

The Dilemma for Attitude Theories of Pleasure

Daniel Pallies and Alexander Dietz

§1 Introduction

You open the kitchen cabinet, and you are pleased to see that it contains coffee grounds. You brew yourself a cup of coffee, and you get pleasure from drinking it. What makes it the case that you have these episodes of pleasure? According to the *phenomenological* theory of pleasure, your pleasure is explained by your phenomenology: the way you feel, or “what it is like” to be you. According to the *attitude* theory of pleasure, your pleasure is explained by your having certain pro-attitudes: you *desire, like, or favor* having coffee grounds, as well as your experience of drinking coffee.¹ These theories can be naturally extended to cover unpleasant experiences, as well: the phenomenological theorist will say that unpleasantness is explained by feelings; the attitude theorist will say that it is explained by our attitudes.

In this chapter, we show that the attitude theory faces a dilemma. The attitude that is relevant to pleasure—the desire, liking, or favoring—is either *necessarily co-instantiated* with certain phenomenology, or not. If the attitude theorist denies that the relevant attitudes are *phenomenologically enriched* in this sense, then their theory has the problematic implication that pleasure can come radically apart from phenomenology. This leads to a scenario that Guy Kahane calls *hedonic inversion*.² If the attitude theorist instead affirms that the relevant attitudes are phenomenologically enriched, then they undermine their main objection to the phenomenological theory of pleasure. This is the so-called *heterogeneity problem*, according to which pleasures do not feel alike.

We conclude that in debates between attitude theorists and phenomenological theorists, the prospects for attitude theorists are worse than is typically supposed. Either they must abandon their most important objection to the phenomenological theory (the heterogeneity objection) or they must confront a serious objection of their own (the objection from hedonic inversion). Either option is a serious setback for attitude theorists in their debate with phenomenological theorists. There are ways of trying to split the difference between the two horns of our dilemma, but in the end there is no way for attitude theorists to avoid both of the problems.

¹ For defenses of the phenomenological theory, see Smuts (2011) and Bramble (2013); for defenses of the attitude theory, see Feldman (1988) and Heathwood (2007). For an introduction to the contemporary debate on the nature of pleasure, see Bramble (2016a).

² Kahane (2009). Daniel Haybron uses the phrase “hedonic inversion” in the same way. He presents but does not ultimately endorse the view that total hedonic inversion is possible (Haybron 2008a, 2008b: 71–73).

§2 Preliminaries

In this chapter we will be principally concerned with two views about the nature of pleasure: the phenomenological theory, and the attitude theory. The phenomenological theory can be stated in terms of *phenomenal properties*, which are properties that characterize “what it is like” to be a given subject. We define the phenomenological theory as follows:

Phenomenological Theory of Pleasure:

- There is a non-empty set of phenomenal properties of pleasure. Necessarily, one enjoys an episode of pleasure iff one instantiates any phenomenal property which is a member of that set. (*Phenomenology-Pleasure Extensional Claim*)
- For each episode of pleasure and each subject, that subject has that episode of pleasure in virtue of instantiating a pleasant phenomenal property. (*Phenomenology-Pleasure Grounding Claim*)

The basic idea here is simple. The Extensional Claim tells us that there are certain kinds of phenomenology which are closely linked with pleasure: necessarily, you enjoy an episode of pleasure just in case you experience some phenomenology of one of those kinds. The Grounding Claim tells us that the connection between pleasure and phenomenology is not *merely* extensional; rather, you have episodes of pleasure *in virtue of* having pleasant phenomenology. So, if you are getting pleasure from drinking some hot coffee, then (i) you must be having an experience with some pleasant phenomenology, and (ii) you are getting pleasure in virtue of this pleasant phenomenology. Different versions of the phenomenological theory of pleasure correspond to different views about which phenomenal properties are pleasant in this sense.

The attitude theory of pleasure, in contrast, makes no reference to phenomenal properties. It instead makes reference to *pro-attitudes*: ways of “favoring” or “being into” certain states of affairs. Different versions of the attitude theory correspond to different views about which pro-attitudes are relevant. For ease of presentation, we will appeal to a simple version of the theory according to which the relevant attitude is *attraction*. Being attracted to something is a way of “favoring” or “being into” it, but beyond that we will not fill in the details of how the attitude should be understood. There are many ways in which the details could be filled in—perhaps being attracted to something is like *desiring* it, or *wishing* for it, or *favoring* it—but the details do not matter for our purposes. We want to show that the attitude theorist faces a dilemma *no matter how* they understand the pro-attitude that is implicated in their preferred version of the theory. For our purposes, then, “attraction” is merely a placeholder for whichever pro-attitude features in the best version of the attitude theory. The details can be filled in however the attitudinal theorist sees fit.

We define the attraction-based attitude theory as follows:

Attraction Theory of Pleasure:

- There is an attitude of *attraction*. Necessarily, one enjoys an episode of pleasure iff one is attracted to something. (*Attraction-Pleasure Extensional Claim*)
- For each episode of pleasure and each subject, that subject has that episode of pleasure in virtue of being attracted to something. (*Attraction-Pleasure Grounding Claim*)

Again, the basic idea here is simple. The Extensional Claim tells us that a certain attitude—“attraction”—is closely linked with pleasure: necessarily, you enjoy an episode of pleasure just in case you are attracted to something. The Grounding Claim tells us that the connection between pleasure and attraction is not *merely* extensional; rather, you enjoy episodes of pleasure *in virtue of* being attracted to things. So, if you are getting pleasure from drinking some hot coffee, then (i) you must be attracted to some state of affairs (presumably sipping the coffee, or getting a certain kind of gustatory experience), and (ii) you are enjoying an episode of pleasure in virtue of being attracted to the relevant state of affairs.

