

## The Trouble with Genuine-Attraction Desires

**Abstract:** Many views of well-being hold that a person's desires directly contribute to well-being. Such views need to account for the plausible thought that not all satisfied desires benefit. An influential way of doing so—chiefly defended by Chris Heathwood—holds that only 'genuine-attraction desires' count toward well-being. I aim to show that we lack the conceptual grounds to distinguish genuine-attraction and other kinds of desire. I argue that if we appeal to phenomenology to explain the difference, we face a heterogeneity objection and we are unable to accommodate the intuition that the satisfaction of calm desires can benefit. If we cannot appeal to phenomenology, it is unclear what the difference is meant to be. I present two strategies that aim to account for the distinction non-phenomenologically and argue that neither is viable. I conclude that, without further analysis, the key distinction remains too unclear for the genuine-attraction strategy to work.

### 0. Introduction

Many theories of welfare take a person's desires to be, in some way, relevant to their well-being. Most obviously, there are desire-satisfaction views, according to which the satisfaction of a person's desires makes their life go better for them and the frustration of their desires makes their life go worse for them. One need not be a desire-satisfactionist, though, to think that desires matter. Let us call any view of well-being which, at least sometimes, takes desires to be fundamentally prudentially relevant *desire theories*. While there is something compelling about the idea that what a person wants directly matters for their well-being, we quickly discover that things are not so simple. A myriad of problem cases for desire theories have been discussed in the literature and, for now, suffice it to say that it is not *always* good for a person to get what they want. Desire theorists have attempted to account for this by drawing distinctions between actual and idealized desires, intrinsic and instrumental desires, autonomous and non-autonomous desires, self-regarding and other-regarding desires, and altruistic and non-altruistic desires, to name a few. One of the most promising ways of drawing the line between desires that do and do not matter for well-being was recently defended by Chris Heathwood 2019. He distinguishes *genuine-attraction desires* (roughly, desires that involve

genuine appeal) from *behavioral* ones (those which do not). (He cites Campbell 2013; Chang 2004; Daveney 1961; Davis 1986; Foot 1972; Gosling 1969; Hume 1739; Lewis 1988; Nagel 1970; Parfit 2011; Schapiro 2014; Schueler 1995; Sumner 1996; and Vadas 1984 as having made a similar kind of distinction.) He argues that there is a prudentially relevant difference between desires whose objects genuinely appeal to us and those whose objects do not, and that by employing this distinction, we can avoid four problem cases for desire theorists. The allure of this approach is not only that it parsimoniously delivers the right result in the problem cases, but also that there is intuitive appeal to the idea that the prudentially salient aspect of desires is genuine attraction. An animating concern for many desire theorists is that a person's welfare should be determined by what really matters to them.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Peter Railton writes,

...it does seem to me to capture an important feature of the concept of intrinsic value to say that what is intrinsically valuable for a person must have a connection with what he would find in some degree compelling or attractive, at least if he were rational and aware. It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any such way to engage him. (1986: 9)

Using the notion of genuine attraction to demarcate the desires that are relevant to well-being captures one of the most powerful rationales behind desire views of well-being like no other approach. As such, this strategy has proven to be quite influential in the well-being literature in that it is frequently discussed and cited favorably as a viable way of carving out which desires matter for prudential benefit. For a start, see Dorsey 2021; Jahn and Beck 2022; Lin 2021, 2022; and Yu 2022.

I argue that the genuine-attraction approach is fatally underspecified. In what follows, I show that there is theoretical pressure to account for the purported difference between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires by appealing to a difference in phenomenology; one that is characterized by affective arousal. But, I argue, there are two serious problems with

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<sup>1</sup> I take it that this sort of thought is what many proponents of the resonance constraint—roughly, that something can benefit someone only if they have a favoring attitude toward it—are aiming to capture. For a start, see Brandt 1979, Dorsey 2017, Griffin 1986, Hare 1981, Railton 1986, and Rosati 1996.

holding that genuine-attraction desires are such in virtue of a certain phenomenology. First, the more we require affective arousal of genuine-attraction desires, the less we are able to accommodate the intuition that the satisfaction of calm desires can benefit. Second, if genuine-attraction desires are necessary for satisfied desires to benefit and if they necessarily involve a certain phenomenology, then all instances of desire-benefit share a phenomenology. But this implication is counterintuitive and, for many, a decisive reason to reject a view.

If we are unable to account for the difference between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires phenomenologically, then it is unclear how we are meant to do so. I put forth what I take to be the two most promising non-phenomenological approaches and aim to show that neither is viable. The upshot is not only that the key distinction between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires is too unclear for the strategy to succeed, but also that it is doubtful that any path exists to make it work. This has substantial implications for desire theories at large. The genuine-attraction approach promises to deliver a unified, independently plausible solution to the problem cases in a way that other existing responses do not. If I am right that it is untenable, then desire theorists are in need not only of a response to each problem case, but also of one that can do so without being objectionably ad hoc.

### **1. The Promise of Genuine-Attraction Desires**

As previously mentioned, the most comprehensive defense of the view that only genuine-attraction desires are relevant to well-being is given by Heathwood 2019 in “Which Desires are Relevant to Well-Being?” He reviews four problem cases that need to be addressed to make viable the claim that desires can contribute to well-being. He argues that the cases are problematic only if we fail to disambiguate between two senses of desire. On the one hand, there are behavioral desires, which do not contribute to well-being. Those, Heathwood tells us, are desires that have some connection with our ‘voluntary action, intention, choice, and will’

(2019: 673). Every time that a person acts voluntarily, they necessarily have a corresponding behavioral desire to have so acted. Do I *want* to pay my bills? In one sense, yes. It is an obligation that I have and there will be aversive consequences if I do not. So, it can be said that I have a desire to pay my bills. But does the satisfaction of that desire benefit me non-instrumentally? Intuitively, it does not. Heathwood argues that this is because the desire to pay my bills is a behavioral desire and does not involve genuine appeal. There is a very real sense in which I do not want to pay my bills; there are other things that I *actually want* to spend my money on. He characterizes behavioral desires as follows:

- Behavioral desire may simply be a “functional state”, or a state defined by what it does; in this case: an intentional state that disposes the person in it to try to act in the ways that (according to that person’s beliefs) would make its content true;
- When it comes to the behavioral sense of “desire”, a person cannot voluntarily do an action that they had no desire to do; voluntarily doing an act entails having wanted to do it;
- For desire in the behavioral sense, *strength* of desire is determined by hypothetical choices. (2019: 675)

On the other hand, there are genuine-attraction desires, which do contribute to well-being. These are desires that correspond with what we find genuinely appealing. We behaviorally desire to do all kinds of things that we do not *really* want to do. Genuine-attraction desires are meant to capture what we mean when we appeal to the notion of ‘*really* wanting’. Let us say that I take myself to have a moral obligation to go visit a sick friend, but what I *really* want to do is to go on a long walk.<sup>2</sup> My friend has been thoroughly miserable during all my previous visits and is a drag to be around, but I know that they benefit from me being there. Although I want nothing more than to go on a solitary walk and to enjoy the sun on my face, I, with a sinking heart, decide to go and visit them.

