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OBJECTIVE LIST THEORIES

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Ask people what they want for themselves, for their loved ones, and for their friends and they will likely suggest a few things. Suppose that they answer with the following: health, friendships, romantic relationships, pleasure and enjoyment, happiness, achievement, knowledge. A conception of prudential value which says that well-being is promoted by this collection of items is an instance of an objective list theory.[1] This chapter is divided into three parts. First I outline objective list theories of well-being. I then go on to look at the motivations for holding such a view before turning to objections to these theories of well-being.

Just what are objective list theories?

Unlike the case of hedonism and the desire-fulfillment theory of well-being, it is difficult to characterize objective list theories in general. This is partly because, to a greater extent than is true of hedonism and the desire-fulfillment theory, "objective list theory" names something from within a *very* wide *class* of theories.[2] A natural thought one might have: even if objective list theories are a wide class of theories, we can *still* ask what all such theories necessarily have in common or, to put the point another way, what is *constitutive* of an objective list theory. This brings us to the second and more significant reason why it is difficult to provide a clear and accurate characterization of objective list theories, namely, the label "objective list theory" is used inconsistently in the well-being literature. I will begin by outlining this inconsistency before explaining how I think we should proceed.

It is uncontroversial that *paradigmatic* objective list theories adhere to both of the following claims:

> **Attitude-independence**: it is not the case that G is (non-instrumentally) good for some agent X only if X, or some counterpart of X, has some pro-attitude towards G.
>
> **Pluralism**: there are a plurality of (non-instrumental) prudential goods.

Note, first, that these theses are both couched in terms of *non-instrumental* goods. Henceforth I'll drop the qualifier "non-instrumental" but this should be read as implied throughout this chapter. Second, as is common in the literature, I express these claims only in terms of basic prudential *goods*. It is natural to assume that a paradigm objective list theory is committed

to the corresponding claims about basic prudential *bads*. However, whilst this is a natural combination, an objective list theory need not hold that there are a plurality of bads, just as there are a plurality of goods.[3] Whatever its plausibility, it seems perfectly *coherent* to hold, for example, that there is a plurality of basic goods but only *one* basic prudential bad (pain, for example).

Here are some examples of *paradigmatic* objective list theories, with their lists of basic prudential goods:

> **Finnis**
> Life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability (friendship), practical reasonableness, "religion."
>
> **Fletcher**
> Achievement, friendship, happiness, pleasure, self-respect, virtue.
>
> **Murphy**
> Life, knowledge, aesthetic experience, excellence in play and work, excellence in agency, inner peace, friendship and community, religion, happiness.
>
> **Parfit**
> Moral goodness, rational activity, development of abilities, having children and being a good parent, knowledge, awareness of true beauty.[4]

These theories are paradigm cases of objective list theories because they are consistent with each of attitude-independence and pluralism. Their consistency with pluralism is obvious—their lists have more than one member—and their consistency with attitude-independence stems from the fact that they do not claim that these items are good for individuals only if they desire them. For example, Finnis makes this feature of his view abundantly clear thus:

> It is obvious that a man who is well informed, etc., simply *is* better-off (other things being equal) than a man who is muddled, deluded, and ignorant, that the state of the one is better than the state of the other, not just in this particular case or that, but in all cases, as such, universally, and *whether I like it or not*.[5]

But why have I said that the theories above are only *paradigmatic* objective list theories? Why not simply define objective list theories as those which accept both attitude-independence and pluralism?

The problem is that, despite the *paradigm* cases of objective list theories embracing both attitude-independence and pluralism, there are two ways in which "objective list theory" is used which falsify this as a view of what is definitive of objective list theories.

First, it has long been standard to divide theories of well-being in a tripartite way thus:

> Hedonism Desire-fulfillment Objective list

For example, Derek Parfit (1984: 493) writes that "[t]here are three kinds of theory" of self-interest or "what makes someone's life go best" and then proceeds to list "hedonistic theories . . . desire fulfilment theories . . . objective list theories."[6] This gives us a tripartite distinction among theories of well-being. On this categorization, sufficiently common to be accurately regarded as orthodoxy, the category of "objective list theories" thus covers *every* theory that is

neither hedonism nor the desire-fulfillment theory. And this makes trouble because not every theory that is distinct from hedonism and desire-fulfillment theory accepts pluralism *and* attitude-independence. Consider, for example, the following theory:

> *Knowledgism*: Knowledge is the only prudential good.