According to an especially influential version of the attitude theory, pleasures are grounded in a *combination* of desire and belief. On Chris Heathwood’s version of this theory, the relevant attitudes are (roughly) *intrinsically desiring a certain state of affairs in a “genuine-attraction sense,”* and *believing that the relevant state of affairs obtains* (2006, 2019). We intend for our attraction theory of pleasure to cover this kind of theory, as well. If one prefers this desire-plus-belief version of the attitude theory, one can understand attraction as involving a combination of desire and belief.

Our dilemma arises when we bear down on the question of whether or not attraction—or whichever attitude features in the attitude theory—is *phenomenological*, in the following sense:

Phenomenology of Attraction Thesis:

- There is a non-empty set of *phenomenal properties of attraction*. Necessarily, one is attracted to something iff one instantiates any phenomenal property which is a member of that set. (*Phenomenology-Attraction Extensional Claim*)

Notice that this thesis which concerns us is *merely* extensional; we are not concerned with the issue of whether or not one is attracted to things *in virtue of* one’s phenomenology. The extensional thesis alone gives rise to the dilemma for attitude theorists. If they accept the thesis—if they accept what we will call the *enriched attraction theory*—then they must give up their heterogeneity objection against

phenomenological theorists. If, on the other hand, the attitude theorist rejects the thesis—if they accept what we will call the *unenriched attraction theory*—then they face the objection from hedonic inversion.

Although we appeal to the particular attitude of *attraction* for ease of presentation, it will be clear that the dilemma applies to all versions of the attitude theory. No matter which attitudes are implicated in one's preferred version of the attitude theory, they must be either enriched or unenriched, in the sense that they either are or are not necessarily co-instantiated with certain phenomenal properties. If the attitude theorist tells us that the relevant attitudes are enriched, then they must give up the heterogeneity objection against phenomenological theories of pleasure. If they tell us that the relevant attitudes are unenriched, then they are vulnerable to an objection from hedonic inversion.

§3 Unenriched Attraction

Suppose the attraction theorist opts for an unenriched theory. They claim that attraction is to be understood in non-phenomenological terms, and there is no phenomenology with which attraction is necessarily co-instantiated. There are many ways such a theory might be developed; for ease of presentation, we will consider just one version: the *dispositional* theory. According to this theory, you count as being attracted to a given state of affairs just in case you are *disposed to try to continue it*. And you enjoy an episode of pleasure just in case and because you are disposed to try to continue a certain state of affairs. This theory is admittedly simplistic; we do not mean to imply that actual attitude theorists accept it. We focus on the dispositional theory because it clearly qualifies as “non-phenomenological,” in our sense. The relevant disposition is not necessarily co-instantiated with any phenomenology; subjects with the same phenomenology can differ with respect to whether or not they have the disposition.

The problem with this view—and all other versions of the unenriched attitude theory—is that it suggests, counterintuitively, that two subjects could have exactly the same experiences while differing *radically* in their levels of pleasure. Or, as Kahane puts it, that they could be *hedonic inverts* (2009).

We can state this problem in the form of the following argument:

- P1.** If the unenriched attitude theory of pleasure is true, then it is possible for there to be phenomenal duplicates with radically different levels of pleasure.
- P2.** It is not possible for there to be phenomenal duplicates with radically different levels of pleasure.
- C.** Therefore, the unenriched attitude theory of pleasure is false.

Kahane and other philosophers have suggested this objection, but its force and scope have not been properly appreciated.³

To illustrate the problem, we will consider the following pair of cases:

Amy at the Amusement Park: Amy spends a tremendously enjoyable day at an amusement park riding rollercoasters, eating delicious food, and joking with her friends.

Twin Amy at the Amusement Park: Twin Amy also spends the day at an amusement park riding rollercoasters, eating delicious food, and joking with her friends. Over the course of this day, Twin Amy is a phenomenal duplicate of Amy: that is, Twin Amy's total phenomenology, or conscious experience, is exactly like Amy's.

An attitude theorist of pleasure will claim that Amy's pleasures are to be explained partly in terms of some attitude that she has, and on the proposal under discussion here, this attitude is to be understood in non-phenomenological terms. Let's suppose again that the attitude is taken to be a disposition to try to continue certain states of affairs. This means that we could imagine Twin Amy having a day that is exactly like Amy's in every respect, except that Twin Amy does not have the relevant disposition. Since the disposition is stipulated to be non-phenomenological, this means we can assume that Twin Amy has exactly the same phenomenology as Amy—the same rush from the rollercoasters, the same juicy taste from the food, the same warm tingle from the jokes. But Twin Amy is not disposed to try to continue the relevant states of affairs, so the attitude theorist must conclude that her day is entirely devoid of pleasure. Despite the fact that Amy and Twin Amy are phenomenal duplicates—there is no difference between “what it is like” to be Amy, and “what it is like” to be Twin Amy—they differ significantly with respect to the pleasantness of their experiences: Amy's day is extremely pleasant and Twin Amy's day is not at all pleasant.

This, we think, is already an implausible result. But in fact, the attitude theorist is committed to an even more implausible result. Attitude theorists explain the *unpleasantness* of our experiences in the same way that they explain the pleasantness of our experiences: by appealing to our attitudes.⁴ They claim that unpleasant experiences consist in our having attitudes which are in some sense *opposites* of

³ For examples of papers in which the problem has been broached, see Haybron (2008a, 2008b); Kahane (2009); Labukt (2012: 183); Bramble (2016b: 92); Lin (2020: 521).