There is a clear sense in which I had a desire—a behavioral one—to go visit my friend, as is evidenced by my having decided to do so. But there is also a clear way in which I did not

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<sup>2</sup> This example is inspired by a case given by Gosling 1969, which Heathwood cites (2019: 672).

want to go see them; what I *really* wanted was to go on a walk. Genuine-attraction desires aim to account for these two different ways in which a person can relate to the object of their desire.

Heathwood writes that they are ‘... connected with notions like enthusiasm, appeal, interest, excitement, and attraction’ (2019: 673). He further characterizes them as follows:

- If a person has a genuine-attraction desire for some event to occur (or to have occurred or to be occurring), the person finds the occurrence of the event attractive or appealing, is enthusiastic about it (at least to some extent), and tends to view it with pleasure or gusto;
- When it comes to the genuine-attraction sense of “desire”, a person can voluntarily do an action that they had no desire to do, and they can refuse to do what they most desire to do;
- For desire in the genuine-attraction sense, *strength* of desire is the strength of the genuine attraction to the event’s occurring, or the degree to which the event’s occurrence genuinely appeals to the desirer, or the degree to which they are enthusiastic about it. (2019: 674–75)

To illustrate the prudential significance of this distinction, let us further consider the above example. Without distinguishing between the two senses of desire, desire theorists would be forced to say that, because I got what I wanted, the satisfaction of my desire to visit my friend benefited me. But this seems wrong. A plausible account of well-being ought to be able to capture the sense in which I sacrificed my welfare in order to fulfill my moral obligation. Employing the genuine-attraction strategy solves this worry. Because I did not find the prospect of visiting my friend to be genuinely appealing, my desire to visit them was a mere behavioral one and, as such, its satisfaction did not benefit me. Moreover, I had a genuine-attraction desire to go on a walk, which was frustrated when I decided to visit my friend instead. This thereby allows us to say that I sacrificed my well-being in order to visit my friend.

I will call this approach *The Genuine-Attraction Theory of Prudentially-Relevant Desires*, or *GAT* for short.

### **The Genuine-Attraction Theory of Prudentially-Relevant Desires (GAT):**

Genuine-attraction desires are the only desires whose satisfaction are of prudential value.<sup>3</sup>

There are many cases that have a similar structure to the one above: a person fulfills a moral obligation (or simply behaves altruistically), and, in doing so, sacrifices their well-being. Following Heathwood, we will refer to the desires described in these cases as *moral desires*.<sup>4</sup> We have already seen how GAT successfully addresses the problem of moral desires. In order to showcase the promise of GAT and its potential significance to desire theories, I briefly canvas the other three problem cases that Heathwood presents for which GAT provides a much-needed solution. If he is right that GAT is the only existing view that can adequately address these issues, and if I am right that GAT is fatally flawed, then the call for a tenable view of prudentially relevant desires is all the more pressing for anyone inclined toward a desire theory.

In what follows, for simplicity's sake, I assume a view of well-being according to which at least some satisfied desires are fundamentally prudentially relevant.

*Prudential Desires:* In these kinds of cases, a person does something that they do not *really* want to do in order to be prudentially responsible. Imagine a person who wants to quit

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<sup>3</sup> There are many questions that still need to be addressed for GAT to be a complete theory of the ways in which satisfied desires might benefit. For instance, is GAT a concurrentist view—of the kind defended by Heathwood 2005—according to which the satisfaction of a desire can only benefit a person if the time at which they have the desire overlaps with the time at which its object obtains? Another question is that of whether GAT abandons a widely held tenet of desire views which holds that things can benefit a person without affecting their experience (Lin 2021: 879–80 claims that GAT rejects the experience requirement). Yet another question is that of whether a person needs to be conscious of their genuine-attraction desires or whether they can be latent (I suspect the latter is the more promising strategy). Although addressing these questions is crucial in order to properly assess the viability of the theory, doing so is outside the scope of this paper. Heathwood does not directly address these details, nor does he pretend to have offered a full picture of the way in which the theory might work. With the exception of one point, I don't think that anything discussed in what follows hinges on how GAT answers these important questions. When it does matter, I flag this in a footnote. Thank you to an anonymous referee for this point.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that we can never be genuinely attracted to our moral obligations or benefited by the satisfaction of desires with moral objects. The term is merely meant to refer to a kind of problem case for desire theories: cases in which the satisfaction of desires with moral objects does not intuitively benefit us non-derivatively.

smoking, but who is seriously addicted to cigarettes. During their lunch break, all they can think about is how badly they want to smoke, but they ultimately decide against it. They keep this up for a month and eventually lose the desire for cigarettes. Desire theories seem to tell us that because they fulfilled their desires not to smoke for an entire month, they benefited intrinsically from their satisfaction. While it is true that it is beneficial not to smoke, that seems to be so because of instrumental considerations. The problem is that desire theories struggle to account for the fact that this was an arduous month for the smoker. Were the smoker to be killed in an accident at the end of the month, desire theories seem to be unable to account for the way in which the person did not live to see the benefit from not smoking. If they were to die prematurely, then it is intuitively plausible that they were actually harmed by quitting smoking, given how painful of an experience it was for them.

GAT has no trouble accounting for this. It tells us that our smoker had genuine-attraction desires to smoke (as smoking is what *really* appealed to them) that were frustrated when they decided not to and that they were thereby harmed by the frustration of those desires. Without GAT, desire theories would tell us that our smoker had a great month because they got what they most wanted the whole time. With GAT, we are able to account for the fact that it was a horrible month for them. Were they to survive beyond the month, GAT would also be able to account for the instrumental benefit that quitting smoking would have had (assuming that they would go on to satisfy more genuine-attraction desires than they otherwise would have).

