the suitability of the pleasure-machine scenario, see Löhr 2019.
- 3 See the exposition and the references in Heathwood 2019a, sec. 3.2.
- 4 In outline: if you fully represented to yourself that you experience a specific pleasure, you would (this being entailed by full representing) experience that very pleasure. You thus have a disposition to be pleased when fully representing that you have the pleasure, and that disposition of yours is (see sec. 2.1) your desire that you have the pleasure. Details in Fehige 2004, chs. 3–5, esp. pp. 143–145.
- 5 Jason Raibly and Valerie Tiberius (e.g., this volume) are among those who advocate the claim that welfare is value fulfilment.
- 6 Affective notions of desire have a long tradition; numerous references are given in Fehige 2001, sec. 1.3, where desires-in-that-sense are claimed to be central to practical reason, and in Heathwood 2019b, sec. 2. Heathwood stresses, as does Ulla Wessels (2011, secs. 3.1.3 und 3.6), how important it is to invoke desires-in-that-sense when thinking about welfare.

- 7 For discussions of the switch to what people would desire, see, e.g., Rosati 1996, Sobel 2009, Dorsey 2017b, and Heathwood 2021, sec. 4.3, subsecs. “The Orthodox Solution” and “Against Idealization”.
- 8 See Wessels 2011, sec. 3.3, and the references given there as well as Bykvist 2016, sec. 11.5.
- 9 There is more on antifrustrationism and orexigenicism in Fehige 1998 and Handfield 2011.
- 10 See Parfit 1984, pp. 498f, and Chris Heathwood’s discussion of that passage (2020, sec. “The Single-Life Repugnant Conclusion”). The resemblance is also explored, in more general terms, in Temkin 2012, esp. chs. 2 and 4.
- 11 For similar lists of principles, see, e.g., Fehige 2000, sec. 1.3, and Lukas 2010, sec. 1.
- 12 More on summative intrapersonal aggregation in, e.g., Rawls 1971, secs. 45 and 64, Broome 2004, sec. 15.3, and Heathwood 2021, sec. 4.3.2; for parallels to the interpersonal domain, see Parfit 1984, pp. 498f, and Persson 2004.
- 13 See Parfit 1984, pp. 496–499, Carson 2000, sec. 3.1.4, and Heathwood 2021, sec. 4.3.2, for various assessments of the third way.
- 14 A good point of entry to the debate on aggregation and infinity is Bostrom 2011.
- 15 An aversion account of ill-being is defended in Mathison 2018, ch. 4; more on ill-being in Bykvist 2010, ch. 4, sec. “Desire-Based Theories”, and Kagan 2014, esp. secs. 4 and 9, and 2021, esp. secs. 4–7.
- 16 For more on the object version and the way it ensures resonance, see van Weelden 2019. The distinction between that version and the standard version goes back to Rabinowicz and Österberg 1996.
- 17 For a thoughtful treatment of the pros and cons, see Egonsson 2007.
- 18 The funny business, including its analogon in the theory of truth, is explored in Bradley 2007 and Wessels 2011, sec. 7.1.

- 19 See Wessels 2018, sec. 4.3; the timelessness of fulfilment and frustration is also pointed out in Lukas 2005, ch. 1, sec. “Desires, Satisfaction and Frustrations”.
- 20 Classical examples of desiderata that have no objective value include: to count blades of grass, to eat mud, and to knock icicles to the ground. For further examples and a discussion of the desires in question, see Heathwood 2005, sec. 5, Bruckner 2016, and Bykvist 2016, sec. 11.7.3. More on such desires in sec. 5.2.
- 21 See Parfit’s well-known example of the stranger on the train (1984, p. 494). The example is discussed in Fletcher 2016, secs. 2.3–2.6, and Heathwood 2020, sec. “The Unrestricted Desire-Fulfilment Theory and the Problem of Remote Desires”. The doubts concerning desiderata that do not involve the desirer are sometimes rooted in thoughts about self-sacrifices; see, e.g., Overvold 1980, Lukas 2005, ch. 4, esp. pp. 94–100, Heathwood 2011, and, in this article, sec. 5.2.
- 22 Think of a person’s desire to spend her days doing what she rightly regards as boring, arduous, and useless (Kraut 1994, sec. 2), or to get a healthy, functioning limb amputated (Oddie 2005, sec. 5.6). Such desires are also discussed in Heathwood 2005, sec. 6.
- 23 See, for example, the discussion of adaptive desires in sec. 6.2; other aspects are covered in Fehige 1998, in the subsec. “Prophylacticism” of sec. 1.
- 24 See, e.g., Carson 2000, sec. 3.1.6, Luper 2004, pp. 70f, and Mulgan 2007, ch.4, subsec. “Posthumous Harms” of sec. “The Preference Theory”.
- 25 See Lukas 2005, ch. 5, Wessels 2011, sec. 5.1, and 2018, and Bruckner 2013, sec. 5, and the references given in those texts. For the type of response that those three authors give, see also sec. 5.2.
- 26 Ignorance of fulfilment is discussed in, e.g., Griffin 1986, sec. 1.1.4, esp. pp. 13f and 16f, Egonsson 1990, sec. 2.1.1., and Heathwood 2021, sec. 4.3.3.
- 27 Fulfilment without pleasure and fulfilment with pain are discussed in secs. 3.2 and 5.1; see also, e.g., Sidgwick 1907, p. 110, Sumner 1996, sec. 5.2, Gesang 2003, sec. 1.4, and Heathwood 2019b, secs. 1 and 3.
- 28 See Wessels 2011, sec. 5.2.2, and the references given there.
- 29 The literature contains numerous examples of adaptive desires. Serene Khader (2011, p. 10) provides a helpful catalogue; discussions and further references in Bruckner 2009, Wessels 2011, ch. 6, and Dorsey 2017a.