⁴ See Heathwood (2007: 40–44). Might the attitude theorist avoid this problem by explaining unpleasantness in terms of something other than (non-phenomenological) desire? They could, but they would only be delaying the inevitable. Whatever is implicated in their explanation of unpleasantness, it must be either phenomenological or non-phenomenological. So the dilemma arises all over again: if unpleasantness is explained in terms of something non-phenomenological, the attitude theorist faces the problem of hedonic inversion; otherwise, they face the heterogeneity problem (introduced in the next section).

those which are relevant to pleasure. The dispositional theorist might claim that you suffer an episode of displeasure just in case, and because, you are *averse* to something, where aversion consists in a disposition to *end* certain states of affairs. Since the relevant attitudes are again non-phenomenological, we can imagine that Twin Amy has those attitudes throughout the day at the amusement park, but is nevertheless a phenomenal duplicate of Amy. Although she has all the same sorts of experiences as Amy, phenomenologically speaking, she is disposed to *end* the various states of affairs which Amy is disposed to continue. So the attitude theorist must conclude that Twin Amy is a *hedonic invert* of Amy—despite the fact that there is no difference between “what it is like” to be Amy, and “what it is like” to be Twin Amy, they differ radically with respect to the pleasantness of their experiences: Amy’s day is extremely pleasant, and Twin Amy’s day is *miserable*. We find this suggestion very hard to make sense of.

A second pair of cases serves to drive the point home:

Bob's Bad Day: Bob has a tremendously unpleasant day. He has extremely itchy and painful hemorrhoids. He is fired from work, which fills him with feelings of anxiety and self-loathing. He gets caught in the freezing rain on his way home. Upon arriving home, he stubs his toe so hard that he breaks his toe bone. Finally, his girlfriend breaks up with him. He succumbs to despair and cries himself to sleep.

Twin Bob's Bad Day: Twin Bob’s day is just like Bob’s day. Twin Bob is a phenomenal duplicate of Bob: that is, Twin Bob’s total phenomenology, or conscious experience, is exactly like Bob’s.

Just as the attitude theorist must allow that Twin Amy could be a hedonic invert of Amy, they must also allow that Twin Bob could be a hedonic invert of Bob. They must allow that Twin Bob’s day could be extremely pleasant, despite the fact that he has experiences which *feel exactly like* Bob’s experiences of itchiness, self-loathing, pain, and despair.⁵ Again, we find this suggestion very hard to make sense of.

It is important to keep in mind that Bob and Twin Bob are exactly alike with respect to their *total* phenomenology, and not merely with respect to some set of particular feelings. Consider the thoughts that might be running through Bob’s head as he walks home after being fired. He might think to himself: “Why did I ever think that I could succeed at that job? I’m just a fraud, and I’m sure all of my co-workers knew it. They’ll be glad I left, if they even notice.” If this self-belittling monologue has any impact on

⁵ Notice we are *not* claiming that Twin Bob’s feelings are in fact feelings of itchiness, self-loathing, pain, and despair. Nor are we claiming that Twin Bob’s feelings are *not* feelings of itchiness, self-loathing, pain, and despair. Indeed, both claims are implausible. If Twin Bob *does* feel itchiness, despair, etc., then we must accept that there can be *pleasant* feelings of itchiness, despair, etc. That is deeply implausible. If Twin Bob *does not* feel itchiness, despair, etc., then we must accept that there can be “pseudo-itches” and “pseudo-despair”—experiences which are not feelings of itchiness and despair, despite feeling exactly like them. That, too, is deeply implausible. The only way to avoid an implausible result is to reject the idea that Twin Bob is a hedonic invert of Bob. We take this as further evidence that hedonic inversion is implausible.

Bob's phenomenology—and surely it does!—then Twin Bob is impacted in exactly the same way. For Twin Bob, it is *exactly as if* a self-belittling monologue is running through his head as he trudges through the freezing rain. Now consider the claim that those experiences, taken as a whole, are pleasant. It seems to us that this claim strains the concept of pleasure to the breaking point. We do not know what it would mean for it to be true. So we regard P2 as extremely plausible: hedonic inversion is impossible.

As a reminder: there is a straightforward way for attraction theorists to avoid committing themselves to hedonic inversion. They can embrace the *enriched* attraction theory. According to that theory, attraction is necessarily co-instantiated with certain phenomenology—a *feeling of attraction*, perhaps. This theory, we think, is not without some initial plausibility. And if it is true, then hedonic inversion is impossible—in virtue of the differences in their attitudes, Amy's overall phenomenology *must* differ from Twin Amy's. Similarly, if aversion is necessarily co-instantiated with certain phenomenology, then Bob's overall phenomenology must differ from Twin Bob's. We consider enriched versions of the attitude theory in the next section.

For attraction theorists who want to maintain an *unenriched* version of the theory, there are two ways to respond to our argument. First, they could deny P1: in other words, they could deny that their theory has the implications that we have just described. Second, they could deny P2: that is, they could insist that it is not so implausible to think that phenomenal duplicates could have radically different levels of pleasure.

In order to deny P1, attitude theorists might first claim that even if attraction and aversion are to be understood in terms of non-phenomenological dispositions, these dispositions will tend to affect what our experiences are like. For example, we might think that if Amy is disposed to continue riding rollercoasters, then we would expect her also to be disposed, for example, to find herself wondering about which rides might have the shortest lines. In contrast, attitude theorists might argue, if we are supposed to imagine a “twin” who really does not have this disposition, then we would expect this twin not to think about such things; and if she is in fact disposed not to *stop* riding rollercoasters, then we would expect her instead, for example, to find herself imagining how it will feel to finally be back home.