*Compulsive Desires:* The next problem case concerns compulsive desires. Warren Quinn has a well-known example of such a case: we are to imagine that a person 'is in a strange functional state that disposes him to turn on radios that he sees to be turned off' (1993: 32). The person isn't passionate about having radios on, or turning knobs, or anything like that, nor does he feel any joy or satisfaction after the fact. He is simply compelled to turn on radios. Without

GAT, this person would, counterintuitively, be made better-off every time he satisfied his desire to turn on a radio. Employing the distinction, we can see that his desires to turn on radios are merely behavioral. If we take only genuine-attraction desires to be intrinsically prudentially relevant, we are not forced to say that turning on radios benefits him.<sup>5</sup>

*Desires Concerning Unlikely Possibilities:* This last kind of problematic desire is nicely illustrated by a case from Fred Feldman (2010: 66). Imagine a person, Lois, at a museum who, upon seeing a dinosaur exhibit, coolly and without emotion reflects on how it would be terrible to be eaten by a dinosaur. Obviously, it is extremely unlikely that Lois will ever be on Earth at the same time as a dinosaur, never mind that she will be eaten by one. But because she has never reflected on this before, she forms a new desire not to be eaten by a dinosaur which is, of course, constantly being satisfied. Without GAT, there is pressure on desire theories to say that Lois is benefitted by not being mauled by a dinosaur, even when that isn't a live possibility for her. With GAT, we can explain why the dinosaur-desire is not prudentially relevant. As the case is described, Lois is emotionless and unenthusiastic, which means that she does not have a genuine-attraction desire, and thus does not benefit.

Like Heathwood, I think that problem cases involving moral desires, prudential desires, compulsive desires, and desires concerning unlikely possibilities are worrisome for desire theories and that they need to be addressed by those who find the theories attractive. In what follows, though, I hope to show that GAT is not up to the task. The upshot is that desire theories are in need of a tenable account—one with intuitive appeal and that can handle the problem cases—that tells us which desires are relevant to well-being.

## **2. Phenomenological Unity**

### **2.1 What About Stoicism?**

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<sup>5</sup> Heathwood also discusses the drug-addict case from Parfit (1984: 496) as one that illustrates the problem of compulsive desires (2019: 667–68).



In order for GAT to work, there must be a viable way of classifying genuine-attraction desires in a way that sets them apart from behavioral ones. Moreover, it should be the case that once we clearly distinguish between these two kinds of desire, genuine-attraction ones should be present in all instances where a person is intuitively benefited by the satisfaction of a desire.

As we saw previously, Heathwood writes that if a person is genuinely attracted to the object of their desire, then they find it attractive or appealing, they are (to some extent) enthusiastic about it, and they tend to view it with pleasure or gusto. But these descriptors are ambiguous. For instance, in cases of desires concerning unlikely possibilities, such as Lois' desire not to be eaten by a dinosaur, the subject has what is supposed to be a paradigmatically behavioral desire whose satisfaction is intuitively of no prudential value. But wouldn't it be fair to say that Lois finds the idea of not being eaten by a dinosaur genuinely attractive or appealing? Or, in the case of Quinn's radio man, it seems like we can accurately characterize him as being attracted to the prospect of turning on radios. Heathwood himself acknowledges this difficulty in two endnotes:

... if a person is in a functional state that disposes him to turn on radios, there is some sense of 'attracted' in which it follows trivially that he was attracted to doing this (perhaps it is the same sense in which electrons are attracted to protons). But I hope it's clear enough that there is another sense—a more phenomenological or affective rather than behavioral sense—in which this fellow was in no way attracted to turning on radios. (2019: 683)

However, won't Lois find the prospect of being eaten by a dinosaur unappealing, even in her emotionless state? Yes, but this [is] just an illustration of the unfortunate fact that even the terms I am using to characterize genuine-attraction desire don't all do so unambiguously. We can use the notions of appeal and attraction in a thinner sense as well, to refer to behavioral desire... Language aside, what I need for my solution to work is for there to be two importantly different ways that Lois might relate to the prospect of being eaten by a dinosaur: (i) calmly disposed to choose against it, which is what she is in the example, and (ii) affectively averse to it, which is what she would be if she thought it a live possibility. (2019: 685)

In both these passages, Heathwood directs us to embrace the affective, phenomenological aspect of genuine-attraction desires. He distinguishes behavioral desires from genuine-attraction ones

by noting that the former are calm and perhaps emotionless, whereas the latter are characterized by phenomenology and affective arousal.

Not only is there theoretical pressure to characterize genuine-attraction desires by appealing to phenomenology and affective arousal, it seems to accurately capture what Heathwood was going for. He characterizes genuine-attraction desires as 'warm', and sometimes 'appetitive' (2019: 673). He holds that the person views the object of their desire 'with pleasure or gusto', 'enthusiasm', and 'excitement' (2019: 677–78). When he is contrasting genuine-attraction desires with behavioral desires, he describes the latter as 'cold' and 'calm' (2019: 677). These descriptors are arguably more evidence that an uncalm, affectively aroused state is what the notion of genuine-attraction is aiming to capture.

Demarcating the difference between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires by appealing to phenomenology has the advantage of cleanly differentiating between the two. On this picture, genuine-attraction desires all have the feeling of genuine attraction and behavioral desires lack it. Another advantage of appealing to phenomenology is that, insofar as we have an intuitive grasp of the distinction that Heathwood is after, it does seem to be one that is characterized by the way it feels. GAT gains its initial intuitive plausibility with an (indirect) appeal to phenomenology. When we reflect on the difference between a desire to not be eaten by a dinosaur and the desire to spend time with one's children, a natural place to which to turn is the striking difference in phenomenology between those two ways of wanting.

There are two problems with classifying genuine-attraction desires as such in virtue of their phenomenology or affective arousal. The first is that doing so seems to preclude calm, quiet desires from benefiting, even in cases where their satisfaction is intuitively of prudential value. The second is that we run into a heterogeneity objection. I discuss the latter problem in the next subsection.

To illustrate the former problem, consider Feldman's description of Stoicus, who

...just wants peace and quiet. He wants to live an unruffled life... In fact, he prefers not to experience any episodes of pleasure. He prefers not to have such pleasure in part because he fears that if he had some, they would ruffle his life... Suppose Stoicus gets exactly what he wants - peace, quiet, no episodes of sensory pleasure, and no episodes of sensory pain... Suppose that as he receives his daily dose of peace and quiet, Stoicus is content. He is satisfied with his life... Surely it would be odd to say that whole schools of apparently rational philosophers have advocated a life-style that is guaranteed to yield worthless lives! (2010: 50)

With this, Feldman shows us that one advantage of desire theories is that they are seemingly able to account for the intuition that Stoicus lives a good life. That they are able to do so is often considered to be a major advantage of those views. If we flesh out the case a bit more, and add a few details (which I take to be in keeping with the original description of the case), we can see how an account of genuine-attraction desire which relies on affective arousal is incompatible with the thought that Stoicus is benefited by the satisfaction of his desires.

