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THE PRAGMATIC FOUNDATIONS OF NON-DERIVATIVE PLURALISM ABOUT REASONS FOR BELIEF[1]

[This is still a very rough draft, and feedback would be most welcome. This paper represents my current views, and there should be no difficulty with citing it in a general way. However, please check with me before citing specific passages or detailed claims. The view under discussion here is that which is under investigation in the book I am working on, *The Pragmatic Foundations of Theoretical Reason*. It sometimes goes by a different name, 'welfare pragmatism', in the chapters that are available online. The name here, 'Welfarist pluralism' is more likely to be the final one in the book, too.]

0. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores a small part of a broader conjecture.[2] It is a conjecture about how to solve a problem that has concerned me now for close to 20 years. With many others, I share the intuition that what one ought to believe, all-things-considered, is determined jointly by considerations that indicate or are related to the truth of the contents of a belief and by considerations that make having a particular belief better, either morally or prudentially, than not having the belief. To put things in contemporary parlance, I have the intuition that there are both epistemic and pragmatic reasons for belief – what can reasonably be called 'pluralist' intuitions.

Pluralism strikes me as the most attractive first-order view about how what one ought to

[2] The conjecture is worked out more completely in *The pragmatic foundations of theoretical reason* (MS).

believe is determined. It is, however, rather less neat than its main non-nihilist alternatives (and indeed than nihilism itself). One the hand, there is *alethicism*,[3] which is the view that truth-related considerations are all that determine what one ought to believe.[4] On the other hand, there is *pragmatism* or *strict pragmatism*, which is the view that goodness-related considerations are all that determine what one ought to believe.[5] What alethicism and pragmatism have in common is that both views promise a degree of explanatory unity that pluralism appears to lack. One can explain why, and perhaps how, truth-related considerations aggregate to determine what one ought to believe, and likewise for goodness-based considerations. Pluralism, on the other hand, *prima facie* lacks the same kind of underlying explanatory unity. One might wonder both why and how alethic and pragmatic considerations combine to determine what one ought to believe. This disunity at the foundational level disturbs me, and I have not found a way to dissolve my unease about the prospect of pluralist foundations for theoretical normativity.

What follows is a first pass at a proposal for how to preserve first-order, non-derivative pluralism in concert with foundational monism. I shall call the view that this proposal contains 'welfarist pluralism'. I shall begin with a sketch of welfarist pluralism before making an attempt to exert some order on the important theoretical notions.

This paper concludes in what is perhaps an unexpected way, namely with a discussion of how theoretical rationality relates to welfarist pluralism. To dampen any tendency to excitement that this turn, if left unexplained, might provoke, it will be good to say why it occurs before continuing.

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[3] The use of this name is inspired by Leary (2017). A more common name for the relevant family of views is 'evidentialism', although both in meaning and all-to-frequently in application, the name is too narrow. 'Alethecisim' is not entirely unproblematic, but it must do for now.

[4] I mean for this description to include justification-centric and virtue-based accounts of reasons that may not in a strict sense be truth-related. For convenience, I shall focus on truth-related considerations, but nothing of interest depends on doing so.

[5] In parallel with previous footnote, this is not strictly, or even non-strictly, accurate. It is, however, both convenient and faithful to how I see things. A pragmatist might accept that there are only moral reasons for believing, and that the correct moral theory is a value-independent form of deontology.

As will be apparent, welfarist pluralism relies on an account of wellbeing that has at minimum two distinct, fundamental components. One of those components is being in a positive epistemic state. The other or others are anything that is not epistemic, for example a hedonic component or a component the concerns having a life filled with meaningful achievements or activities. This raises an important question about the boundaries of the epistemic, which is topic that goes beyond what it is possible to address here.[6] However, by looking at why theoretical rationality is not a proper part of epistemology, in the sense in which I mean to use notion, one can at least get the gist of the boundaries of 'epistemology' At the same time, it offers some insight into the question of whether theoretical rationality is normative.

1. A sketch of welfarist pluralism

Welfarist pluralism is made up of three basic commitments. The first is that facts about wellbeing are ultimately what determine what one ought to believe. In the language of reasons, facts about wellbeing determine what normative reasons there are for beliefs. The second commitment is that wellbeing itself has a pluralist nature, and that one of the irreducible components of wellbeing is that of an individual's being in a positive epistemic state. Finally, welfarist pluralism is committed to the view that something's contribution to one or more individuals' wellbeing mainly fixes its contribution to determining what one ought to believe.

There is a further feature of the view that I shall largely ignore in this paper.[7] Strictly speaking, what determines what one ought to believe are not facts about wellbeing, but about the value of wellbeing and the value of aggregates or distributions of wellbeing.

Taken together with several further assumptions that I shall discuss in due course, welfarist

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[6] See Reisner (MS).
[7] See Reisner (MS), especially the chapter 3, for more discussion.

pluralism entails that both alethic and non-alethic considerations are non-derivative determinates of what one ought to believe. Put in the language of reasons, there are both non-derivative alethic reasons for belief and non-derivative non-alethic or pragmatic reasons for belief. Both kinds of determinates or reasons share a common grounding in facts about wellbeing. In this way, the normativity of alethic and pragmatic reasons for belief is the normativity of wellbeing. As I shall argue further on, the comparability of alethic and pragmatic considerations or reasons for belief is the comparability of the epistemic and non-epistemic components of wellbeing. Thus the picture is one of a first-order theory with non-derivative alethic and non-alethic components and fully pragmatic foundations.