However, this is not enough to undermine P1. At most it shows that, on the dispositional theory, hedonic inversion is *unexpected*, or *highly unlikely*. It does not show that, on the dispositional theory, hedonic inversion is *impossible*. So it does not show that P1 is false. Of course the attraction theorist could make a stronger claim: they could claim that the difference in Amy and Twin Amy's dispositions *necessarily* makes for differences in their phenomenology. That would be enough to show that P1 is false. But if the attitude theorist claims that the relevant dispositions are phenomenologically enriched in this way, then they are accepting an enriched version of the attraction theory, and fall on the second horn of our dilemma. We consider the second horn in the next section.

As an alternative response to P1, the attitude theorists might reject the particular non-phenomenological theory of attraction that we have been considering, and instead opt for a different non-phenomenological theory. According to the theory we have been considering, attractions are dispositions to choose certain states of affairs. Attitude theorists may suspect that the problem of hedonic inversion is a problem for *this* theory, but not for *all* unenriched versions of the attitude theory. Motivated by this suspicion, they may go in search of a more sophisticated attitude to employ in their theory.

It is true that the theory of attraction we have been considering is not very sophisticated. But it is hard to see how a more sophisticated theory would help. Posit the most sophisticated theory you like—in terms of attention, or functional role, or representational content, or whatever else. If the resulting theory entails that the relevant attitudes are unenriched in the relevant sense—if it entails that those attitudes are not necessarily co-instantiated with any phenomenal properties—then the problem of hedonic inversion arises all over again. Given that the relevant attitudes are unenriched, phenomenal duplicates can differ with respect to those attitudes. And so, if the unenriched attitude theory is true, phenomenal duplicates can differ with respect to their pleasures. The structure of the problem is the same, no matter what we say specifically about the unenriched attitudes which feature in the theory.

Let's next consider how attitude theorists might challenge P2. Perhaps, attitude theorists could argue, we should not really find the idea that there could be phenomenal duplicates with radically different levels of pleasure so implausible. After all, attitude theorists might argue, consider ordinary cases of differences in tastes. Attitude theorists typically appeal to such cases as *prima facie* evidence for their view. Chris Heathwood points out that whereas some people love spicy food, others hate it (Heathwood 2007: 35–36). Fred Feldman claims that two people might differ with respect to whether or not they enjoy the taste of a certain beer (Feldman 2004: 82–83). And Feldman suggests that, at least in many cases, beer lovers and beer haters might be having more or less the same taste experience. So doesn't this show that two people can in fact have the same phenomenology, but different levels of pleasure?

Our first response is that even if beer lovers and beer haters have the same *taste* experience, this does not mean that they have the same *total* experience. The attitude theorist needs to claim that “what it's like” to *drink beer as a beer lover* is the same as “what it's like” to *drink beer as a beer hater*, despite the fact that the former experience is very pleasant and the latter experience is very unpleasant. *This* claim is not obviously true. It is natural to suppose that the beer hater experiences disgust, for example. If so, then their total experiences are different. So the claim that there can be hedonic inverts receives no strong support from our common sense judgments regarding differences in taste.

The friend of hedonic inversion might point out that they only need to endorse a *possibility* claim: it's *possible* that the beer lover's and beer hater's total experiences are exactly alike with respect to phenomenology, despite the fact that the lover and hater bear very different attitudes towards those experiences, and despite the fact that those experiences differ radically with respect to pleasantness. It is true that the friend of hedonic inversion only needs to make this possibility claim. But what supports it? If they are *merely* making a claim about a *possible* difference, and *not* making a claim about *actual* differences in taste, then clearly they are not appealing to our common sense judgments about differences in taste. On what basis, then, does the friend of hedonic inversion insist that some possible taste differences have the structure they describe?

A natural thought is that the friend of hedonic inversion is appealing to Hume's Dictum. The idea is that our attitudes are "distinct" from our experiences, so there are no necessary connections between them: as a matter of metaphysical possibility, our attitudes and experiences can be mixed and matched in every which way.⁶ In particular, then, it must be possible for the beer lover to love the exact same kind of total experience which the beer hater hates. And given that *love* and *hate* are to be understood in terms of the kinds of attitudes that can ground differences in pleasantness, it follows that the beer lover and beer hater's experiences differ radically in pleasantness despite sharing the same total phenomenology.

The trouble is that, despite appearances, Hume's Dictum has no direct implications for differences in taste or hedonic inversion. We can accept Hume's Dictum while rejecting the conclusion about differences in taste, simply by denying that pleasure is "distinct" from phenomenology. We might say that *part of what it is* to feel pleasure is to feel certain phenomenology, either because pleasure itself or the attitudes relevant to pleasure are grounded in some sort of phenomenology. In either case, Hume's Dictum does not forbid that there may be necessary connections between pleasure and phenomenology. More generally, it is not clear that there are any plausible metaphysical principles which entail the possibility of hedonic inversion.

Of course, one who wishes to reject P2 should not insist upon the bare *possibility* that differences in taste may involve radical differences in pleasantness without differences in total phenomenology. This is simply to insist that, in cases like that of Amy and Twin Amy, hedonic inversion is possible. If this insistence is not supported by some further argument—by an argument from *actual* differences in taste, for example—then it will not convince anyone who finds hedonic inversion implausible.

Rather than trying to resist our intuitions regarding hedonic inversion, the attitude theorist would do better to grant that hedonic inversion is indeed *prima facie* implausible. By extension, P2 is *prima facie* plausible. They might nevertheless resist it by arguing that it leads to implausible results. In particular, the attitude theorist might claim that accepting P2 commits us to a tendentious

⁶ Thanks to a reviewer for suggesting this line of response.

phenomenological theory of pleasure. Here is one such tendentious theory: pleasure consists in a certain sort of warm tingling feeling. If this naïve theory is correct, then obviously hedonic inversion is impossible, because hedonic inverts would differ with respect to this warm tingle. But the reverse is not true—P2 does not entail the warm tingle theory, nor any other specific and tendentious theory of pleasure. It entails only a modest claim about pleasure: there cannot be *extreme* differences in pleasantness, without *some* difference in phenomenology. This claim, we think, is quite plausible, and for exactly the same reason that P2 is plausible.