Whatever its ultimate merits or lack thereof, knowledgism is *a* theory of well-being. It should therefore be possible to categorize it. Clearly, knowledgism is neither a form of hedonism nor desire-fulfillment theory. This means, according to the tripartite division stated above, knowledgism is an objective list theory. But knowledgism, though committed to attitude-independence, is inconsistent with pluralism. So knowledgism cannot be an objective list theory *if* objective list theories necessarily embrace both attitude-independence and pluralism. Thus, the way in which the category of "objective list theory" is used to distinguish theories of well-being means that one cannot treat pluralism and attitude-independence as *constitutive* of objective list theories.[7]

The previous reason for not treating attitude-independence and pluralism as constitutive of objective list theories was implicit, stemming as it did from the way in which the category of objective list theories is used. There is however a second, more explicit, reason not to treat commitment to attitude-independence and pluralism as *constitutive of* objective list theories. This is the fact that the literature is flatly, and explicitly, inconsistent on this point. Objective list theories are sometimes explicitly defined as pluralistic:

> The objective list theory of well-being holds that a plurality of basic objective goods directly benefit people[8]

even though the idea that pluralism is constitutive of objective list is contradicted by the many times when people allow for the possibility of *monistic* objective list theories. For example, Roger Crisp writes:

> But it is worth remembering, for example, that hedonism might be seen as one kind of "list" theory, and all list theories might then be opposed to desire theories as a whole.[9]

And Chris Heathwood:

> Also, if one-item lists are allowed, then objective list theories can be monistic. Hedonism is sometimes thought of as such a theory.[10]

Heathwood:

> One concern for objective list theories, at least if they are pluralistic[. . .][11]

Shelly Kagan:

> On this approach, what the hedonist is endorsing appears to be a version of an objective theory . . . In effect, the hedonist is offering an objective list theory with a very short list. Pleasure is an objective good, and it is the only such good.[12]

Julia Markovits:

> This way of thinking about H[edonism] makes it an Objective List View (OL), with a very short list: pleasure is the only item on it.[13]

Even though some of these come as part of conditional claims, they show that there is no *consensus* that objective list theories are pluralistic in the way that there is a consensus over what hedonism and desire-fulfillment theories claim.[14]

It is for these two reasons that one cannot easily say what is constitutive of objective list theories. The literature sometimes treats pluralism as constitutive of objective list theories, sometimes uses "objective list theory" as a residual category, such that it could not incorporate pluralism, and sometimes explicitly allows monistic objective list theories.

How then should we proceed? Well, notice that the inconsistency in the usage of "objective list theory" concerned only pluralism. There is unanimity that objective list theories are committed to attitude-independence. For this reason, I think that the best way to carve up the logical space of theories of well-being is to say that "objective list theories" are all and only those that specify particular things as non-instrumentally prudentially good (or bad) for people whether or not they have any pro (or con) attitude towards them. More succinctly, the essence of objective list theories is attitude-independence. Some precedent for such a convention stems from the passages cited above, which allow for monistic objective list theories, as well as from characterizations of objective list views such as Parfit's: "On Objective List Theories, certain things are good or bad for us, whether or not we want to have the good things, or to avoid the bad things."[15] This also fits the taxonomy used by Allan Hazlett,[16] which distinguishes Desire-*Dependent* and Desire-*Independent* theories (before then further dividing Desire-Independent theories according to whether they are monistic or pluralistic), and the discussions of how to categorize theories of well-being in Dorsey, Fletcher, and Woodard.[17] One consequence of treating attitude-independence alone as constitutive of objective list theories is that hedonism will then qualify as a particular instance of an objective list theory.[18]

Let me recap what we have seen so far. I have shown that the label "objective list theory" is used inconsistently in the well-being literature, such that one cannot spell out what is constitutive of objective list theories without contradicting at least some of the ways in which the label is commonly used. My suggestion for how to proceed from here was that it would be best to take attitude-independence to be all that is constitutive of objective list theories, and that this would *adequately* fit the way the term is currently used (though for the reasons given above, it could not fit all such uses of the label). However this second point is much less important. After all, better taxonomies of well-being may eschew the label "objective list theory" altogether. The first point, however, is important as it is clear that "objective list theory" is used inconsistently. So one must take care in using the label. In the rest of this entry I will mostly be concerned with pluralistic objective list theories, given that many of the objections to the view, and motivations for it, make most sense in the case of pluralistic views.