As is by now apparent, I prefer the locution 'determinates of what one ought to believe' to 'reasons for belief.' It is not that I object to reasons talk, but I much prefer to preserve the use of 'reason' to refer to entities with certain specific properties that not all determinates of what one ought to believe must have.[8] Reasons are technically a proper subset of the possible determinates of what one ought to believe. In this paper I shall not pay the distinction any mind, however, and shall use 'reasons' to simplify the discussion.[9]

1.1 Non-derivative pluralism

In its present state, physics posits the existence of six *force particles*, which govern interactions among the 12 basic *matter particles*, which fall into either the quark or lepton family.[10] In this picture we have a physical universe with several basic constituents, some of which are acted upon and some of which do the acting, at least in a very loose sense.

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[8] See Reisner (2018) & (2019) for a more detailed discussion of why I prefer a restricted use of 'reason'.

[9] This distinction takes on added importance in Reisner (MS), chapter 3.

[10] Time may tell whether this picture of the basic constituent of the physical universe is complete and correct, or whether there is, for example, some more basic in the way posited by various versions of string theory.

It is an unwarranted idealisation to say that physicists do little more than discover the constituents of the physical universe through observation and inference, describing their interactions by means of mathematical models. From a certain methodological point of view, however, this is an idealisation with which there is little reason to quibble. That methodological point of view is metaphysical. The physical universe contains whatever it contains. If that proves to be 18 basic particles with no further underlying substance or force, then it is not for the philosopher to say that the universe is insufficiently parsimonious, or that some further facts are required to explain the brute interactions of these particles. Appropriate criticisms of present and future theories about the fundamental constituents of physical reality concern evidence, consistency, and the various precepts of scientific reasoning.

The study of the normative universe is given over to the constraints on theorising within which philosophers must work. There is no normative property accelerator in which theoretical and practical properties collide, leaving traces of their more basic constituents. The normative world is explored through reasoning, analysis, intuitions, and at times bluster, albeit not always in that order.

Insofar as one is prepared to accept that there are fundamental determinates of what one ought to believe or non-derivative normative reasons for belief, there are three very general possibilities on offer: that all non-derivative reasons for belief are alethic, that all are non-alethic or pragmatic, and that there are both alethic and non-alethic/pragmatic non-derivative reasons for belief. Pluralism of a general sort is compatible with both the second and third options. On the second option, alethic reasons for belief exist, but are derivative, whereas there are at least some non-derivative pragmatic or non-alethic reasons for belief. On the third option, there are non-derivative reasons of both kinds.

To a greater degree than physicists, philosophers are troubled by accusations that they are merely making things up, especially with respect to ontological questions. Perhaps there is yet

greater sensitivity to the charge of being fantasists amongst those who investigate the normative domain, for it at least apparently lies farther from the posits of respectable science than many non-normative areas of inquiry. This sensitivity can push philosophers to prefer ontological minimalism, sometimes at a high cost, beyond the sensible methodological principle that one should not unnecessarily multiply entities. Even this principle is prone to being misapplied in a way that treats any ontologically simpler account of the normative domain as preferable to other accounts that have more cogent and plausible explanatory characteristics.

Welfarist pluralism is partially and essentially constituted by the thesis that there are non-derivative reasons for belief that are, respectively, fundamentally alethic and fundamentally non-alethic. One may thus say that *non-derivative* pluralism is an essential part of welfarist pluralism. While it is intellectually timorous to worry that non-derivative pluralism violates good taste merely because it does not fly the banner of a more thoroughgoing ontological minimalism, it is wholly reasonable to worry that the greater number of non-derivative entities has been preferred to the lesser, when the lesser has been made available to us at no significant cost. The non-alethic alternative, i.e. pragmatism, offers the possibility of working with a single non-derivative category or reason for belief: non-alethic reasons for belief are such that it is often good for us to believe things based on indications of their truth.[11] Thus truth provides, at least much of the time, a derived reason for belief.

I shall describe in the coming section why the ontology, at least at the first-order normative level, is no more complex for non-derivative pluralism than it is for derivative pluralism. While this explains why one need not fear a sting from the tail of the methodological scorpion, that derivative and non-derivative pluralism are ontological equals says little about which view is correct or better supported.

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[11] This view should be distinguished from Clifford's [XXXX] picture of believing the truth as an absolute good or moral duty.

I shall do little more than mention what I take to be the three *prima facie* considerations that favour non-derivative pluralism over derivative pluralism, although a more detailed discussion is certainly warranted.[12] The first is what I shall call the 'alethic explanatory intuition'. The alethic explanatory intuition is the intuition that the fact that something is true, or likely to be true, counts in favour of believing it, simply because it is true or likely to be true. It is not because, for example, truth bring us a certain kind of pleasure or makes us more effective agents, although it may do those things, to. The force of this intuition is undoubtedly defeasible, but it at least provides a pre-theoretical starting point for this study.