As a final response to the argument from hedonic inversion—one which has often been suggested to us in conversation—the attitude theorist might make a dialectical point. They might point out that the desire theory is standardly presented in contrast to the phenomenological theory: attitude theorists claim that the pleasantness of an experience is explained not by the way it feels, but instead by the fact that the subject desires it. But if attitude theorists deny that pleasure is a matter of phenomenology, then it is *obvious* that they must claim that phenomenological duplicates could have different levels of pleasure. In other words, we should not be *surprised* by the attitude theorist's commitment to hedonic inversion.

It is hard to see how far this response goes. Perhaps attitude theorists will not be surprised to hear that they are committed to hedonic inversion, but that does not make hedonic inversion less counterintuitive. Similarly, if attitude theorists claim that hedonic inversion is not counterintuitive, we can only remind them of the cases we have described. Think about Bob as he ruminates on his failures, and as he cries himself to sleep. Think about *what it is like* to be Bob—that is, to experience intense itchiness, fear, despair, and self-loathing. It makes no sense to claim that *those very experiences*—in all of their qualitative detail—might be instances of pleasure. Some attitude theorists might be able to convince themselves otherwise, but we doubt that many will share this judgment.

§4 Enriched Attraction

Given the issues raised in the last section, the attitude theorist might embrace an *enriched* theory of attraction, according to which attraction is necessarily co-instantiated with some phenomenology. Just as there are many possible unenriched attraction theories, so too are there many possible enriched theories. Once again it will be best to focus on a simple and specific version. We will consider the *simple feeling* theory, according to which there is a single and homogenous *feeling of attraction*.⁷ This theory is

⁷ See Lin (2020: 518–522). Presumably, the attitude theorist who opts for this strategy will say something similar about unpleasant experiences. Aversion is necessarily co-instantiated with a *feeling of repulsion*, so one who suffers from an episode of displeasure will invariably experience this feeling. For ease of discussion, we will focus on the proposed reduction of pleasure to feelings of attraction. But everything we say in this section applies equally to the reduction of unpleasant experiences to feelings of repulsion.

neutral about whether or not attraction is grounded in, or constituted by, the feeling of attraction. The claim is merely that the feeling and attitude are necessarily co-instantiated.

The simple feeling theory avoids the problem of hedonic inversion. On the simple feeling theory, the Amusement Park cases will *not* produce the result that pleasure can be radically disconnected from phenomenology. Since Amy is attracted to various states of affairs—riding rollercoasters, eating delicious food, and joking with her friends—she must experience the feeling of attraction. Since Twin Amy is not attracted to those states of affairs, she must *not* experience the feeling of attraction. This amounts to a phenomenological difference in their overall experiences, so Amy and her counterpart will not be phenomenal duplicates. Similar considerations apply to Bob's Bad Day. The problem of hedonic inversion does not arise.

However, the simple feeling theory faces a different problem. The theory—along with every other version of the enriched attraction theory—is subject to the most famous argument against the phenomenological theory of pleasure: the *heterogeneity problem*. It faces this problem because it predicts that there are certain kinds of phenomenology which are common to every instance in which we enjoy pleasure. But many philosophers have thought that pleasure is entirely *heterogeneous*; they have claimed there are no phenomenological commonalities among pleasures.

The heterogeneity problem is standardly taken to be a problem for the *phenomenological* theory of pleasure, so we can start by considering how the objection applies to that theory. Phenomenological theorists accept that whenever we enjoy pleasure, we do so in virtue of our phenomenology. Relatedly, they accept an extensional claim about the instantiation of pleasure and phenomenal properties:

Phenomenology-Pleasure Extensional Claim: There is a non-empty set of *phenomenal properties of pleasure*. Necessarily, one enjoys an episode of pleasure iff one instantiates any phenomenal property which is a member of that set.

The *phenomenal properties of pleasure* may or may not be a singleton set. If it is a singleton set, then this would straightforwardly imply that there is a phenomenological commonality among all instances on which we enjoy pleasure. Even if it is not a singleton set,⁸ it is natural to ask what the members of that have in common, and the most natural answer is that the phenomenologies resemble one another. This, too, would imply that there is a phenomenological commonality among all instances on which we enjoy pleasure. This is presumably why many philosophers have found it natural to suppose that, if the

⁸ Admittedly, as we saw earlier, we might distinguish between different kinds of pleasure, such as sensory and attitude pleasures. And one might claim that “pleasure” is in fact ambiguous, and that these different kinds of pleasure do not in fact have anything in common. Even then, it is plausible that there must be something that unites each particular kind of pleasure.

phenomenological theory of pleasure is true, then we feel the same or similar feelings whenever we enjoy pleasure.

Many philosophers have also supposed that there are no such feelings. And this supposition is *prima facie* plausible. Consider Amy's amusement park experiences: the rush she gets from the rollercoaster ride, the juicy taste she gets from the delicious food, the warm tingles she gets from joking with friends. These experiences are pleasurable—for Amy—but it is at least *not obvious* that they all involve the same or similar feelings.