One final thing to do in this section is to clear up two potential confusions that one might have about objective list theories.

First, it is *not* constitutive of an objective list theory that it hold that the constituent goods are either good *simpliciter* or *morally* good, aside from being good *for* people. Of course any particular objective list theorist might also hold that the goods are good *simpliciter* etc., but that is an extra, strictly separate, commitment.[19] This means that objective list theories are strictly neutral as to the truth of welfarism (the view that welfare is all that is non-instrumentally valuable or the only thing that generates practical reasons).

Second, the objective list theory gives no fundamental role to people's *beliefs* about what is good for them. Thus we are not free, according to the objective list theories, to "devise our own lists," so to speak. An objective list theorist believes that the items on the list are all and only the things that are good for all humans.[20]

Having explained what "objective list theories" have in common, I move on now to examining the reasons for and against holding such a view. Of course each such argument or objection is the subject of sustained reflection so I only detail the opening moves in the debate about each.

In favor of objective list theories

Pre-theoretical judgements

Objective list theory is, I suggest, analogous to commonsense morality in being a kind of widely held starting point when thinking about well-being. It thus seems to function as the view that one holds before and until one is persuaded to adopt one of the other philosophical theories of well-being.[21] As I noted at the beginning of the chapter, if you ask people what they ultimately want for themselves and their loved ones they will typically give you a list of items—health, pleasure, friendship, knowledge, achievement—without thinking that these can all be reduced to one value and without thinking that the list is determined by what their loved ones in fact desire. Thus one ground that might be offered for holding an objective list theory is that it is supported by our pre-theoretic intuitive judgments about well-being, or the judgments that we make about well-being outside of, or before, philosophical thinking about the nature of well-being. That is to say, one might argue that our pre-theoretical judgments—judgments reflected in the prudential choices we make, the way in which we give prudential advice, and the way in which we care for family and friends—are defeasible *evidence* in favor of objective list theories.

One might dispute this observation, by giving an account of why our everyday prudential judgements are actually better evidence for some *other* theory of well-being. Alternatively, and I think more plausibly, an opponent might concede that the *observation* is correct—that objective list theory is a common starting point and a widely held view among non-philosophers—but dispute its significance, arguing that it is weak or no evidence for objective list theories. One ground for this might be the fact that it is pre-theoretic judgments that are being appealed to, where an opponent of an objective list theory might think that such judgments are naive or unlikely to be accurate. How one thinks progress is to be made on this issue is likely to depend on one's background views of how much trust we should place in pre-theoretic intuitions.

Another kind of argument for objective list theories is that they steer a middle course between hedonism and the desire-fulfillment theory and thus avoid strong objections to these views. These objections I will label "too few prudential goods" and "too many prudential goods."[22]

Too few prudential goods

Hedonism is subject to a "too few prudential goods" objection because it claims that *only* pleasures contribute to well-being. Notice that most objections to hedonism do not dispute that pleasure contributes to well-being. Rather, objections to hedonism tend to target the hedonist thesis that *only* pleasure contributes to well-being.

Take Nozick's experience machine objection.[23] Nozick imagines a machine that one could plug into and enjoy pleasurable experiences. One might, for example, have the pleasurable experience of winning the World Cup, of writing the great American novel, or simply living a very happy life surrounded by loving family and friends. The issue that the example brings out is

what to think about lives which are very pleasurable but which are plugged into such a machine. The objection is used to support the following claim: things other than pleasurable and painful experiences determine our level of well-being.

Of course, the experience machine objection does not show, or even purport to show, that the experiential quality of our lives is completely *irrelevant* to well-being. But it does provide strong evidence that there are more things than pleasure that can affect our well-being. This is an instance of the general class of the "too few prudential goods" objection to hedonism. One piece of evidence in favor of objective list theories is their being able to avoid the "too few prudential goods" objection that hedonism is subject to.