The second consideration is more speculative. I believe there are some grounds for doubting that a derivative account of alethic determinates will correctly track the strength of the contribution of alethic considerations to what one ought to believe. A toy example may help. Consider a theory according to which the only non-derivative determinate of what one ought to believe is the pleasure caused by having that belief. Having an individual true belief will bring most of us some additional pleasure, because having certain kinds of true beliefs is conducive to doing things that we enjoy. However, the truth of many kinds of beliefs, for example those about astronomical phenomena and events in the distant past, has little bearing on how much pleasure individuals experience through their present actions, at least for a substantial part of the population.

More important than the truth of or evidential support for those beliefs, what may matter more is whether one believes one's impractical beliefs to be true. Taking one's beliefs to be true or to have other positive epistemic qualities may bring a kind of satisfaction, which is itself a form of pleasure. A poorly supported belief would have equal support to an epistemically well supported belief, so long as one had the corresponding second-order belief that relevant first-order belief was

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[12] See Reisner (MS).

true and perhaps epistemically justified. This seems at least to me to run contrary to the pluralist intuition that a belief's having some sort of positive epistemic status is normatively relevant, irrespective of one's higher-order beliefs about those beliefs.

There are, naturally, a number of alternatives to simple hedonism, but examples of this kind can be reconstructed for other views. Taking alethic considerations to bear directly on the normative status of a belief and assigning them a weight based on the importance of that epistemic status may avoid making errors about the strength of the normative contribution of alethic considerations to what one ought to believe.

The final motivation provides a natural segue to the next section. I shall introduce it even more sketchily than the other two. Many philosophers and non-philosophers alike have the intuition that truth is important for its own sake.[13] Putting things this way is vague at best. To provide some substance to the intuition, one must say something about the truth of what is supposed to be important and in what general way is it important.

I postulate that the first question concerns both the beliefs of individuals and the various public forms of expression that those beliefs take. While my postulation is perhaps incomplete, I should imagine it suffices for getting started. The answer to the second question is more complicated. It is tempting, albeit far from necessary, to treat importance as being related to value. At least in loose talk, this is a common sentiment.

The truth may be important in ways that have nothing to do with value, but I conjecture that if one were to introspect carefully and consider the ways in which the importance of truth is discussed in pre-theoretical contexts, one would find that it is a common, if unarticulated, view that the importance of truth is something like the value of believing, or knowing, the truth at both an individual and a social level. In a tradition that begins at least with Aristotle, this idea has been

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[13] Clifford (XXXX) is of course one, but see also Horwich (2006), Lynch (2004 & 2020), and Mitova (2021), who draws out important connections between the value of truth and epistemic justice.

taken serious by philosophers and given form by treating various positive epistemic qualities, including the possession of knowledge, as a non-derivative component of wellbeing or an aspect of human virtue. I assume, at least, that personal good increases as wellbeing increases. In that technical sense, at least, truth on this account is good.

It is this rather old idea, that truth is non-derivatively important to us, that is the third motivation for accepting non-derivative pluralism. In whatever sense truth is normative, it is so because it is non-derivatively important to us.

1.2 Welfarist (pragmatic) foundations

Suppose that the fact that a certain chemical trail in the sand is evidence that a female snake of a particular species has passed by during mating season. Perhaps with the added assumption that this fact about a chemical trail in the sand is epistemically accessible to me, that fact is an alethic reason for me to believe that a snake has slithered across the patch of sand in question.[14]

On what I take to be the correct view of reasons, the fact that there are chemicals in the sand is the reason itself, *i.e.* it stands in the reason relation to an agent (me), a belief (that a snake has passed by), and degree of strength, and so on. The metaphysical explanation of why it is a reason is that it is evidence for the proposition contained in the belief that it is a reason for.

We are entitled to ask a further explanatory question. Why does this fact's standing as evidence for the contents of a particular belief make it be a reason to have that belief? A foundational pluralist would, or at least might, answer that there is no informative answer to this question. It is simply the nature of normativity that something's being evidence makes it be a reason for belief.[15]

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[14] Snakes gain epistemic access to this information through their ability to track directional features of chemical trains with their forked tongues in combination with Jacobson's organ. Presumably a person would manage with some sort of artificial sensor.

[15] See Leary (2017) for further discussion of foundational pluralist strategies. Howard (XXXX) appears also to be a foundational pluralist, although he does not address the question of grounding in detail.

Now consider the fact that having a particular belief would make me happy, irrespective of the support for the truth of its contents (or their truth, for that matter). The fact that having the belief would (or does) make me happy is the reason to have that belief. If we ask the further questions of why this is so, the very same foundational pluralist might answer that it is because it makes us happy.

Foundational pluralism is a worthwhile view to consider, but I introduce it here to introduce an alternative, namely *foundational monism*. The particular kind of foundational monism that I have in mind leaves the answer to the question 'What is the reason itself?' intact in both of the preceding examples. However, it offers a wholly different answer to the second question to that given by foundational pluralism.