Many attitude theorists have taken the heterogeneity problem to provide an extremely forceful objection against phenomenological theorists. For example, here is Derek Parfit:

Narrow Hedonists assume, falsely, that pleasure and pain are two distinctive kinds of experience. Compare the pleasures of satisfying an intense thirst or lust, listening to music, solving an intellectual problem, reading a tragedy, and knowing that one's child is happy. These various experiences do not contain any distinctive common quality. (Parfit 1984: 492)

Here is Thomas Carson:

The heterogeneity of pleasures is a serious problem for the felt-quality theory. Consider the pleasures of orgasm, the pleasure of being rubbed or massaged during sexual activity, the pleasure of warming oneself by a fire, the pleasure of eating delicious food ... [...] It is not obvious that there is any common felt quality they all share. [...] My own introspection and that of many others fails to discern a feeling tone of pleasantness that is shared by all pleasant experiences. (Carson 2000: 14)

Here is Chris Heathwood:

There are well-known arguments against Felt Quality Theories, and, suffice it 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. (Heathwood 2007: 26)

And here is David Sobel:

A great many philosophers have introspected in vain for such a phenomenological commonality involved in the full range of pleasurable experiences such as taking a warm bubble bath, winning a tense tennis match, and sexual excitement. (Sobel 2019: 162–163)

These quotations are representative of the general consensus among attitude theorists. The above quotations target different theories—“Narrow Hedonism,” “Felt-Quality Theories,” the “Benthamite Theory”—but these are all versions of the phenomenological theory.

It is *dialectically* significant, then, that the heterogeneity problem applies as much to the enriched attraction theory as it does to the phenomenological theory. The enriched attraction theory includes the following extensional claims:

Attraction-Pleasure Extensional Claim: There is an attitude of *attraction*. Necessarily, one enjoys an episode of pleasure iff one is attracted to something.

Phenomenology-Attraction Extensional Claim: There is a non-empty set of *phenomenal properties of attraction*. Necessarily, one is attracted to something iff one instantiates any phenomenal property which is a member of that set.

These claims jointly entail the Phenomenology-Pleasure Extensional Claim. The only difference is the name given to the relevant phenomenal properties: *phenomenal properties of attraction*, as opposed to *phenomenal properties of pleasure*. So it would seem that, insofar as the phenomenological theorist gets in trouble for saying that there are phenomenal properties common to every instance on which we enjoy pleasure, the enriched attraction theorist gets in trouble for the same reason. The heterogeneity problem is the same problem either way.

We are not claiming that the heterogeneity problem is a decisive objection to either the enriched attraction theory or the phenomenological theory. In fact, we will ultimately suggest that the problem is less pressing than many philosophers have thought. We are chiefly interested in making a *dialectical point*. As we have seen, attitude theorists have often suggested that the heterogeneity problem is decisive against the phenomenological theory. In fact, the heterogeneity problem is often invoked as the main reason to accept the attitude theory over the phenomenological theory. But the heterogeneity problem applies to the enriched attitude theory in the same way that it applies to the phenomenological theory. So if the heterogeneity problem is a cogent objection to the phenomenological theory, it's an equally cogent objection to the enriched attitude theory.

We can formulate the dialectical point as the conclusion of a simple argument:

P1b. If the phenomenological theory of pleasure implies that we experience phenomenologically similar feelings on every occasion on which we enjoy pleasure, then the enriched attraction theory of pleasure also implies that we experience phenomenologically similar feelings on every occasion on which we enjoy pleasure.

P2b. If P1b is true, then the heterogeneity problem has the same strength against the enriched attitude theory of pleasure as it has against the phenomenological theory of pleasure.

C2. The heterogeneity problem has the same strength against the enriched attitude theory of pleasure as it has against the phenomenological theory of pleasure.

If attitude theorists accept C2, then they should admit that they do not enjoy what *they* take to be the strongest advantage of their theory over their chief rival. They should admit that *by their own lights*, their theory has a decisive problem—or that they have been wrong to think that the phenomenological theory faces a decisive problem.

In an effort to avoid this result, the attitude theorist might deny P1b or P2b. Suppose they deny P1b. They might start by suggesting that, even if pleasures are necessarily co-instantiated with some *phenomenal properties of attraction*, this does not imply that we experience phenomenologically similar feelings on every occasion on which we enjoy pleasure. For the phenomenal properties of attraction might not be phenomenologically similar to one another. They might be phenomenologically *heterogeneous*. To take a simple proposal along these lines, perhaps there are two phenomenal properties of attraction—a *feeling of enthusiasm* and a *feeling of yearning*—and these feelings do not resemble each other phenomenologically. Then the enriched attitude theory of pleasure could be true, and yet we do not experience phenomenologically similar feelings on every occasion on which we enjoy pleasure.

Of course, the attitude theorist cannot merely leave things there. They must also claim that, if the phenomenological theory of pleasure is true, then this *would* imply that we experience phenomenologically similar feelings on every occasion on which we enjoy pleasure. And here the attitude theorist faces a problem, for it seems as though the phenomenological theorist can make more or less the same claim that the attitude theorist has just made. If it's legitimate to suppose that *phenomenal properties of attraction* are phenomenologically heterogeneous, then it also seems legitimate to suppose that *phenomenal properties of pleasure* are phenomenologically heterogeneous. Perhaps there are two phenomenal properties of pleasure—a *feeling of satisfaction* and a *feeling of excitement*—and these feelings do not resemble each other phenomenologically. Then the phenomenological theory of pleasure could be true, and yet we do not experience phenomenologically similar feelings on every occasion on which we enjoy pleasure.

The challenge for the attitude theorist, then, is to find a strategy for explaining heterogeneity which cannot be appropriated by the phenomenological theorist. And we do not believe that this challenge can be met. Thus far we have been considering quite simple strategies for explaining heterogeneity, but the same considerations apply to more sophisticated strategies. Whether simplistic or sophisticated, the same moves are available to both the enriched attitude theorist, and the

phenomenological theorist. Whatever can be said about phenomenal properties of attraction can also be said about phenomenal properties of pleasure.