Too many prudential goods

Desire-fulfillment theory, at least in its simplest form, is subject to a "too many prudential goods" objection. One particularly well-known form of this objection is the "scope problem."[24] The problem is that if, as desire-fulfillment theory claims,[25] someone's desiring something is sufficient for its being good for that person, then anything that someone desires is good for that person. However, this seems to make many things good for people which plausibly are not.[26]

To take one example, suppose that you desire *that there is sentient life elsewhere in the universe*.[27] According to the desire-fulfillment theory, if there is such life, this satisfaction of your desire is good for you. But it seems implausible that the existence of sentient life elsewhere in the universe is, itself, good for you. And there are limitless other such examples, stemming from the fact that we have desires for a wide range of things that do not seem plausibly good for us. Worries about such cases have typically led desire-fulfillment theorists to seek to restrict the relevant range of desires in some way.[28]

One might similarly think that perfectionist theories of well-being are subject to one, or both, of the too many/too few goods objections and one might therefore hold an objective list theory because one is also unpersuaded by perfectionist theories.[29] Thus one kind of motivation for an objective list theory is its apparent ability to avoid such "too many prudential goods" objections.

The too many/too few prudential goods objections taken together push towards the view that pleasure and a, limited, class of other things are good for people. In light of that, one might think of objective list theories as the natural go-to option for those dissatisfied with alternate theories on the grounds considered above.

Piecemeal arguments for specific goods

Another style of argument for an objective list theory is that of arguing for the prudential value of particular goods on the list. For example, one might argue for an objective list theory by arguing that *knowledge* is prudentially valuable irrespective of whether it is desired or pleasurable, thus contradicting the claims of desire-fulfillment theory and hedonism. One example of this strategy is Finnis, who provides a specific argument to support the claim that knowledge belongs on the objective list, arguing that the contrary position is self-refuting.[30] One can, of course, do the same with any other candidate prudential good that is included on one's objective list. Thus one way of arguing for an objective list theory is to argue piecemeal for its particular constituents.

Arguments from the nature of prudential value

Objective list theories are theories of which things hold prudential value. One might try to argue for an objective list theory answer to this question by, first, defending a particular view of

the *nature* of prudential value—*what it is* for something to be prudentially valuable—before then arguing that an objective list theory is a consequence of such a view.

Defensive maneuvers

The final way of motivating objective list theories is that of performing defensive maneuvers on its behalf, by trying to nullify potential objections. In the next section I will cover some standard objections to objective list theories and also explain the best way for the objective list theorist to reply to each of the standard objections, thus demonstrating some such defensive maneuvers on behalf of the objective list theorist.

Problems and objections to objective list theories, and replies

Before starting properly, let me note that many objections to particular objective list theories will depend upon their constituent claims—their list of goods and any further claims they make about the constituents of the list. In discussing problems and objections I will largely abstract from particular objective list theories and consider problems and objections which apply to such theories generally (even if to different extents).

Arbitrariness and explanatory impotence

Ben Bradley gives a succinct spelling-out of a cluster of related objections to objective list theories, objections centered on the idea that theories are problematically arbitrary, nothing but an "unconnected heap," or somehow explanatorily unsatisfying.[31] For example:

> [P]luralism seems objectionably arbitrary. Whatever the composition of the list, we can always ask: why should these things be on the list? What do they have in common? What is the rational principle that yields the results that these things, and no others, are the things that are good?[32]

Although Bradley couches this as an objection to "pluralism," at least part of his objection(s) applies to monistic objective list theories, such as knowledgism or hedonism, equally well and one reply for the objective list theorist to make is to argue that the objective list theory is no more burdened by these challenges than any other theory of well-being. We can ask: "why is pleasure (or knowledge or . . .) alone of prudential value?" or "what is the rational principle that determines that pleasure (or knowledge or . . .) contributes to well-being?"

The same goes for desire-fulfillment theory. Desire-fulfillment theorists spend little or no time providing an *explanation* of *why* desire fulfillment contributes to well-being. And to the extent that the challenge to the objective list theory is a good one, perfectionist theories of well-being owe us an answer to the question: *why* are the exercise and development of our capacities good for us?