After deep reflection about what constitutes the good life, Stoicus has concluded that it is one characterized by equanimity and low affect. He wakes up every morning, resolved not to be thrust about by his own desires and emotions, and, with few exceptions, he succeeds. He has desires about the way his day will go, but those desires lack gusto; they are without pleasure or enthusiasm.<sup>6</sup> Instead, they are calm, quiet, and considered desires and that is exactly the way he wants them to be. Although he cares about the objects of his everyday desires, he is not overly attached to their obtaining. Stoicus coolly desires to go on his morning walk, to spend the afternoon meditating, and to end his day by studying philosophy. Occasionally, in the evenings, as he philosophizes, he catches himself getting too worked up about this dilemma or that puzzle. But his lifelong training is effective, and before he becomes overly enthusiastic or

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted here that Feldman describes Stoicus as 'content', which might indicate that it is not fair to describe his desires as lacking pleasure (and therefore as behavioral, which I go on to do). In what follows, I aim to show that if his desires are ones characterized by calmness, then, on the picture we are currently considering where desires with no or low affective arousal are behavioral, then Stoicus' desires must count as behavioral. If they are to count as genuine-attraction desires, then we need some explanation as to what differentiates them from calm and cool behavioral desires. I argue that there is no clear way to make that distinction.

agitated by the question at hand, he is quickly able to bring himself back to a composed, neutral, gusto-less state with which he approaches his activities for the remainder of the night.

Is Stoicus benefited by the satisfaction of his day-to-day desires? Many—particularly those inclined towards desire theories—think that the answer is quite plausibly, ‘Yes’. Consider, though, what GAT must say about the case if genuine-attraction desires are ones characterized by affective arousal or a certain phenomenology. Recall that GAT holds that in order to be benefited by their satisfaction, Stoicus’ desires must be genuine-attraction ones. But this doesn’t seem to be the case. Stoicus’ desires do not ruffle his feathers. They are not characterized by gusto, enthusiasm, or pleasure. He expressly aims to have low affective arousal and not to be too attached to any given outcome. As we saw in the passages cited at the beginning of this section, there is theoretical pressure to appeal to an uncalm, affective phenomenology in order to distinguish genuine-attraction from behavioral desires. Without doing so, it is unclear why Lois’ calm desire not to be eaten by a dinosaur should count as a behavioral one. Calmness is explicitly pitted against genuine attraction on the view currently at hand. It seems as though if Lois’ desire is a behavioral one in virtue of its calmness, then so too is Stoicus’. As such, GAT tells us that Stoicus is not benefited by the satisfaction of his calm desires, even though those desires are rooted in his deepest interests about what amounts to a good life for him.<sup>7</sup>

It is perhaps worth pausing here to explicitly disambiguate the different kinds of desire that Stoicus might have. As I have described the case, Stoicus’ first-order desires are not genuine-attraction ones, but perhaps I am neglecting the possibility that his second-order desire to not desire things in such a way as to ruffle his feathers is itself a genuine-attraction desire.

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<sup>7</sup> I suspect that it’s even worse than that, for GAT. Because living an unruffled life is important to Stoicus, he thinks that he is doing poorly to the extent that he becomes, for lack of a better term, ruffled. But GAT delivers a verdict that flies in the face of Stoicus’ deepest commitments. It tells us that he is benefited by satisfying his desires *only when* he becomes ruffled. If we pair GAT with a desire theory, we get the counterintuitive result that Stoicus is never benefited, even when he is lucky enough to spend all of his days doing nothing other than satisfying his desires.

With this approach, GAT could say that while Stoicus is not benefited by his daily activities (which he only behaviorally desires), he *is* benefited every time he is able to prevent a genuine-attraction desire from occurring. The thought is that his genuine-attraction desire to experience only behavioral desires accounts for the ways in which he is benefited throughout his days.

But proponents of GAT are not off the hook. The problem with this picture is that a feather-ruffling genuine-attraction desire is still necessary for benefit. Every time Stoicus is benefited by preventing a first-order genuine-attraction desire, we discover that it was only at the expense of having a disquieting second-order genuine-attraction desire, which in turn harms him. This way of thinking about Stoicus morphs him into a tragic, Sisyphian figure, which, at the very least, is not what Feldman had in mind.

What of the possibility that this is precisely the right result? Perhaps Stoicus, given his convictions, can never live a good life. I leave open the question of whether this is the right diagnosis of the case, but it seems to me like this result would be particularly difficult for desire theorists to accept. A powerful reason to think that desires are prudentially relevant is the thought that a person's well-being should be suited to her. For a start, see Railton 1986 and Rosati 1996. A person's well-being must 'fit' her. The thought is that what a good life amounts to for someone is informed by their convictions and interests.<sup>8</sup> It is thus a cost to GAT that it tells us that for Stoicus to benefit from satisfying his desires, they must involve a kind of affective arousal that does not suit him at all.

Heathwood considers a case with interesting implications for the present discussion (2019: 680–81). He notes that one might object to his view on the grounds that it excludes too

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<sup>8</sup> This thought serves as support for the resonance constraint on theories of well-being, which is the claim that if something is good for a person, then it must have a connection to her favoring attitudes. While the resonance constraint is not in question for our purposes, the animating thought behind it—that a person's welfare should be tailored to her interests—is.

many desires from counting towards well-being. He asks us to imagine a cool and calm being who only experiences behavioral desires. As with the Stoicus case, GAT tells us that the satisfaction of that being's desires does not benefit. But, Heathwood argues, this is precisely the right result for this type of being. But it's crucial, he tells us, that we are imagining the case correctly:

Some readers might be imagining a creature like the famous character Spock from *Star Trek*. Doing so certainly helps to elicit the intuition that things go better for the being if it [satisfies its desire to win a] game of chess. For surely Spock is a being for whom things go better and worse, and if so, then winning this game of chess seems like a good candidate for being a good thing for Spock. But to imagine the case this way is illegitimate, for Spock isn't in fact a being who lacks true desires. Although there is a tendency to think of Spock as an emotionless, detached being, this isn't true. ... Spock desires things not merely in virtue of the fact that he makes voluntary choices; things genuinely appeal to him. (2019: 680)

A proponent of GAT would likely have a similar response to the Stoicus case. Stoicus does not desire things merely in virtue of the fact that he makes voluntary choices; things genuinely appeal to him. The objection is that there is an intuitive difference between Stoicus' desires and Lois'. Stoicus might seem to be genuinely attracted to the objects of his desires in a way that Lois' is not to hers. After all, even though his everyday desires are cool and composed, we should think of them as mattering to him. He certainly does not go about his routines grudgingly and he is described as content. Perhaps this should indicate to us that his desires are of the genuine-attraction variety. It does seem right to say that Stoicus is genuinely attracted to the life he leads and to the various activities that make up his day.