References

- Arneson, Richard J. 1990. "Liberalism, Distributive Subjectivism, and Equal Opportunity of Welfare". *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 19: 158–194.
- Arneson, Richard J. 1999. "Human Flourishing versus Desire Satisfaction". *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16: 113–142.
- Bostrom, Nick. 2011. "Infinite Ethics". *Analysis and Metaphysics* 10: 9–59.
- Bradley, Ben. 2007. "A Paradox for Some Theories of Welfare". *Philosophical Studies* 133: 45–53.
- Brandt, Richard B. 1966. "The Concept of Welfare". In *The Structure of Economic Science*, edited by Sherman R. Krupp, 257–276. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Brandt, Richard B. 1982. "Two Concepts of Utility". In *The Limits of Utilitarianism*, edited by Harlan B. Miller and William H. Williams, 169–185. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Broome, John. 2004. *Weighing Lives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bruckner, Donald W. 2009. "In Defense of Adaptive Preferences". *Philosophical Studies* 142: 307–324.
- Bruckner, Donald W. 2013. "Present Desire Satisfaction and Past Well-Being". *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 91: 15–29.
- Bruckner, Donald W. 2016. "Quirky Desires and Well-Being". *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 10 (no volume-wide pagination).
- Bykvist, Krister. 2010. *Utilitarianism*. London: Continuum.
- Bykvist, Krister. 2016. "Preference-Based Views of Well-Being". In *The Oxford Handbook of Well-Being and Public Policy*, edited by Matthew D. Adler and Marc Fleurbaey, 321–346. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Carson, Thomas. 2000. *Value and the Good Life*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Dorsey, Dale. 2017a. "Adaptive Preferences Are a Red Herring". *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 3: 465–484.
- Dorsey, Dale. 2017b. "Idealization and the Heart of Subjectivism". *Noûs* 51: 196–217.