According to welfarist pluralism's foundational monism, the fact something is evidence for *p* is a non-derivative reason to believe *p*, just as it would be on foundational pluralist theories. However, the explanation of why it is a reason is that being in a positive epistemic state is a basic, non-derivative component of wellbeing. Just in the same way that something's being pleasurable to believe is a reason to believe it – *i.e.* because pleasure is a basic, non-derivative component of wellbeing – relevant epistemic 'goods' are also basic components of wellbeing.

Welfarist pluralism is thus committed to a particular kind of account of wellbeing, although not to any particular account *per se*. It is committed to an account of wellbeing that has basic components, at least one of which is being in a positive epistemic state and at least one of which is something else. Welfarist pluralism also must hold that these components combine to produce a total wellbeing state, although that discussion lies outside the remit of this paper.[16]

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider what makes something be a basic component of wellbeing. Here is a sketch of the idea. A component of wellbeing is basic only if it is a) necessarily

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[16] See Reisner (MS) chapter 3.

a component of wellbeing for the relevant type of individual and b) it is not so only in virtue of its contribution to one or more other components of wellbeing.[17] There are doubtless other necessary conditions, and I have not said anything about sufficient ones. The matter must rest here for the time being.

This kind of foundational monism holds that all reasons for belief are so in virtue of the fact that the relevant belief contributes positively to wellbeing, either one's own or someone else's. This kind of foundational monism is pragmatic in just this sense: all reasons for belief derive from wellbeing. What makes a fact be a reason is its impact on wellbeing. As I argue elsewhere,[18] what explains why and how alethic and non-alethic determinates of what we ought to believe combine is how the corresponding epistemic and non-epistemic components of wellbeing combine to produce a level of total wellbeing.

1.3 The epistemic component

In §§1.2-1.3, I painted a soft picture of how each of the two main components of welfarist pluralism work to combine monist foundations with non-derivative pluralism about the determinates of what one ought to believe. The source of reasons for belief is wellbeing, and their comparative properties are those of the individual components of wellbeing.

One issue that arises immediately on this picture is that of how to understand the epistemic component of wellbeing. One perhaps tempting, but unacceptable, view is that being in doxastic states or engaging in doxastic processes for which there are alethic reasons is *ceteris paribus* good for an individual, with the order of explanation going from reasons to wellbeing (or perhaps personal good, where 'good' refers to value rather than wellbeing). This picture makes reasons prior to

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[17] I take it that this is roughly what Aristotle has in mind in *The Nichomachean Ethics*. The *locus classicus* for the modern discussion is Griffin (1986).
[18] Reisner (MS) chapter 3.

wellbeing and would require an explanation about the source of alethic reasons which is in some way independent of wellbeing. A picture of this kind is inconsistent with welfarist pluralism in both logic and spirit. There are accounts of personal good, and even wellbeing under that name, that treat being in line with various normative reasons as an inherently positive contribution to one's wellbeing.[19] Whatever account of wellbeing is ultimately the right one for use in welfarist pluralism, it is not one of those.

There are certain ideas of something's being a *normative source* that have appeared in earlier work of mine and also in the work of John Broome.[20] Broome's idea, very roughly, is that different sorts of domains or systems are capable of producing requirements. For example, the source of the requirement that one eat peas on the reverse side of one's fork is etiquette. And the source of the requirement not to harm innocents is morality. One of the possible sources is epistemology. The requirement that one not believe a transparently false proposition has epistemology as its source.

According to Broome, some sources are normative. For example, morality may be normative, whereas etiquette is non-normative. When a source is normative, it confers the force of being a normative reason on its requirements. This is why there is a reason not to harm innocents but no non-derivative reason (at least) to eat peas by balancing them on the reverse side of one's fork. Broome does not elaborate on what makes a normative source be normative. I believe it is correct to read him as being open to existence of either one or of many basic normative sources.

For my own part, I did not consider the possibility of there's being non-normative sources underlying a common requirement structure, in which some requirements (those generated by normative sources) are normative requirements and others (those generated by non-normative sources) are not. My thinking was that sources were properties or categories of properties that gave rise to reasons or oughts. On my proposal, the source of the requirement that one not believe

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[19] Fitting-attitude analyses can have this character. For an in-depth discussion, see Sylvan (MS).
[20] See Reisner (2004 & 2015) and Broome (2007 & 2013).

necessary falsehoods is truth, or perhaps logic, rather than epistemology. Likewise, the source of the requirement not to harm innocents is goodness (assuming a broadly teleological ethics for the sake of argument).

While I feel broadly sympathetic with some version of the picture of normative sources that lies in the vicinity of Broome's account or of my own, I have long felt some pressure to reconsider my view due to arguments developed by Bruno Guindon.[21] Guindon presents a picture that reconfigures the explanatory priority of Broome's account.

The idea is roughly this. We may ask what makes morality and etiquette different – why is it that one is normative and the other is not? According to Broome, this is a deep question about why the things that are normative are normative and why those that are not are not. Perhaps there is a principled answer, and perhaps we must rely to a substantial extent on intuition. Broome can say, however, why something that is a reason is a reason, namely because it is a requirement that has been generated by a normative source.