There are two good reasons to think that these fundamental questions are, at best, *extremely* difficult to answer. First, the fundamental tenets of a theory of well-being are *necessary* truths and, as such, might be *incapable* of further explanation. Finally, given that the fundamental tenets of a theory of well-being are purported *evaluative* truths, there is a major epistemological challenge to all theories of well-being stemming from the fact that we have no well-worked-out account of how knowledge of evaluative truths is possible. Thus Bradley points out difficulties for the objective list theory but not for the objective list theory in particular.

This reply has some merit. Note, however, that it really shows only that all theories of well-being share the same *kind* of challenge. But this leaves open the possibility that objective list theories (strictly speaking, *pluralist* ones) have an especially difficult instance of the challenge. One reason for thinking this is that it has to provide an account of why *each* constituent good is a fundamental prudential value. Thus, if we are comparing the costs of the theories of well-being, it is a *pro tanto* cost of (pluralistic) objective list theories that they will need to provide a fundamental explanation of, or explanation of our knowledge of, more than one type of good.

A final thread to Bradley's objection is a challenge to the (pluralist) objective list theorist to provide an explanation of the *commonality* between the items on the list. If the idea is that the objective list theorist must provide an explanation of why the items on the list have the common property of enhancing well-being then this collapses into the previous objection. An alternative way of reading it is as a request simply for an explanation of what properties the items on the list have in common. Of course, one answer that the objective list theorist is committed to is that the items on the list have the property *enhancing well-being*. However that is trivial, so we must read the demand, instead, as one of asking what *other* properties the items on the list have in common, aside from contributing to well-being.

At this point objective list theorists have options. They can either question the legitimacy of the demand by asking what reason we have to expect the items on the list will have some property in common, aside from contributing to well-being. Another, more positive, strategy is simply to note that the items on any plausible objective list will have points of commonality.[33] For example, any list with pleasure and happiness on it has the commonality that these two goods enjoy, namely experiential quality, and any list with friendship, virtue, and self-respect on it can point to the traits of character and affective states which are common to these goods. Thus, if such a demand is legitimate, there seems nothing intractable about the demand to provide commonalities between the goods postulated by an objective list theory.

Bradley voices another complaint against objective list theories, thus:

> [P]luralists must tell us, for example, how to compare the effects on well-being of a certain amount of pleasure with the effect of a certain amount of knowledge . . . To the extent that the pluralist refuses to tackle these questions she abandons the philosophical project of understanding well-being; she admits defeat. A theory that tells us that A, B, and C are intrinsically good, but does not tell us why those things are on the list or how to weight them, does not give what we initially wanted out of a theory of well-being. We wanted enlightenment, but we are provided instead with a list and told not to look any deeper. This is not theorizing, but a refusal to theorize.[34]

This passage contains at least two separate objections. One is that discussed above (the "why are *those* things are on the list?" worry) but there is a distinct worry, one echoing the "unconnected heap of duties" criticism of "deontic pluralism" (commonsense morality).[35] This worry is about how much detail the objective list theorist has in the theory. If one were to propose that A, B, and C are the only constituents of well-being and then simply refuse to tackle the issue of how they are to be weighed against each other, then this is certainly a demerit in the theory (or the theorist?). Of course, an objective list theory should either tackle these questions or, alternatively, tackle the issue of why such questions cannot be answered.

However, whilst this shows that a very negative and dogmatic kind of objective list theory is unsatisfying for that reason, this type of objection applies to all theories of well-being. What it highlights is that there is much more work to do than simply specifying what is to go on the list. But equivalent worries apply to hedonism and desire-fulfillment theories.

Take hedonism first. Hedonists need to provide, for example, an account of how to weight: (a) the various elements of a pleasure experience, in calculating the prudential value of a pleasure; (b) the various elements of a pain experience, in calculating the prudential disvalue of a pain; and (c) how to trade-off prudential value and disvalue from pleasure and pain in determining someone's overall level of well-being. To put some meat on these bones, note that it is not obvious how to compare (a) a pain/pleasure which is extremely intense but short-lasting against (b) a pain/pleasure that is mild but long-lasting. Nor is it obvious how one arrives at an overall level of well-being from someone's level of pleasure and pain. Nor is it obvious that there is one homogeneous kind of, e.g., pain (compare, for instance, emotional heartache with the feeling of burning one's hand), and if so one must find a way of comparing different types of pain (or explaining why there is some common, comparable, pain experience that they all have in common).