The trouble with this approach is that we are desperately in need of an account of what it is that makes Stoicus' desires of the genuine-attraction variety; of what constitutes genuine attraction if not affective arousal or uncalm phenomenology. Even if we were to find an account of genuine attraction that does not necessitate affective arousal of the kind that Stoicus aims to avoid, we would then need some explanation of what distinguishes Stoicus' cool and calm desires from Lois' cool and calm desire not to be eaten by a dinosaur. Why should one be a

genuine-attraction desire and the other a behavioral one? What does it mean for Stoicus to find the objects of his desires genuinely appealing? It is not as though Lois is disingenuous about wanting not to be eaten by a dinosaur. Lois does not desire things merely in virtue of the fact that she makes voluntary choices. We saw at the beginning of this section that Heathwood's attempt to distinguish Lois' purportedly behavioral desire from genuine-attraction ones relies on affective arousal. If we cannot appeal to affective arousal by way of explaining why Stoicus' desire is purportedly of the genuine-attraction variety, then it is not clear to what else we should turn. In order to properly distinguish between the two kinds of desire in a way that would yield good results for GAT, we need something more. In section 3, I canvas different possible ways of distinguishing between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires and conclude that if genuine-attraction desires are not characterized by affective arousal, then the distinction between behavioral desires and genuine attraction desires collapses.

In any case, even if I am wrong about GAT's verdicts in the Stoicus case, there is another serious problem with appealing to phenomenology to distinguish between genuine attraction and behavioral desires.

## **2.2 Heterogeneity**

Assume, for now, that genuine-attraction desires differ phenomenally from behavioral ones. On this picture, one question is that of whether descriptors such as 'gusto', 'enthusiasm', 'interest', 'pleasure', and 'excitement' are meant to indicate that genuine-attraction desires can involve different types of phenomenologies or whether the descriptors are all meant to describe a singular (kind of) phenomenology. On the former picture, genuine-attraction desires characterized by interest, for example, could be phenomenally distinct from ones characterized by excitement, but on the latter picture they would all share one (kind of) phenomenology. Let us consider the latter option first.

The trouble with this option is that it opens GAT up to a heterogeneity objection. If genuine-attraction is necessary for prudential desire-benefit and if genuine-attraction necessarily involves a phenomenology (or phenomenal tone), then a particular phenomenology (or phenomenal tone) is necessary for desire-benefit.<sup>9</sup> On this view, if a person is benefited by the satisfaction of their desire, then that benefit necessarily involves a certain kind of phenomenology.<sup>10</sup> Many people find a very similar implication to be quite counterintuitive, as is evidenced in the literature on the heterogeneity objection to phenomenological views of pleasure (according to which all pleasures share a felt-quality). This kind of objection is well-known and is widely taken to be a reason to reject that kind of view. In a different paper, Heathwood writes, ‘There are well-known arguments against Felt-Quality Theories [of pleasure], and, sufficient to say, the phenomenology just doesn’t bear it out—there doesn’t seem to be any one feeling (or even ‘hedonic tone’) common to all occasions on which we experience pleasure or enjoyment’ (2007: 26).

Notice, though, that on the interpretation that we are currently considering, GAT faces a very similar problem. Instead of questioning whether there is really any shared phenomenology between disparate pleasures, I am questioning whether there is really any shared phenomenology between instances in which our satisfied desires benefit. If genuine-attraction desires are united by phenomenology, then GAT seems committed to the claim that there is

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<sup>9</sup> The heterogeneity objection that I describe here depends on the assumption that the genuine-attraction desire (and thus its accompanying phenomenology) must be present at the time at which its subject benefits. I take this to be a safe assumption, given the popularity (among the few who explicitly consider the question) of Time-of-Desire and Concurrentist views in the literature, both of which hold that one benefits from the satisfaction of their desire only when they have that desire. Heathwood 2005 defends Concurrentism, and Lin cites Bigelow, Campbell, and Pargetter 1990; Bruckner 2013, and Dorsey 2013 as defending versions of Time-of-Desire views (2017: 161)). He notes that it is unclear to him that anyone has defended the view which denies that one must have a desire at the time of benefit.

<sup>10</sup> What is worse is that this would seem to suggest that there is a common phenomenology not only to all instances in which desire benefits, but also that the same phenomenology is present in all instances in which desire detracts from well-being (given that genuine-attraction desires are the only ones that are prudentially relevant). Because of space constraints, I will not pursue this thought here.



some feeling common to all occasions on which we experience prudential benefit by way of desire-satisfaction. Assume that both taking a bath and falling in love contribute to S's well-being because they have a genuine-attraction desire for each. When they satisfy their genuine-attraction desire to take a bath, they experience a certain phenomenology in virtue of what it feels like to have a genuine-attraction desire. But, on this view, when they satisfy a genuine-attraction desire to fall in love, they experience that same phenomenology (due to the presence of the genuine-attraction desire). This should be particularly troubling for desire theorists who think that pleasure is reducible to desire, as it would entail that there is in fact a phenomenology common to all instances of pleasure. (Heathwood 2007, for instance, argues that all sensory pleasure is reducible to desire.) If one is skeptical that any such feeling exists in the case of all pleasures, it seems to me that they should be just as skeptical that it exists in all instances in which desires contribute to well-being.

One might think that this isn't a particularly pressing problem for GAT because it would be true of any view that tells us that disparate experiences benefit because of the satisfaction of a desire. But that is mistaken. Analyzing desire by appealing to a shared felt-quality is not a common way of doing it. Some accounts of desire analyze it in terms of, for instance, being disposed to act in certain ways (Michael Smith 1987, 1994), in terms of mental states that have the function of producing actions (Millikan 1984; Papineau 1987), or in terms of judgments of what we have reason to do (Scanlon 1998). Even pleasure-based accounts of desire often avoid the claim that the desire itself has a particular felt-quality and appeal instead to an agent's being disposed to take pleasure in the object of their desire (Schueler 1995; Vadas 1984). So, because other accounts of desire do not analyze desires in terms of felt-quality, they are not committed to the view that there is one feeling common to all instances of desire-benefit.

Let's instead consider the possibility that we should consider characteristics like 'gusto', 'enthusiasm', and 'interest' to describe a number of different phenomenologies rather than a particular one (or a phenomenal tone). This would allow us to avoid a heterogeneity objection because it could account for there being disparate phenomenologies associated with desire-benefit. It would not be committed to the counterintuitive claim that there is one particular phenomenology (or phenomenal tone) common to all instances of desire-benefit. The problem with this approach is that we need an account of what unites these various phenomenologies; what is it that makes them belong to the genuine-attraction class rather than the behavioral one?