Guindon argues that Broome has put things in the wrong order. His idea is that what it is for something to be a normative source is to be the sort of thing for which there are normative reasons. To ask why the requirements of morality, for example, are reasons is mistaken. Rather, what it is for normativity to be a normative source is for there to be reasons to do as morality requires. What explains and perhaps constitutes morality's normativity as a source is that there are reasons to be moral.

This alternative, which changes the order explanation set out explicitly in Broome's view and and also in mine, raises the question of where normativity enters the picture. welfarist pluralism has an answer, although it may of course be the wrong one.

The question of in virtue of what something is valuable requires two answers, as there are two

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[21] Guindon (2016).

relevant senses of 'in virtue of'. It is helpful to present the relevant part of his idea here by using a toy example. Suppose that subjectivism about goodness is true, *i.e.* what it is for something to be good is for me to believe that it is good.

Let us assume that pinnipeds are good. In virtue of what are they good? The first answer to this question is the fact that I believe that they are good. This *grounds*, to use the popular term of today, the fact that they are good. This relation itself is grounded by a second fact, namely that what makes something good is that I believe it is good. This explains why what is good changes along with my beliefs about what is good and also why what is good is always determined by what I believe is good and not something else. An idea along these lines is present in welfarist pluralism.

According to welfarist pluralism, the fact that believing x is required by epistemology is the first kind of grounding fact. That satisfying the requirements[22] of epistemology is a constitutive or basic (positive) component of my wellbeing is the grounding fact of the second kind, namely what makes it the case that the first fact itself grounds the fact that there is an alethic reason for me to believe x.

This structure supports two integral parts of the the welfarist pluralism picture. The first is that it distinguishes welfarist pluralism from foundational pluralism. Welfarist pluralism and foundational pluralism both cite the fact that something is required by epistemology as the grounding fact (of the first kind) for the fact that there is an alethic reason to believe x. According to welfarist pluralism's foundational monism, the explanation of why the fact that x satisfies a requirement of epistemology grounds the fact that x is a an alethic reason for belief is because satisfying a requirement of epistemology contributes to increasing the level of a basic component of one's wellbeing. According to foundational pluralism, the explanation instead is that the fact that x satisfies a requirement of epistemology is itself the complete explanation. I shall discuss this

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[22] I am assuming for the present discussion that what there is to being in a good (as far as it goes) epistemic state just is being in the state of satisfying one or more requirements of epistemology.

difference presently when I introduce the notion of a *source of normativity*.

This kind of structure also puts us in a position to distinguish between welfarist pluralism and versions of pragmatism that treat alethic reasons for belief as being derivative rather than non-derivative. On the latter, view, the fact that *e* is evidence for *p* grounds the fact that *e* is a reason to believe *p*. However, what grounds the relation between these facts is that believing according to the evidence (either in this case or generally) increases some non-epistemic component of wellbeing, for example the amount of pleasure one feels. What makes the reason non-derivative according to the foundational monism of welfarist pluralism, as opposed to a (for example) hedonic pragmatism, has to do with the nature of wellbeing itself. Epistemic goods are wellbeing goods, so to speak, on the former view, whereas they are not on the latter.

To characterise the structure of welfarist pluralism, it is helpful to extend the model. Here is a first pass. It will not be the last one. The fact that *e* is evidence for *p* grounds the fact that *e* is a reason to believe *p*. In turn, this grounding relation obtains because epistemology requires one to believe according to the evidence. What *confers* normativity on the requirements of epistemology is in turn the fact being in a positive epistemic state is a basic component of an individual's wellbeing.

To return now to talk of 'sources', in the sense in which I have used the term, the source of all normativity is wellbeing. In Broome's sense, the source of normativity is epistemology, and the rest of the story is part of the explanation of why epistemology is a normative (reason providing) source. According to Guindon's proposed structure, the basic fact is that one has a reason to believe those things, the believing of which improves one's or others' wellbeing. To say that either wellbeing or (e.g.) prudence is the normative source of a reason for belief is just to say that one has a reason to believe those things that are wellbeing increasing or prudent to believe. One would say the same thing, *mutatis mutandis*, for epistemology and alethic reasons for belief.

The claim that characterises welfarist pluralism's foundational commitments is difficult to

square with the kind of reasons-centric picture that Guindon presents. This is not intended as either an argument against or a critique of his view. Rather I make the point to circle round to my earlier observation, namely that welfarist pluralism cannot by neatly squared with a reasons centric picture of what the requirements of epistemology are or a reasons centric explanation of why being in a positive epistemic state is a basic component of wellbeing. This is true even if one adopts an ontology with sources, reasons, and requirements. If one is persuaded by Guindon's picture, one is unlikely to be persuaded by the picture being presented here.[23]

Instead, the picture I shall offer relies on the dual grounding picture just presented. I shall describe the first ground for a reason or determinant of what one ought to believe as the 'reason itself'. I shall use 'source' in the way that Broome does, namely the sort of system or structure that can produces requirements and reasons or (partial) determinates. A source which can issue reasons non-derivatively is a *normative source* and one that cannot is a *non-normative source*. Following my earlier practice, something like wellbeing, which confers normativity to a source, is a *source of normativity*. One may rightly complain that it is too easy to confuse a *normative source* with a *source of normativity*. However, other terminology is yet more awkward and adds difficulty when comparing with Guindon's, Broome's, or my own earlier work. I apologise for not having a neater terminological solution.