Move now to desire-fulfillment theory. We might ask of such a theory how it calculates the prudential value of the satisfaction of a pleasure and how it weighs desire satisfactions against non-satisfactions. A very simple form of the theory has an answer, in terms of the intensity of the desire, such that desiring P to degree 10 and it being the case that P has prudential value of +10 (and desiring P to degree 10 and it being the case that not-P has prudential disvalue of −10). But any more sophisticated desire-fulfillment theory, such as one that takes the relevant desires to be those that meet some counterfactual condition or to be those of a relevant counterpart, will have work to do in specifying exactly how much prudential value or disvalue a desire fulfillment or non-fulfillment has.

Overall, then, Bradley is right that it is unsatisfying if an objective list theory says *nothing* about, e.g., relative weightings. But even if that applies to all extant objective list theories, this does not constitute an objection to objective list theories *as such*. It shows that objective list theorists have work to do, and they might have an especially large degree of it, but it is nonetheless work of the same *type* as that which hedonists and desire-fulfillment theorists have to do.

Alienation

A mistaken objection to objective list theories is that they are elitist or paternalistic, where this is the claim that such theories suggest that people should be compelled to have the constituents of the list. The objective list theory, like all theories of well-being, is not a theory of what, if anything, people ought to be compelled to have. One could in principle combine the objective list theory with the most stringent anti-paternalism one could imagine. Thus objective list theories, just as much as hedonism and desire-fulfillment theories, have no necessary connection to paternalism.

A better objection to the objective list theory is the worry that objective list theories might fail to be sufficiently *subject-sensitive* and thereby provide a conception of well-being that is potentially *alienating*.[36] What is the worry? An influential way of putting it is thus:

> It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any way to engage him.[37]

One could develop this worry in a number of ways.

One way is as the thought that a conception of well-being is problematic to the extent that it is insensitive to a person's affective states and volitions (tastes, preferences, desires, interests, etc.) such that a person could have a very high level of well-being, according to the theory, even if she was affectively unengaged. This alienation worry certainly applies to some objective

list theories. It certainly applies to *knowledgism*, as described above, as one could easily imagine someone who had a lot of knowledge but who just was not *interested in* knowledge, or who did not care about it. In this way *knowledgism* leaves open the possibility of someone having a very high level of well-being despite being completely affectively cold. Thus a conception of well-being that said that only knowledge had prudential value is problematic in giving rise to the possibility of such disconnect between what is good for a person and the person's affective states.

However, whilst some objective list theories clearly provide alienating conceptions of well-being, this does not clearly apply to *all* objective list theories. There is nothing to stop an objective list theorist from taking a *constitutive strategy* on this question and arguing that their theory avoids alienation because the objective list elements are (necessarily) constituted by the agent's affective states and volitions. For example, take an objective list theory with pleasure, happiness, friendship, and achievement on the list. Call this *four goods* for brevity. Each of the four goods is clearly (at least) partly constituted by affective, attitudinal, or volitional states of the person. Thus no one can have these goods without, *ipso facto*, being in these states. For example, a person who experiences pleasure is in the affective states that *constitute* pleasure, the person who achieves something has a volition towards the outcome she has attained, a person who is happy has the affective and/or attitudinal states that are constitutive of happiness, and a person who has friendship has the attitudes of concern and enjoyment that are constitutive of friendship. There is thus, according to *four goods*, no possibility of someone having a high level of well-being whilst being left affectively cold. Thus, an objective list theorist might argue, there is no more problem with alienation for this type of objective list theory than for hedonism or the desire-fulfillment theory.[38]

Someone might think that the reply in the previous paragraph does not fully address the alienation worry because someone could have these four goods (and necessarily therefore be in positive affective states) but lack any *second-order* desires to be in those states (or, have a second-order desire not to be in those states). According to *four goods* such desires for or against the four goods are, in and of themselves, irrelevant to whether these items contribute to well-being. These four goods are the things that contribute to prudential value, whether you desire them or not. Thus in and of themselves whether you desire them is irrelevant.[39] One might then object that the alienation intuition is thereby left unsatisfied because there is this possibility of an agent who does not care about the things which, according to *four goods*, hold prudential value for him. To support this one might argue that the alienation intuition cannot be fully satisfied by the *constitutive strategy* and that alienation can only be avoided some other way.

