What is this thing called Happiness?. By FRED FELDMAN. (Oxford: University Press, 2010. Pp. xv + 286. Price £30.00.)

This is a lucidly written and rigorously argued book. In addition to an introduction outlining its ambitions, the book contains three parts. In part I, Feldman rejects a number of descriptive views of happiness, including sensory hedonism, (some forms of) preferentialism, and whole life satisfactionism. In part II, he defends his own conception of happiness and then argues that welfare tracks it alone. In part III, he contends that certain forms of psychological research on happiness do not in fact measure happiness and that the psychological research he considers is irrelevant to his philosophical project.

Feldman offers a descriptive and an evaluative account of happiness. A descriptive account of happiness details the essential features of what an individual possesses when that individual is happy. An evaluative account of happiness tells you what it is for an individual's life to be going well for her. Feldman's descriptive view of happiness is a version of hedonism. It is not the version found in Bentham, Mill and Sidgwick. Feldman distinguishes between attitudinal pleasure (displeasure) and sensory pleasure (pain) (pp. 109-110, 143-145). Sensory pleasure is a positive feeling or a sensation. Attitudinal pleasure is neither of these: it is a propositional pro-attitude, which one takes in some state of affairs, e.g., that one is swimming. Feldman's descriptive view of happiness is a version of attitudinal hedonism (AHH). One is happy at time t when one has on balance more intrinsic occurrent attitudinal pleasure (IOAP) than intrinsic occurrent attitudinal displeasure (IOAD) at t. One's happiness across an interval of time is just the sum of one's momentary happiness minus one's momentary unhappiness experienced during the interval of time (pp. 240-241). Feldman's evaluative view of happiness is

that one is faring well when one has on balance more happiness (consisting in IOAP) than unhappiness (consisting in IOAD) (p. 169).

Most of Feldman's book is devoted to defending his descriptive account of happiness. This involves trying to show that his view explains our intuitions about cases more plausibly than his rivals. Consider this case, designed to refute Wayne Davis's preferentialist theory of happiness (pp. 63ff.). Susan is a graduate student in philosophy. She is pessimistic and despondent. She wants to write a very good dissertation, to get a good job in philosophy and to publish her work in esteemed journals. She believes that these things won't happen. According to Davis, Susan's preferences are frustrated and therefore she's unhappy. Feldman imagines that she receives a drug that has a direct impact on her mood, making her feel better (p. 64). Even if her beliefs and desires remain the same, Feldman thinks, she is now contra Davis happier on account of the fact that her mood is "chipper" (p. 65). Let's agree that Susan is happier. But now suppose instead that she takes a pill that causes her to take attitudinal pleasure in the states of affairs, where this involves no feelings or chipper moods. Suppose she replies to this state of affairs in Commander Data-like tone: "I am pleased to a greater extent with my life." It's simply not clear *pace* Feldman that we would say she's happier.

This is a version of what Feldman calls the "The Missing Element" objection (p. 143). His reply to this objection is that it is possible to be happy without feeling any sort of sensory pleasure or cheery feelings (pp. 145-146). He describes an ill friend who reported that he was happy because, though he had on balance more sensory pain than pleasure, his new medication reduced the amount of sensory pain he felt and this gave him hope that he could again do what he enjoyed (p. 146). In rebuttal, one may argue that while it might be true that one can be happy without feeling any sensory pleasure or cheery feelings or while experiencing on balance more

sensory pain than pleasure, it does not follow that one's life gets better simply by adding (net) attitudinal pleasure. In the modified case of Susan it does not.

Indeed, there may be a theory that is better able to explain Feldman's examples. Consider the life satisfaction theory of happiness. On one version, one is happy when one judges that, on balance, one's life is measuring up well to one's standards and when one finds one's life under those standards satisfying. This theory can explain why we might think that initially Susan is not happy. Her life is not, on balance, measuring up well against her standards, and she is not satisfied with her life. In addition, it explains why she is happier (or less unhappy) when her mood feels better. She judges that she is feeling better and she finds this satisfying (p. 64-65). This view also explains why Feldman's friend is happy when his condition improves: he judges that he is better able to do more of what he values and he finds this satisfying. Feldman raises a number of worries about the life satisfaction theory of happiness. He thinks the following example is decisive (pp. 83-84). Timmy is always smiling. He has friends, a job, a nice car, surplus cash, and he spends his time doing what he most enjoys. However, Timmy has no well worked out life plan and he does not have any well-articulated standards against which he measures his life. If you ask him to judge whether his life measures up favourably against his standards he confesses to being nonplussed and cannot make any such judgement. Feldman claims contra this version of whole life satisfactionism that Timmy is happy despite the fact that Timmy is not making a judgement about his life at a time or as a whole (p. 84).

The problem with this criticism is that it relies on an account of judgement or positive evaluation that is questionable. Feldman appears to think that whole life satisfactionism requires the sort of judgement that one gives in reply to a question, where what one is called on to do is articulate one's ideals and to state in a sober fashion whether one finds one's life measuring up

well to one's ideals (p. 235n8). But this need not be the case. Timmy clearly has some standards: he likes fast cars, he enjoys time with his friends and frequent partying. His behaviour suggests that he finds that his life is measuring up well against these standards: he's not complaining, he continues to carry on in the same way as he has in the past, and when given the choice he opts for his own life rather than another. He's clearly finding his life under his standards satisfying. There seems no reason to judge that he's not happy on the version of the life satisfaction theory at which Feldman aims this objection.

One very sensible element of Feldman's treatment of happiness is the extent to which he diminishes the role of intellectual requirements in determining happiness. This makes it odd that he forces such a strong view of judgement on exponents of the life satisfaction view. The issue of the intellectual requirements of happiness is relevant to the scope AHH. It seems that if a theory of happiness is to be descriptively adequate, it must be sufficiently general: it must apply to all core subjects of welfare assessments. He rightly notes (contra Aristotle) that a child can be happy. When I twirl my nine-month-old infant around in my arms and he laughs and smiles, I am sure that he is happy. At the same time, and contra Feldman, I am not certain that he is having an episode of attitudinal pleasure. For this, one needs to 'consider' or (in some sense) be 'aware' of what one is taking pleasure in, and if one cannot 'grasp', 'think' about, or 'entertain' a proposition, then one cannot be pleased (displeased) about it and therefore one cannot experience attitudinal pleasure (displeasure) (pp. 85, 115). It is not certain that my infant son 'considers', 'entertains' or 'grasps' any propositions when he giggles. True, the state of affairs that one takes attitudinal pleasure in need not to be 'at the very forefront of consciousness' (p. 115). But still Feldman has not told us precisely what he means by 'considers', 'entertains', and 'grasps' to indicate what a being has to be like to have an episode of attitudinal pleasure. This is important

to his reply to the problem of objectless moods, the worry that a mood can make one worse/better off without being an attitude toward some state of affairs, and to the scope of his theory of happiness.

Feldman aims to provide a descriptively adequate account of welfare. Let's suppose he's right that welfare tracks AHH. This may come at a cost. He is willing to grant that the socialised and the brainwashed might fare relatively well, that we have only limited authority over our own welfare, and that we fare well even if we rely on illusion or various strategies for coping with sour grapes. This may leave one wondering what relevance (if any) welfare as Feldman construes it has to our moral and political thinking.

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