To illustrate, consider a sophisticated strategy that the enriched attitude theorist might adopt. They might claim that attraction is to be understood as a disposition (along the lines sketched in the previous section) and phenomenal properties of attraction are the *categorical grounds* of that disposition. On the resulting view, the phenomenal properties of attraction are unified not by phenomenological similarity, but by their shared role in grounding the disposition of attraction. So there is no *phenomenological* resemblance among the experiences we have when we enjoy pleasure, but those experiences do have something genuinely in common.

This is, we think, an interesting and *prima facie* plausible view about the relationship between our phenomenology and pro-attitudes. But it is not exclusively available to attitude theorists; it is available to phenomenological theorists as well. The phenomenological theorist can claim that the *phenomenological properties of pleasure* are unified not by phenomenological similarity, but by their shared role in grounding the disposition of attraction. So there is no *phenomenological* resemblance among the experiences we have when we enjoy pleasure, but those experiences do have something genuinely in common.

In saying all this, the attitude theorist and the phenomenological theorist are telling more or less the same story about the relationship between phenomenology and attraction. They differ in how they describe the relevant phenomenology: “phenomenal properties of attraction” versus “phenomenal properties of pleasure.” But the story is still more or less the same. The real difference between the theories concerns the grounds of pleasure *itself*. According to the phenomenological theorist, each episode of pleasure is grounded in the instantiation of some phenomenal properties of pleasure. You count as enjoying pleasure, on a particular occasion, because your experiences feel the way that they do. According to the attitudinal theorist, by contrast, each episode of pleasure is grounded in some particular attitude of attraction. You count as enjoying pleasure, on a particular occasion, because you are attracted to some state of affairs—you “favor it,” or are “into it.” So there does seem to be a real difference between the theories here.

The crucial point, for our purposes, is that these versions of the attitude and phenomenological theories of pleasure are alike with respect to their implications for the heterogeneity of pleasure. If the proponent of the enriched attitude theory has succeeded in showing that their view is consistent with the phenomenological heterogeneity of pleasure, then the proponent of the phenomenological theory has *also* succeeded in showing that their view is consistent with the phenomenological heterogeneity of pleasure. And vice versa. The theories have the same resources for accommodating the supposed phenomenological heterogeneity of pleasure. P1b is secure.

Suppose the enriched attitude theorist concedes all this. They might nevertheless try to show that the heterogeneity problem is more of a problem for their opponents, the phenomenological theorists. That is, they might try to show that P2b is false. If so, this could only be because *both* theories imply that we experience phenomenologically similar feelings on every occasion on which we enjoy pleasure, but somehow this commitment is less damaging for the attitudinal theory than it is for the phenomenological theory.

They might claim that we have introspective evidence which favors the enriched attraction theory over the phenomenological theory. The claim would then be that whereas introspection militates against the view that there are *phenomenal properties of pleasure*, introspection does *not* militate against the view that there are *phenomenal properties of attraction*. Thus, the heterogeneity problem is specifically a problem for the view that pleasures share phenomenal properties of pleasure, and not a problem for the view that pleasures share phenomenal properties of attraction. This line of thought seems to be endorsed by Eden Lin, who seems to advocate a version of the enriched attraction theory (Lin 2020: 518–522).

The line of thought does not seem very plausible to us. We know what it is like to ride rollercoasters, to eat delicious food, and to laugh with our friends. We are uncertain as to whether or not we detect phenomenologically similar feelings on each of these occasions.⁹ But certainly it is *not* the case that, while we *cannot* detect a shared phenomenology of pleasure, we *can* detect a shared phenomenology of attraction. The alleged phenomenology of attraction is at least as elusive as the phenomenology of pleasure.

This is not to say that there is no such phenomenology. It might be that we experience phenomenologically similar feelings on every occasion on which we enjoy pleasure, even if we fail to detect these feelings introspectively. There are various stories we might tell about why we fail to detect this feeling. Perhaps the feeling is ephemeral and hard to pin down. Perhaps whenever we feel it, our attention is elsewhere—we attend to the things which are sources of pleasure for us, rather than the phenomenology which always accompanies pleasure. But these responses are available to both enriched attitude theorists *and* phenomenological theorists. Indeed, phenomenological theorists have endorsed precisely these sorts of responses to the heterogeneity objection (Smuts 2011: 256–257; Bramble 2013: 210–211). So, once again, the attraction theory is on par with the phenomenological theory with respect to the heterogeneity objection. Enriched attitude theorists and phenomenological theorists have all the same resources for responding to the objection. If it is a cogent objection to the phenomenological theory of pleasure, it is a cogent objection to the enriched attraction theory as well.

⁹ Notice this is not to say that the heterogeneity objection succeeds against the phenomenological theory or enriched attraction theory; those theories might be developed in a way that accommodates heterogeneity.

On balance, we are inclined to doubt that the heterogeneity problem is a decisive problem. We are inclined to endorse some combination of the responses outlined in this section. But if the heterogeneity problem is not a serious problem, then it is not a serious problem for anyone—for attitude theorists, or for phenomenological theorists. And *that* would be a problem for attitude theorists, because they claim to be at an advantage with respect to the heterogeneity problem. Indeed, it is often cited as a central reason, if not *the* central reason, to reject the phenomenological theory in favor of the attitude theory.

§5 Escaping the Dilemma?

Is there any way in which the attitude theorist might escape the dilemma? One strategy would be to find a middle ground between the enriched attraction theory and the unenriched attraction theory. According to the enriched attraction theory, there is a set of phenomenal properties necessarily co-instantiated with attraction: instantiating any or all of those properties is *necessary and sufficient* for being attracted to something. According to the unenriched attraction theory, there is no such set of phenomenal properties. On the most extreme version of this theory, there are no necessary connections between phenomenology and attraction. But there are other possible views according to which there is some phenomenology which is *necessary but not sufficient* for attraction, or *sufficient but not necessary*. These views might seem to present a middle ground.