Coming full circle, it is now possible to locate the epistemic component. The epistemic component is a component of wellbeing. Epistemic facts are thus reasons or (partial) determinates for/of belief themselves. They are so because epistemology is a normative source. The source of normativity for epistemology is wellbeing.

1.4 Epistemology as a component of wellbeing

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[23] I argue against the reasons-first picture in Reisner (MS) chapter 5.

'Epistemology' is a word used to name a field of philosophical inquiry. This field was originally constituted by the study and theory of knowledge, but in time it has come to concern concepts and properties like *justification*, *warrant*, *ought*s, and *reason*s as they apply to a variety of doxastic states.

I am interested in a rather narrow part of epistemology, that part which issues requirements. Epistemology here is a kind of function from states of the world to requirements. These requirements may be evidential in character: that there is overwhelming evidence for *p* requires one to believe *p*. They may be logical: that *x* and *not x* are contradictories requires one not to believe both *x* and not *x*. I do not mean to limit the requirements of epistemology to logic and evidence. In fact, I take it that it is the job of the epistemologist to discover the requirements of epistemology. Satisfying those requirements is a basic, non-derivative component of wellbeing, whatever the requirements turn out to be.

1.5 Epistemology and theoretical rationality

Philosophers writing on normativity and rationality commonly use the term 'theoretical rationality' or 'epistemic rationality'. There is a poor level of uniformity in the use of these terms. At least in one use, the one that interests me, 'theoretical rationality' picks out a set of rational requirements that govern belief. It is my view that these requirements are for the most part consistency requirements of various kinds. These requirements may or may not be normative; that remains a controversial matter.[24]

The question that is of most direct interest here is whether theoretical rationality is part of epistemology. When theoretical rationality requires that one, for example, not believe a contradiction, is that because epistemology requires it? Or, is theoretical rationality either its own source or a convenient way of identifying a part of a broader source, *rationality*?

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[24] See Broome (2013), Guindon (2016), Kolodny (2005), Reisner (2004) & (2011), and Wedgwood (2017) for more discussion.

Answering this question properly is the job of another work.[25] Answering it improperly is the job of this section. Consider the form of a simple requirement of theoretical rationality:

TR1. Rationality requires that (If you believe p, then you do not believe not p)

This kind of requirement is familiar from the work of John Broome and now many other philosophers. It is a wide-scope requirement, the relevant feature of which is that affirming the consequent does not allow one to attach the rational requirement to the consequent. The rational requirement is satisfied so long as the conditional which it governs is true. The requirement obtains, at least in this case, because it requires that one not have inconsistent beliefs.

Epistemology (also) requires this, at least on many plausible views about what epistemology requires. There are at least plausible two epistemic principles that yield consistency requirements like this one. One is an evidential requirement. Contradictions are necessarily false. If one holds two contradictory beliefs, then the conjunction of those two beliefs is necessarily false. That something is necessarily false is perfect evidence that it is false. Thus epistemology forbids that one have two contradictory beliefs. The other is a brute principle of consistency. Epistemology says that one is required not to have inconsistent beliefs.

There may be more to theoretical rationality than consistency requirements. For example, some form of epistemic *enkrasia* may be a requirement of theoretical rationality. It is an interesting question as to whether, and why, epistemology might require something like epistemic *enkrasia*.

A necessary condition for theoretical rationality's being a proper subset of epistemology would be that epistemology entails all the requirements of theoretical rationality. The existence of one or more rational requirements that are not required by epistemology would be (with some trivial

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[25] See Reisner (MS) for more discussion.

premises added) an apodeictic proof that theoretical rationality is not part of epistemology.

The improper answer to the question of whether theoretical rationality is part of epistemology is that at minimum a subset of the requirements of theoretical rationality are also requirements of epistemology.[26] The proper answer that I shall defend later is that theoretical rationality is a distinct source from epistemology.

1.6 *Welfarist pluralism and theoretical rationality*

Welfarist pluralism is a view about what kinds of considerations determine what one ought to believe and why they do so. One may recall that an implicit assumption of welfarist pluralism is that wellbeing contains at least two basic components: a component comprising one's epistemic status and some kind of non-epistemic component. I suspect that the substantive accounts of wellbeing that would include an epistemic component would also include more than just one non-epistemic component. Could conforming to rational requirements, or in particular the requirements of theoretical rationality, be a component of wellbeing?

An affirmative answer to this question would make rationality non-derivatively normative in the same way that epistemology is non-derivatively normative. I am sceptical that rationality is normative in that way, and thus I want to resist including theoretical rationality, or rationality at all, amongst the basic components of wellbeing. I cannot do that in a very convincing way here, but I can at least provide an incomplete argument against including theoretical rationality as a basic component of wellbeing. I shall come to this argument in the next section.