- Egonsson, Dan. 1990. *Interests, Utilitarianism and Moral Standing*. Lund: Lund University Press.
- Egonsson, Dan. 2007. *Preferences and Information*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Fehige, Christoph. 1998. "A Pareto Principle for Possible People". In *Preferences*, edited by Christoph Fehige and Ulla Wessels, 508–543. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Fehige, Christoph. 2000. "Justice beyond Desires?". In *The Idea of Political Liberalism*, edited by Victoria Davion and Clark Wolf, 253–284. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Fehige, Christoph. 2001. "Instrumentalism". In *Varieties of Practical Reasoning*, edited by Elijah Millgram, 49–76. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Fehige, Christoph. 2004. *Soll ich?* Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Fletcher, Guy. 2016. *The Philosophy of Well-Being*. New York: Routledge.
- Gesang, Bernward. 2003. *Eine Verteidigung des Utilitarismus*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Goldman, Alan H. 2018. *Life's Values*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Griffin, James. 1986. *Well-Being*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Handfield, Toby. 2011. "Absent Desires". *Utilitas* 23: 402–427.
- Harsanyi, John C. 1977. "Morality and the Theory of Rational Behavior". *Social Research* 44: 623–656.
- Hawkins, Jennifer. 2016. "The Experience Machine and the Experience Requirement". In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*, edited by Guy Fletcher, 355–365. London: Routledge.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2005. "The Problem of Defective Desires". *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 83: 487–504.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2011. "Preferentialism and Self-Sacrifice". *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 92: 18–38.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2016. "The Desire-Fulfillment Theory". In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*, edited by Guy Fletcher, 135–147. London: Routledge.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2019a. "Desire-Based Theories of Reasons, Pleasure, and Welfare". In *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 6, edited by Russ Shafer-Landau, 79–106. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Heathwood, Chris. 2019b. "Which Desires Are Relevant to Well-Being?". *Noûs* 53: 664–688.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2020. "An Opinionated Guide to 'What Makes Someone's Life Go Best'". In *Derek Parfit's Reasons and Persons*, edited by Andrea Sauchelli, 94–113. London: Routledge.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2021. *Happiness and Well-Being*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jakola, Lassi. 2017. "In Search of 'the Good of Man': Georg Henrik von Wright's Humanistic Ethics". In *On the Human Condition*, edited by Ilkka Niiniluoto and Thomas Wallgren, 269–290. Helsinki: Juvenes Print.
- Kagan, Shelly. 1998. *Normative Ethics*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Kagan, Shelly. 2014. "An Introduction to Ill-Being". In *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics*, vol. 4, edited by Mark Timmons, 261–268. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kagan, Shelly. 2021. "What Is the Opposite of Well-Being?". In *Principles and Persons*, edited by Jeff McMahan, Tim Campbell, James Goodrich, and Ketan Ramakrishnan, 215–250. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Khader, Serene J. 2011. *Adaptive Preferences and Women's Empowerment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kraut, Richard. 1994. "Desire and the Human Good". *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 68: 39–54.
- Lin, Eden. 2016. "How to Use the Experience Machine". *Utilitas* 28: 314–332.
- Lin, Eden. 2022. "Well-Being, Part 2: Theories of Well-Being". *Philosophy Compass* 17: 1–23.
- Löhr, Guido. 2019. "The Experience Machine and the Expertise Defense". *Philosophical Psychology* 32: 257–273.
- Lukas, Mark E. 2005. "Well-Being and Actual Desires". PhD diss., University of Massachusetts.
- Lukas, Mark E. 2010. "Desire Satisfactionism and the Problem of Irrelevant Desires". *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 4 (no volume-wide pagination).
- Lukas, Mark E. 2013. "Desire Theories of the Good". In *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, edited by Hugh LaFollette, 1316–1323. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Luper, Steven. 2004. "Posthumous Harm". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 41: 63–72.

- Mathison, Eric. 2018. "Asymmetries and Ill-Being". PhD diss., University of Toronto.
- Mulgan, Tim. 2007. *Understanding Utilitarianism*. Stocksfield: Acumen.
- von Neumann, John, and Oskar Morgenstern. 1944. *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*. Princeton: Princeton U.P.
- Oddie, Graham. 2005. *Value, Reality, and Desire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Overvold, Mark C. 1980. "Self-Interest and the Concept of Self-Sacrifice". *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 10: 105–118.
- Parfit, Derek. 1984. *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Persson, Ingmar. 2004. "The Root of the Repugnant Conclusion and Its Rebuttal". In *The Repugnant Conclusion*, edited by Jesper Ryberg and Torbjörn Tännsjö, 187–199. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press.
- Rabinowicz, Wlodek, and Jan Österberg. 1996. "Value Based on Preference: On Two Interpretations of Preference Utilitarianism". *Economics and Philosophy* 12: 1–27.
- Raibley, Jason, and Valerie Tiberius. 2024. "Value Fulfillment and the Prudential Good". In this volume.
- Railton, Peter. 1986. "Facts and Values". *Philosophical Topics* 14: 5–31.
- Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rosati, Connie. 1996. "Internalism and the Good for a Person". *Ethics* 106: 297–326.
- Sartorius, Rolf E. 1975. *Individual Conduct and Social Norms*. Encino, CA: Dickenson.
- Sidgwick, Henry. 1907. *The Methods of Ethics*. 7th ed. (first ed. in 1874). London: McMillan.
- Sobel, David. 2009. "Subjectivism and Idealization". *Ethics* 119: 336–352.
- Sumner, L. Wayne. 1996. *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Temkin, Larry S. 2012. *Rethinking the Good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- van Weelden, Joseph. 2019. "On Two Interpretations of the Desire-Satisfaction Theory of Prudential Value". *Utilitas* 31: 137–156.
- Wessels, Ulla. 2011. *Das Gute*. Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann.
- Wessels, Ulla. 2018. "Über Wünsche von gestern, die nicht mehr Wünsche von heute sind". In *Zeit – eine normative Ressource?*, edited by Frank Dietrich, Johannes Müller-Salo and Reinold Schmücker, 75–89. Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann.
- von Wright, Georg H. 1963. *The Varieties of Goodness*. London: Routledge.