One might be tempted to provide such an account by appealing to the determinate-determinable distinction (Crisp brought this distinction to bear on the well-being literature by arguing that analyzing enjoyment through this lens provides an answer to the heterogeneity objection (2006: 109)). The thought would then be something like this: *genuine-attraction* or *appeal* is the determinable, and *gusto-desire*, *interest-desire*, *pleasure-desire*, and *enthusiasm-desire*, for example, are all determinates. On this account, what token *gusto-desires* and *interest-desires* share in virtue of which they count as *genuine-attraction desires* is that they are both determinates of the determinable *genuine-attraction desire*. *Gusto-desire* and *interest-desire* would be to *genuine-attraction desire* just as *seeing blue* and *seeing red* are to *seeing color*. Although there is a sense in which the experience of seeing blue is nothing like the experience of seeing red, there is one quale that they have in common: they are both experiences of seeing color. We might say that just as seeing blue and seeing red are quite different from one another, so too are the experiences of having a *gusto-desire* and an *interest-desire*. And, perhaps just as the experiences of seeing blue and seeing red are united because they are both instances of the

determinable *seeing color*, having a gusto-desire and having an interest-desire are united because they are both instances of the determinable *genuine-attraction desire*.

The trouble here is a familiar one. Although the distinction between determinates and determinables appears to explain what different kinds of genuine-attraction desire have in common (being determinates of a shared determinable), it does not gain any explanatory traction with regard to parsing out which desires count as genuine-attraction ones. Nothing in what we have been given prevents us from saying that the desires that Quinn’s radio man and Lois have—ones that are intuitively behavioral and do not contribute to well-being—are also determinates of the determinable *genuine-attraction*. Moreover, as previously discussed, we want our account to be able to say that cool, calm desires (like the ones that Stoicus has) count as genuine-attraction ones. But the appeal to determinates and determinables makes no progress in this regard. Why would *cool-calm-Stoicus-desire* and *excitable-desire* both be determinates of *genuine-attraction desire*, but *cool-calm-Lois-desire* and *radio-man-desire* not be? If the distinction between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires is viable, we need a principled way to answer that question, and, as of yet, we quite simply do not have it.

### **3. Non-Phenomenological Unity**

#### **3.1 Adverbial Conceptual Unity**

I have argued that if GAT relies upon phenomenology to differentiate genuine-attraction desires from other desires, it cannot accommodate Stoicus and it faces a heterogeneity objection. But what happens if we turn away from phenomenology? Although Heathwood thinks that genuine-attraction desires are in part characterized by their unique phenomenologies, he also notes that genuine-attraction desires are not just behavioral ones with a certain feeling added to them. He writes,

... what is different about the one kind of state isn’t that it is just the other kind of state plus a certain phenomenology. Rather, it is a difference in the intentional aspect of the state, in the way of relating to the object of the desire. I don’t deny that there is a phenomenological difference

between the two states; they plainly do differ with respect to what it is like to be in them. I just want to insist that the affective part isn't some inessential feature of the relation to the object of desire, but part of the very stuff of the relation. (2019: 674)

This passage suggests that the key distinction might be found in the way the subject relates to the object of their desire. In the remaining sections, we will set aside Heathwood's own views about the necessary phenomenological difference between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires to see whether we can make sense of the notion that there are two fundamentally different ways—ones that deliver the correct verdicts in the problem cases—in which a subject can relate to the object of their desire.

One possible way that we might flesh this out draws inspiration from an account of the nature of pleasure known as *the adverbial view of pleasure*.<sup>11</sup> Proponents of this view of pleasure hold that there is no phenomenology that all pleasures share. What unites them instead is the way that the subject engages with the source of their pleasure. The thought is that we should not imagine pleasure as a particular kind of phenomenology that we affix to the experience in question, but rather as a modification of the way that one engages with the experience. We might say that it modifies the experience 'adverbially' (see Gosling for a helpful overview of adverbial views of pleasure (1969: chs. 4–5)). This echoes some of the language that Heathwood uses in the above passage when he describes what differentiates genuine-attraction desires and behavioral ones. To modify the adverbial approach for our purposes, we might say that genuine-attraction desires are not characterized by any phenomenology, but rather by the way in which the subject engages with the object of their desire; the way in which they relate to it. On this view, having a genuine-attraction desire for something requires that we engage with the object of that desire differently than we would if it were behavioral.

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<sup>11</sup> Thank you to David Sobel for this point.

One major advantage of this kind of view of pleasure—and, *mutatis mutandis*, of this view of genuine-attraction desires—is that because it takes as its starting point that pleasures do not share phenomenologies, it is not subject to the heterogeneity objection. In explaining adverbial views of pleasure, Gosling writes that a person who enjoys a round of golf, for example,

... differs from one who does not in the way in which he goes about it. A person who is not enjoying it shows signs of boredom, is readily distracted, easily discouraged, keeps looking at his watch, and in various typical ways shows that his heart is not in it. By contrast, a man who is enjoying his game shows this by the spring in his step, by impatience with interruptions or delays, by the eagerness with which he proceeds to each new shot, and perhaps the disappointment with which he greets the eighteenth tee. (1969: 55–56)

A similar approach might be employed for our purposes. If we were to employ an adverbial view of genuine-attraction desire, we might say that a person with a genuine-attraction desire to, say, study philosophy differs from a person with a merely behavioral desire to do so, much as the two golfers differ from one another. The person with a genuine-attraction desire to study philosophy would not be readily distracted from their readings, they would not be easily discouraged, and they would approach each new topic eagerly. But were they to have a mere behavioral desire to study philosophy, they would be readily distracted, discouraged, and would grudgingly move from topic to topic.

Although this is merely a rough outline of what this kind of approach could look like, we have enough to see that there are several problems with this strategy. First, whether one is readily distracted or easily discouraged depends more on one's personality and on individual dispositions than on whether the object of their desire is genuinely appealing to them. We can imagine a person who is easily dissuaded from something that they find genuinely appealing.<sup>12</sup> Imagine that playing basketball genuinely appeals to someone, but that they are very shy and unsure of themselves. They have dreamed about playing it for their entire life, but have lacked the

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<sup>12</sup> For a paper in favor of the idea that imagination can help produce justification for modal beliefs, see Derek Lam (2018). Thank you to Hille Paakkunainen for this point.

confidence to actually play. Imagine further that one day they muster the courage to get out on the basketball court, but that once they do, they feel shy and exposed, and hurry home. That they are easily dissuaded does not show that playing basketball lacks genuine appeal for them. This is especially true if we stipulate that they keep dreaming about playing as much as they ever did, even after their failed attempt.

We can also imagine someone who is steadfastly committed to something that lacks genuine appeal. Take, for instance, someone with a behavioral desire to visit a sick friend in the hospital. They don't *really* want to do it, but they will nonetheless. The simple fact that they are not readily distracted or easily discouraged from doing so should not be evidence that the visit genuinely appeals to them. Perhaps they are steadfastly committed to being honorable, or maybe they are just particularly rigid about sticking to their schedule. Consider again Quinn's radio man, whose desire to turn on radios is paradigmatically behavioral. Although he is decidedly steadfast in his commitment to turn on radios, we do not think doing so genuinely appeals to him (nor do we think that it benefits him). Whether someone is easily distracted, dissuaded, or discouraged cannot determine whether they are genuinely attracted to the object of their desire.