Here I want merely to point something out, but it is an important something. Theoretical rationality is not part of epistemology, if belief *enkarsia* is a requirement of theoretical rationality. Belief *enkrasia* is (roughly) the following:

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[26] See Reisner (2011) for a detailed discussion.

TR2. Rationality requires that (if you believe that you ought to believe *p*, you believe *p*)

At the present stage of the discussion, I am agnostic about whether belief *enkrasia* is a requirement of theoretical rationality.[27] Suppose for the moment that it is. In that case, it is an instance of a higher-order rational requirement, one that links beliefs about one ought to believe with one's beliefs.[28]

Higher order requirements of this kind cause a difficulty when they are treated as part of epistemology. Given a particular body of evidence, epistemology sometimes requires one to form a particular belief.[29] If one's evidence, *e*, for proposition *p* is sufficiently strong, then one is required (outright) by epistemology to believe *p*.

As I have (not uniquely) argued elsewhere,[30] sometimes evidence of evidence for a proposition is also evidence against that proposition. Thus it is possible to drive up the evidential support that one ought to believe *p*, because one has evidence that there is evidence for *p*, while at the same time decreasing the evidence for *p* itself. In principle, it should be possible for *e* to be such that in a particular instance it is enough to require that one believe that one ought to believe *p*, while at the same time making it the case that one ought not to believe *p*.[31] These beliefs are not logically inconsistent. Given fallibilism about evidence, they are even reasonable to hold together. Yet when they are held together, they violate belief *enkrasia*. Assuming a no-conflicting-requirements rule, epistemology cannot both have evidential requirements, which it surely has, and belief *enkrasia*.

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[27] See Reisner (2013) for more discussion.

[28] See Worsnip (2018) for more on requirements like this one and their place in a wider theory of rationality.

[29] This requirement is commonly taken for granted, and indeed is often thought to generate an ought. For a valuable discussion, see Meylan (2020).

[30] See Reisner (2016).

[31] It is difficult to say what sort of 'ought' is involved in the requirement. For the moment I have nothing of value to to say about this question.

Therefore, if belief *enkrasia* is a requirement of theoretical rationality, theoretical rationality cannot itself be part of epistemology.

1.7 Some intuitions about theoretical rationality

I have in the past argued that rationality is not normative.[32] I still hold this view, but with the benefit of hindsight this claim needs to be made in a more nuanced way. What I now believe is that the fact that something is required by theoretical rationality is not a non-derivative instance of explanation grounding in the way that for example something's promoting pleasure or being required by epistemology is.

That is not to say that at least some and perhaps all requirements of at least theoretical rationality are derivatively normative. I have argued that consistency requirements are, if epistemology is normative.[33] Therefore, if welfarist pluralism is true, at least the consistency requirements of theoretical rationality are normative.

Welfarist pluralism's treatment of this issue is appealing, at least at first blush and perhaps beyond. Being rational is without a doubt useful. It provides targets for our reasoning that allow us to navigate the world in particular ways and to solve interesting and complex abstract problems. Rational thought often yields predictable behaviour, which is useful in social coordination with our fellows. To the extent that being rational promotes various components of one's wellbeing, for example allowing us to experience richer or more pleasurable lives, there are derivative, non-alethic reasons to be theoretically rational.

At least some requirements of theoretical rationality are also required by epistemology. One must satisfy many of the requirements of theoretical rationality to satisfy the requirements of epistemology, which are normative on the view under investigation. This provides another

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[32] See Reisner (2004)
[33] See Reisner (2011)

derivative reason for being theoretically rational. To the extent that one has the intuition that theoretical rationality is normative, that intuition is vindicated by normativity deriving from standing requirements of epistemology and separately from various non-standing requirements arising from non-epistemic components of our wellbeing. One might say that there are both alethic and pragmatic reasons to be theoretically rational (at least with respect to consistency requirements), always in the former case and often in the latter, but not because one is as theoretical rationality requires.

I should like to point out a difference between theoretical rationality, understood as set of requirements governing relations amongst mental states, and epistemology. Epistemology, as I understand it, concerns the relationship between one's mind and the world. The contribution of being in a positive epistemic state to one's wellbeing is related to the contribution that veridical experience and genuine achievement make to one's wellbeing as opposed to ersatz experiences and achievements of the kind generated in an experience machine. Epistemic goods are like veridical experiential or achievement goods.[34]

There are already obvious complications to this analogy. One need only think about fallibilism about evidence to consider that one may be in a positive epistemic state that relates poorly to the world. For now I set it aside and hope that at least the general character of the analogy between epistemology and other veridical goods in wellbeing is enough to get the general idea across. Clearly more needs to be said to see how far the analogy can in fact be made to hold.

What should be apparent in looking at this analogy is that theoretical rationality does not tie one's mind to the world, or even attempt to do so. It ties one's mind to itself. Perhaps being rational, or theoretically rational at a minimum, is part of wellbeing. If that is so, a novel kind of

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[34] This point is nicely illustrated by the interesting work done by Veli Mitova (2017) and Timothy Williamson (2000) in developing veridical mental-state accounts of evidence and by Skorupski (2010) in employing a notion of evidence that is non-mentalistic altogether.

explanation for why it is so is required. While I cannot rule such a possibility out, I am inclined towards scepticism about it.