As this reply brings out, it is no easy matter to work out precisely what the anti-alienation intuition is as the issues involved are very subtle. As a result how plausible one will find the solution exemplified by *four goods*, or the objection to it in the previous paragraph, will depend a lot on one's way of thinking about the alienation worry.

There is a danger here that we might reach a dialectical impasse. The constitutive strategy is certainly one that an objective list theory can take to avoid the alienation worry (construed one way). However some will argue, as in the previous paragraph, that the constitutive strategy is insufficient on the grounds that it still leaves open the possibility of problematic alienation. If this objection rests on the thought that avoiding alienation requires, instead, an *object strategy*—that of making it a necessary condition of some G being good for a person X that X have a pro-attitude towards G—this begs the question against the objective list theory (given its acceptance of attitude-independence) and in favor of something like the desire-fulfillment theory. This is not to claim that the *object strategy* is *not* the truth about avoiding alienation. But there is a danger of reaching a stalemate, with objective list theories like *four goods* claiming that they accommodate the anti-alienation intuition and opponents arguing for a stronger version of the

anti-alienation intuition, one that could only be satisfied by an *object strategy*. At this point a lot depends on the relative merits of these two ways of avoiding alienation.

Conclusion

In this entry I first outlined the way in which the label "objective list theory" has been used, pointing out that, whilst paradigmatic objective list theories are pluralist, the literature is inconsistent on this point. It was clear that what *is* essential to objective list theories is a rejection of the idea that something is good for someone only if that person has some pro-attitude towards it.

I then considered some of the reasons that lead people to adopt objective list theories and some of the objections to the view. I argued that the challenges to objective list theories often highlight epistemic or explanation problems faced by all theories of well-being (though not perhaps to equal extents) or the need for further refinement of the views of the sort which can also be demanded of other theories of well-being.

Acknowledgment

For comments and discussion, many thanks to Steve Campbell, Connie Rosati, Debbie Roberts, Allan Hazlett.

Related topics

Monism and pluralism, perfectionism, hybrid theories, hedonism, desire-fulfillment theory.

Notes

1 I use "prudential value" and "well-being" interchangeably.
2 Of course there are differences between different hedonist and desire-fulfillment theories, so each can also be accurately thought of as a range of theories. But it is uncontroversial that one knows *much* more about someone's theory of well-being if one knows that person is a hedonist or a desire-fulfillment theorist than if one knows that the individuals is an objective list theorist.
3 This brings out another terminological difficulty, namely that the literature on prudential value tends to use "well-being" to refer to each of (i) a person's level of prudential value as a whole and (ii) more narrowly, the positive constituents thereof (where this is distinguished from "ill-being"). Note that this ambiguity is also present in talk of "prudential value."
4 Finnis (1980). Note that the scare quotes around "religion" are present in the original text (Parfit 1984: 499; Fletcher 2013; Murphy 2001). This is not necessarily Parfit's view but it is a theory he mentions.
5 Finnis (1980: 72) (italics in original).
6 This might not be the best way to read Parfit as he might be distinguishing extant theories, rather than all possible theories.
7 Woodard (2013), Dorsey (2011).
8 Rice (2013: 196), Lin (Chapter 27, this volume).
9 Crisp (2013).
10 See Heathwood (Chapter 12, this volume).
11 Heathwood (2010: 647).
12 Kagan (1992).
13 Markovitz (2009, handout 11).
14 One might try to write these off as deviant uses or errors, but this is implausible.
15 One might point to Parfit's use of the plural as evidence of him presupposing pluralism but that seems strained. Why deal with an essential tenet of this kind of view implicitly in this fashion?
16 Hazlett (2013).
17 Dorsey (2011), Fletcher (2013), Woodard (2013). See also Raibley (2014).