The second problem with this approach is that there are intuitively a variety of different modes of engaging with the objects of desires that benefit. Although it might be appropriate to play golf with a skip in one's step, the same is not true of all experiences that might contribute to well-being. That kind of eagerness does not seem appropriate for less active, more relaxing activities. Take a relaxing summertime snooze by the water, for instance (Gosling 1969: 60). It is entirely misguided to say that for it to genuinely appeal to a person, they must relax enthusiastically, or that they must be difficult to distract from the activity of relaxing.

A defender of the adverbial view of genuine-attraction desire could respond to this objection by identifying some other way in which we might relate to the less active, more relaxing experiences. The thought would be that while our more active genuine-attraction desires are characterized by our being hard to distract and enthusiastically engaged, our more relaxed genuine-attraction desires are characterized by, for example, a joyful and calm abandon. The trouble with this response is, as Gosling points out in regards to the adverbialist view of pleasure, that

... we are being given too many options, and that for the simple reason that various options are needed to keep the view plausible. Then as we move from case to case we can slip into the most plausible option for the case in hand. This unfortunately will not do. For the options are plausible in so far as they are not extended, no one will fit all cases, and there is no reason to believe that all the options are really examples of the same point. (1969: 60)

That we have no reason to believe that all the options are really examples of the same point is at the very heart of the problem at hand. The adverbial approach gives us no new grounds on which to distinguish Lois' and Stoicus' desires. If engaging with the object of one's desire calmly and without affect determines that Stoicus' desires are genuine-attraction ones, then why isn't the same true of Lois? It seems that with or without the adverbial view, we are left with the same question: what serves as the conceptual grounds for distinguishing desires whose objects genuinely appeal to a person from the rest?

### **3.2 Dispositional Conceptual Unity**

Another non-phenomenological way that we might distinguish between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires is by appealing to the way the subject is disposed to react upon having their desire knowingly satisfied.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the mark of a genuine-attraction desire is that one is disposed to feel pleasure when and because the desire is satisfied. Behavioral desires, then, would be desires for which that is not the case. Not only would this approach allow us to avoid saying that genuine-attraction desires are united by a shared

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<sup>13</sup> Thank you to Hille Paakkunainen and Robert Shaver for this point.

phenomenology, it would also seemingly have the advantage of being able to count Stoicus' desires as genuine-attraction ones while maintaining that the desires of Lois and of Quinn's radio man are behavioral. It seems plausible to say that Stoicus takes a calm, cool, contented pleasure in the satisfaction of his prudentially beneficial desires, but that neither Lois nor Quinn's radio man are disposed to feel pleasure upon the satisfaction of their desires.

The trouble with this approach is that it simply pushes back the problems with which we are now familiar. If the taking of pleasure is going to play such a large role in determining genuine-attraction desires, then we need to know more about the nature of the pleasure in question. This pleasure is most plausibly analyzed either phenomenologically or attitudinally.<sup>14</sup> Let us consider the former option first. On this approach, all pleasures share a felt quality. If genuine-attraction desires are ones for which the individual is disposed to take pleasure (that is, to experience a felt quality) when and because the desire is satisfied, then we are still stuck with the conclusion that most instances of desire-benefit share a felt quality.<sup>15</sup> This is the heterogeneity objection with which we are familiar, and which people inclined towards desire theories tend to find decisive.

On the latter approach, the pleasure that the person is disposed to experience upon the satisfaction of their desire is analyzed attitudinally. Attitudinal theorists deny the claim that all pleasures are conceptually united by a felt quality. Instead, they hold, roughly, that what all pleasures have in common is that the agent in question has an attitude of the right sort towards

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<sup>14</sup> There are non-attitudinal, non-phenomenological ways of analyzing pleasure, such as the adverbial approach discussed in the previous section, evaluativism, and representationalism. Unfortunately, I don't have the space here to address my reasons for thinking that phenomenological and attitudinal views of pleasure are superior to the others. More importantly, though, people inclined towards desire views in the first place – the targets of this paper – tend to also be inclined towards attitudinal views of pleasure. Heathwood 2007, for instance, argues that sensory pleasure is reducible to desire.

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps it is not accurate to say that each instance of desire-benefit would have this felt-quality, since our account only requires that the agent be disposed to take pleasure when and because the desire is satisfied. That leaves room for the possibility that they will sometimes not experience pleasure upon the satisfaction of the desire. I do not think that anything important hinges on this as it would still be true that, for most people, in most cases of desire-benefit, there would be a common phenomenology.



a sensation, experience, or state of affairs. So, on this picture, the agent is disposed to adopt a favoring attitude upon the satisfaction of their genuine-attraction desires.

There are important questions that would need to be addressed in order to get a full picture of the view on the table. For instance, what should the favoring attitude in question be directed toward? One option is that the person should be disposed to adopt a favoring attitude toward the state of affairs in which their desire is satisfied. Another is that the favoring attitude should be toward the object of their satisfied desire. Or perhaps there needn't be any restrictions on this front at all. For our purposes, we don't need to commit to any one view, as I aim to show that there is a problem here for GAT regardless of what particulars are most plausible.

We run into trouble on this approach once we notice that we should want to restrict which pleasure-attitudes count in a way that parallels GAT's attempts to restrict which desires count (and for the same reasons). It seems as though there must be some restrictions on this front, or else we will be faced with some of the problems (or analogous ones) that we set out to avoid. For instance, imagine that upon the satisfaction of their desires, a person is compulsively disposed to adopt a desire to turn on radios. This would mean that, for this person, a genuine-attraction desire would be analyzed in terms of a compulsive desire. We would be stuck with the result that a genuine-attraction desire is classified as such because, upon its satisfaction, the subject is disposed to adopt what is supposed to be a behavioral desire. This is clearly unsatisfactory in part because it eschews the notion of genuine appeal altogether. It allows compulsive attitudes, for example, to determine whether a person experiences a genuine-attraction desire, which is the kind of result that we were aiming to avoid.