On closer inspection, however, the middle ground is not particularly promising. Consider first the view that some phenomenology is *necessary but not sufficient* for attraction. This view is vulnerable to the heterogeneity problem to whatever extent the phenomenological theory is vulnerable to that problem, and for the same reason: both theories entail that some particular phenomenal property or properties always accompany pleasure. Furthermore, the *necessary-but-not-sufficient* view faces the problem of hedonic inversion as well. During her day at the amusement park, Amy must have whatever phenomenology is necessary for pleasure—but since that phenomenology is not *sufficient* for enjoying pleasure, Twin Amy's day might not be pleasant despite being phenomenologically just like Amy's day.

Consider next the view that some particular phenomenology is *sufficient but not necessary* for attraction. (Perhaps the theory tells us that attraction is a disjunction of feeling and disposition: instantiating at least one of the feeling or disposition is necessary for being attracted, but instantiating either is sufficient for being attracted.) This strategy has a little more initial promise. With respect to hedonic inversion, the attitude theorist might stipulate that Amy experiences the feeling of attraction. In that case Twin Amy must also experience it, and so Twin Amy cannot fail to be attracted to things, and enjoy pleasures. This is a good result on the first horn of our dilemma. Furthermore, if the feeling of attraction is not *necessary* for enjoying pleasure, then the theory does not entail that some particular

phenomenal property or properties always accompany pleasure. This is a good result on the second horn of our dilemma.

In the end, however, this *sufficient-but-not-necessary* strategy is unstable. The attitude theorist can stipulate whatever they like about Amy, but we can make stipulations too. We can stipulate that Amy's friend Cara does *not* experience the feeling of attraction, despite having a tremendously pleasant day at the amusement park. And then we can construct another hedonic inversion case with Cara and Twin Cara, in the same way that we did with Amy and Twin Amy. If the attitude theorist rejects these stipulations—if they insist that a tremendously pleasant day at the amusement park *must* involve the feeling of attraction—then they are in effect claiming that the feeling of attraction is not only *sufficient* but also *necessary* for enjoying pleasure. In that case they have endorsed the enriched attraction strategy, and they face the second horn of our dilemma. They must admit that the heterogeneity objection has as much force against their view as it does against the phenomenological theory.

We conclude that there is no way for attitude theorists to simply *avoid* the dilemma. Rather, they must face the dilemma head on, by choosing either the enriched attraction theory or the unenriched attraction theory. And so they will have to either address the problem of hedonic inversion or abandon the heterogeneity objection to the phenomenological theory of pleasure.

We do not claim to have shown that the attitude theory is false. We do claim to have shown that the theory is importantly *ambiguous*, because the enriched and unenriched attitude theories are importantly different theories, with different costs and benefits. The enriched version avoids the challenges faced by the unenriched theory, and vice versa. Insofar as we fail to disambiguate, this can mislead us into thinking that there is a unitary theory—“*the attitude theory*”—that avoids *both* sets of challenges. But this is a mistake. There is no way to develop the attitude theory such that it avoids both sets of challenges. Recognizing this, and pressing attitude theorists to get clear about *which* version of the theory they accept, will lead to more productive discussions regarding the prospects of particular attitude theories.¹⁰

References

Bramble, Ben. 2013. “The Distinctive Feeling Theory of Pleasure.” *Philosophical Studies* 162 (2): 201–217.

Bramble, Ben. 2016a. “The Role of Pleasure in Well-Being.” In *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Well-Being*, edited by Guy Fletcher.^[Maz] London: Routledge, 199–208.

¹⁰ This paper was presented at the 2021 meeting of the Eastern Philosophical Association as well as the 2021 Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association. Thanks very much to Mercedes Corredor, Keren Gorodeisky, and audiences at those talks for their insightful and constructive comments. Thanks also to Uriah Kriegel and Mark Schroeder for extended discussion on earlier drafts of this paper.

- Bramble, Ben. 2016b. "A New Defense of Hedonism About Well-Being." *Ergo: An Open Access Journal of Philosophy* 3:[Ma3] 85–112.
- Carson, Thomas L. 2000. *Value and the Good Life*. London: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Feldman, Fred. 1988. "Two Questions About Pleasure." In *Philosophical Analysis*, edited by D. F. Austin, 59–81. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Feldman, Fred. 2004. *Pleasure and the Good Life: Concerning the Nature, Varieties, and Plausibility of Hedonism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haybron, Daniel M. 2008a. "Happiness, the Self and Human Flourishing." *Utilitas* 20 (1): 21–49.
- Haybron, Daniel M. 2008b. *The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-Being*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2006. "Desire Satisfactionism and Hedonism." *Philosophical Studies* 128 (3): 539–563.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2007. "The Reduction of Sensory Pleasure to Desire." *Philosophical Studies* 133 (1): 23–44.
- Heathwood, Chris. 2019. "Which Desires Are Relevant to Well-Being?" *Noûs* 53 (3): 664–688.
- Kahane, Guy. 2009. "Pain, Dislike and Experience." *Utilitas* 21 (3): 327–336.
- Labukt, Ivar. 2012. "Hedonic Tone and the Heterogeneity of Pleasure." *Utilitas* 24 (2): 172–199.
- Lin, Eden. 2020. "Attitudinal and Phenomenological Theories of Pleasure." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 100 (3): 510–524.
- Parfit, Derek. 1984. *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smuts, Aaron. 2011. "The Feels Good Theory of Pleasure." *Philosophical Studies* 155 (2): 241–265.
- Sobel, David. 2019. "The Case for Stance-Dependent Reasons." *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 15 (2): 146–174.