18 Complication: you might think that whether hedonism is an objective list theory depends on the nature of pleasure. If so, feel free to read my claim as "hedonism should then be categorized as one particular instance of an objective list theory, *given* the assumption of a certain kind of theory of pleasure."
19 The denial of such neutrality on the part of the objective list theorist is the best sense I can make of this intriguing passage from Parfit (1984: 499) "[T]here is one important difference between on the one hand Preference-Hedonism and the Success Theory, and on the other hand the Objective List Theory. The first two kinds of theory give an account of self interest that is purely *descriptive*—which does not appeal to facts about *value*. This account appeals only to what that a person does and would prefer, given full knowledge of the purely *non-evaluative facts* about the alternatives. In contrast, the Objective List Theory appeals directly to what it claims to be facts about *value*" (my italics).
20 "Humans" is possibly too specific. One could easily imagine objective list theories being couched as claims about the well-being of *people*.
21 This is admittedly a semi *hunch*, informed by the experience of surveying undergraduates taking courses that include well-being as a topic.
22 To be clear, these objections can be used by those who adopt views other than objective list theory so it's not that they *uniquely* favor objective list theories.
23 Nozick (1974: 42–45).
24 Overvold (1980).
25 I am here only talking about the basic form of the view, for simplicity.
26 Desire-fulfillment theory is also commonly thought to make self-sacrifice impossible. I doubt that this is correct, but it is widely claimed.
27 Note you do not desire to *meet* sentient life and you do not form the desire to *know* that there is sentient life or to be the one that *discovers* it, you simply desire that it be there. Even if unlikely, such a desire is surely possible, which is all that the objection requires.
28 See also Darwall (2002: 27).
29 Hurka (1993), Bradford (Chapter 10, this volume), Dorsey (2010).
30 Finnis (1980: 74). Note: I do not say that the argument is successful. For criticism, see Varelius (2013: 18–20).
31 Bradley (2009: 16) I focus on Bradley's discussion as it provides unusually clear and forthright versions of critical responses to objective list theories which one often hears in discussion but which are not often put into print. Let me note that Bradley's discussion is not part of a sustained discussion of objective list theories so I in no way suggest that he should have considered the possible replies that will be mentioned here. See also Sumner (1996).
32 Bradley (2009: 16).
33 One such strategy is given by Fletcher (2012).
34 Bradley (2009: 16).
35 On this issue see Joseph (1931: 67), McNaughton (1996).
36 For discussion of this worry, see Sumner (1996: 27), Hall and Tiberius (Chapter 14, this volume).
37 Railton (2003: 19). For more detailed discussion of this intuition, see Rosati (1995, 1996). For critical discussion, see Sarch (2011).
38 For elaboration, see Fletcher (2013).
39 It would be relevant if the person who experienced these four things were also filled with regret or anguish, for example, but in and of itself the individuals' desire to have (or not to have) pleasure, happiness, friendship, and achievement does not, itself, make a difference to the prudential value of the four goods.

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13
HYBRID THEORIES

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In many areas of philosophy we may be tempted to think that some opposing views each capture part of the truth. When this happens, we may try to make progress by combining features of these opposing views in new ways, to create hybrid theories.

Recently this has happened in the philosophy of well-being. Over the past 30 years or so, a number of prominent philosophers have suggested that hybrid theories are amongst the most promising theories of well-being. In most cases, they have suggested that well-being is in part a matter of the objective value of elements of the subject's life, but also in part a matter of her subjective evaluation of those elements. In this way, they have attempted to create a hybrid theory of well-being that combines features of more familiar subjective and objective theories. I will discuss a number of proposals of this kind below.

Proposals like this raise a number of important questions. One central question is whether hybrid theories of well-being form a genuinely distinct class. How, if at all, do they differ from pluralist theories of well-being? Another question is whether hybrid theories must always combine features of subjective and objective theories. Most of the prominent proposals have taken this form, but is there room for some other kind of hybrid? A third question concerns the prospects of hybrid theories. Their advocates hope that they will inherit all and only the admirable features of the parent theories, but of course offspring are not always so lucky. Might hybrid theories face special challenges of their own?

This chapter seeks to answer these questions, and to survey some notable recent proposals in this area. I will claim that hybrid theories are distinguished by a kind of holism; that they do not have to combine features of subjective and objective theories; and that they merit detailed consideration in future discussions of well-being.

Recent subjective–objective hybrid proposals

The most general motivation for a hybrid theory in any domain is that, for each of several alternative theories, one finds at least one of their features attractive. In light of these attractions one is tempted to try to combine those features in new ways. Let us briefly consider how this can happen in the most common kind of hybrid theory of well-being, namely the class of theories that combine features from both "subjective" and "objective" theories.