One might object here that restricting what the attitude in question can be directed toward *would* in fact help—contrary to what I say above—as doing so could rule out the compulsive turning on of radios. For instance, we might say that the attitude needs to be

directed at the object of the desire, or the satisfaction itself, or perhaps even a sensation. It seems to me as though this is missing the mark. The problem with allowing for the possibility that genuine attraction might be analyzed in virtue of a compulsive desire to turn on radios is not due to the nature of turning on radios; it is instead due to the nature of compulsive attitudes. In other words, the problem is not with the object of favoring attitudes, it's with the unrestricted attitudes themselves. Even if we were to say that the relevant attitude needs to be one directed toward a sensation, for instance, we meet trouble. Maybe the person compulsively adopts a favoring attitude toward whichever sensation they experience upon the satisfaction of their desire. We can stipulate that they don't feel genuinely attracted to the sensation. They do not view it with enthusiasm or gusto. They are affectively unmoved by it, and yet still adopt a desire for the sensation. This should make clear that the problem is not with the object of the favoring attitude, but with the attitude's being compulsive and thus not reflective of what the person finds genuinely appealing. It is a hopeless endeavor to attempt to analyze genuine-attraction desires by appealing to attitudes that are not themselves restricted by genuine appeal. But, of course, any attempt to restrict those attitudes by genuine appeal puts us back at square one.<sup>16</sup> It would be quite an unsatisfying picture of genuine-attraction desires to analyze them as such: a person has a genuine-attraction desire when they are disposed to adopt a genuine-attraction desire upon the satisfaction of the first genuine-attraction desire. There is no logical contradiction with this account, but it seems hopelessly circular and implausible and it gains almost no argumentative traction.

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<sup>16</sup> There is also the possibility that genuine-attraction desires and the pleasure one is disposed to take upon their satisfaction stand in a metaphysically interdependent relationship such that each is analyzable only in terms of the other. My tentative doubt about the prospect of such an approach as it relates to genuine-attraction desires is that it leaves too much unexplained, but much would depend on the details of the account. That is beyond the scope of this paper, but see Jan Swiderski 2022 for a helpful overview of different approaches to metaphysical coherentism. Thank you to Hille Paakkunainen for this point.

We might consider another way to restrict the favoring attitudes in question. For example, maybe we should say that a person has a genuine-attraction desire when, upon the satisfaction of the desire, they are disposed to adopt a non-compulsive favoring attitude. Besides the fact that this would be blatantly ad hoc, it doesn't provide a convincing solution because, again, without restricting the attitudes in a way that GAT tries to restrict desires, we are faced with the same sorts of problem cases as we began with. For instance, recall that moral desires were initially presented as a problem case for desire theories for which GAT provides an eloquent solution. According to GAT, going to visit your friend because you believe you have a moral obligation to do so does not benefit you unless you find the prospect genuinely appealing. It is supposed to be an advantage of GAT that it can rule out the possibility that moral desires can benefit a person when that person does not find the object of the desire to have genuine appeal; when what the person *really* wants to do is something for themselves. We can imagine someone who has a strictly moral conviction that it is good to have a favoring attitude upon the satisfaction of their desires. Perhaps they think that God wants them to adopt favoring attitudes when their desires are satisfied or that someone else will benefit from them doing so. They don't *really* like or want whatever it is toward which they adopt the favoring attitude. Nonetheless, they are disposed to have a favoring attitude upon the satisfaction of most of their desires. This would, again, give us the unappealing result that the person counts as having satisfied a genuine-attraction desire—and that they thereby have an increase in well-being—in virtue of having a moral desire of the kind that we deemed to be irrelevant to well-being from the outset.

The plausibility of the view that a person has a genuine-attraction desire if they are disposed to experience pleasure upon the satisfaction of that desire depends on what that pleasure is like. If we understand the pleasure to be a felt-quality, we run into a straightforward

heterogeneity objection. If we instead understand it attitudinally—as desire theorists are wont to do—then we lose the ability to exclude those attitudes which are intuitively irrelevant to well-being, which was the aim of GAT in the first place.

#### **4. Conclusion**

GAT aims to provide an account of desires that are relevant to well-being by claiming that a person can benefit by satisfying only their genuine-attraction desires. If such an account is to fulfill its promise of addressing problem cases for desire theories, there must be a viable way to distinguish genuine-attraction desires from behavioral ones. It is unclear why we should think, for instance, that Lois does not find the prospect of being eaten by a dinosaur genuinely appealing, or why turning on radios is not a genuinely attractive prospect for Quinn's radio man. Heathwood tells us that the desires of neither Lois nor Quinn's radio man should count as genuine-attraction ones because they lack a certain (kind of) phenomenology or affective arousal. But there are two problems with appealing to phenomenology to distinguish the two kinds of desire. First, the more affective arousal we require of genuine-attraction desires, the less we are able to account for the ways in which Stoicus is benefitted by fulfilling his everyday desires. Second, if genuine-attraction desires necessarily involve a certain (kind of) phenomenology, and if genuine-attraction desires are necessarily present in each instance where a satisfied desire increases well-being, then each instance of prudential desire-benefit will share a certain (kind of) phenomenology. This is a heterogeneity objection and many take a similar version of it to be decisive.

These considerations make it seem like it would be better for a proponent of GAT to draw the distinction non-phenomenologically, but it is not at all clear how one would go about doing so. I presented two approaches which strike me as the most plausible options, and conclude that neither is tenable.

We are left without the tools with which to draw a viable distinction between genuine-attraction and behavioral desires. When we recall that part of the promise of GAT was its unique ability to provide an intuitively satisfying solution to four critical problem cases, we can see the substantial implications of GAT's unsatisfactoriness for desire theorists more broadly. For each of the problem cases at issue, Heathwood makes a convincing case that desire theorists' existing solutions to it are inadequate. For instance, to avoid the implication that one is benefited by satisfying their benevolently-held desire to visit their friend in the hospital, some desire theorists exclude other-regarding desires from counting toward well-being. See, for instance, Sidgwick 1907. But, as Heathwood and others point out, this restriction is too exclusive, since there are cases in which the satisfaction of an other-regarding desire does intuitively benefit (2019: 667). Parents can attest that the satisfaction of one's desire to see their child overcome a challenge, for instance, does in fact enhance one's own well-being. (He additionally highlights other significant problems with the self-regarding/other-regarding distinction that I do not have the space to address here.)

Heathwood convincingly argues that there are also serious problems with the existing solutions to the other three problem cases. If we agree with him that the existing solutions are deficient—as I think we should—then the need for some other response from desire theorists is obvious. The more substantial point, though, is that regardless of whether or not we think that any individual solution to the problem cases holds promise, no one strategy parsimoniously addresses all four types of concern in the way that GAT was meant to do. (A restriction to self-regarding desires, for instance, does not address the problems of compulsive desires, prudential desires, nor desires concerning unlikely possibilities.)

This highlights the centrality of the genuine-attraction approach for desire theories, as well as the substantial cost to those views if my arguments here are successful. In the absence of

GAT, proponents of desire theories must not only find a satisfying solution to each problem case, but must do so in a way that avoids being problematically ad hoc. GAT was uniquely well-positioned with its promise to provide a unified, independently plausible solution to all four cases. I have argued that, at best, without further analysis, the key distinction remains too unclear for GAT to work. If GAT is meant to provide such a theoretically hefty distinction between the desires that count toward well-being and those that do not, we cannot simply accept that genuine-attraction desires are ones that involve genuine attraction without some further insight about what that is meant to be.<sup>17</sup>

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