1.8 The value of theoretical irrationality

Sometimes it is beneficial to be theoretically or practically irrational. Confining ourselves to the former, there are generally two kinds of ways of in which being theoretically irrational can be good for oneself or others: there can be direct benefits to being irrational or indirect benefits to being irrational.

The direct benefits come mainly in the form of incentives. One might be offered money or other goods simply for being irrational. As a contingent psychological matter, some people may feel pleasure from being irrational in a given instance, just because one is being irrational.

The indirect benefits, as I mean to understand them here, are benefits that accrue over time in complex ways. Perhaps being irrational to some extent aids with practical or epistemic progress, sparks creativity, or encourages useful kinds of self-reflection. In some more practical contexts, being irrational may help make one a more difficult opponent in a contest or more difficult to exploit by a con artist. The ways in which unpredictability can be socially problematic can also make it strategically or tactically beneficial, and irrationality facilitates unpredictability.[35]

If my conjecture that theoretical rationality is not itself part of epistemology is correct, then there is an interesting parallel between rationality and irrationality. Both are sometimes valuable. There can be reasons to be either rational or irrational of much the same kind. I take it that the potential contributions to non-epistemic components of wellbeing in both cases are obvious enough to pass over for the time being. Instead, it will be more interesting to focus on the potential contributions to the epistemic component of wellbeing.

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[35] These benefits to irrationality have been discussed at length in philosophy, economics, and psychology. Nonetheless, Schelling (1960) remains essential reading.

Being theoretically rational contributes to being in a positive epistemic state insofar as evidence requires that we do not hold inconsistent beliefs, since the probability that a pair of inconsistent beliefs will be true is 0, and thus one may be said to have perfect evidence against their joint truth. Satisfying the requirements of theoretical rationality may contribute in other contingent ways to satisfying the requirements of epistemology. Perhaps satisfying requirements of theoretical rationality is conducive to forming evidentially supported beliefs for one reason or another.

Being theoretically irrational can directly contribute to satisfying the requirements of epistemology, if belief *enkrasia* is one of the requirements of theoretical rationality. In cases where evidence of evidence of p is evidence against p, one must violate a requirement of theoretical rationality to satisfy the (evidential) requirements of epistemology. This is the only example I can think of, although there may be others, where it is necessary to violate a (putative) requirement of theoretical rationality to satisfy requirements of epistemology.

The latter is an unusual circumstance, perhaps not one that most of us will encounter in our lifetimes. More often, the epistemic benefits of violating a requirement of theoretical rationality will be indirect. Holding two inconsistent beliefs, and becoming aware of the fact that one does, may prompt theoretical reasoning and more extended forms of inquiry which might, all-in, improve one's epistemic state. It is unclear to me whether there are closure requirements[36] of theoretical rationality, but if there are, trying to decide whether to close or whether to give up on all or part of the conditional that requires closing may likewise be a spur to valuable epistemic improvements.

While the parallelism between the value of being theoretically rational and being theoretically irrational is not perfect, it is striking. Being theoretically rational is always necessary to avoid being

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[36] A closure requirement has the from: You are rationally required that {[if you believe p and also (if p then q)], then you are required to believe q].

in certain negative epistemic states. Being theoretically irrational is not always necessary, but in some evidential conditions, violating belief *enkrasia*, if that is a requirement of theoretical rationality, is also necessary. Beyond that, the benefits and harms of each to one's epistemic state are contingent both due to being theoretically rational and being theoretically irrational.

1.9 Concluding remarks

I have outlined the basic ideas underlying welfarist pluralism. My aim has been to explain the view at a high level, looking at some details of interest. Perhaps the most important amongst the features of welfarist pluralism discussed is the way in which components of wellbeing provide distinctive types of grounds for reasons for belief. The fact that epistemology itself is a source of reasons for belief distinguishes welfarist pluralism from standard forms of pragmatism. The fact that wellbeing is the source of normativity for those reasons, on the other hand, assimilates welfarist pluralism to standard forms of pragmatism.

This chapter concluded with a discussion of theoretical rationality and its relationship to epistemology. The aim in discussing theoretical rationality was to give some hint as to how a view like welfarist pluralism can engage with broader questions in the study of normativity and rationality and also why epistemology may be treatable as a usefully distinctive category and not a mere catchall for regulations that apply to belief or other doxastic states.

I close this paper with an observation. Clifford's evidentialism is not longer a popular view. Modern evidentialists typically do not see their views as having an ethical component in the way that Clifford did of his. Contemporary pragmatists have not been inclined to see conformity to epistemic norms as inherently morally worthy. The conjecture I am exploring in this chapter and in this book will ultimately come to entail that it is morally good, and that there are moral reasons, to believe what is true, or at least what the indicators of truth point to. Although much of what Clifford says is surely wrong, I am surprised to find myself not only offering (to a degree

speculative) support for a part of his view, but also to find that I now am inclined to think that connecting the true and the good is an admirable *desideratum.*

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