

# Defending a Hybrid of Objective List and Desire Theories of Well-Being

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## Abstract

This chapter extends previous work of mine on a view of human well-being that is a hybrid of objective list theories and desire theories. Though some of what I say traverses old ground, much of what I say is new—not in terms of ultimate conclusions, but rather in terms of routes toward these ultimate conclusions and certain implications of these ultimate conclusions (e.g., implications concerning the measurement of well-being). There are two different visions of what human beings are that I privilege and attempt to synthesize herein. One of these visions pushes us toward an objective list theory. This vision is a broadly Aristotelian one according to which humans have various capacities that are central to their functioning well as the kinds of things they are, that is, as human beings. Though this broadly Aristotelian vision captures something necessary for well-being, it is, as it were, only half of the story. The other half of the story derives from a vision of human beings as unique individuals with different sets of intrinsic desires, and this desire-focused vision of humans is itself informed by Jacques Lacan and his view that each human self is constituted by a particular and dynamic chains-of-signifiers-plus-desire-flow structure. I start by briefly discussing mental state theories. Then I discuss objective list theories at some length, and, while doing this, I occasionally comment on pro-attitude theories (e.g., desire theories). After that, I present the hybrid theory of well-being that I favor and defend it against some objections. Last, I conclude the chapter.

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In past work, I argued for a view of human well-being that is a hybrid of objective list theories and desire theories (Lauinger, 2012, pp. 3–120; Lauinger, 2013a).<sup>1</sup> I still accept this view, and, in what follows I will try to provide some support for it. Though some of what I am going to say will traverse old ground, much of what I am going to say will be new—not in terms of ultimate conclusions, but rather in terms of routes toward these ultimate conclusions and certain implications of these ultimate conclusions (e.g., implications concerning the measurement of well-being). There are two different visions of what humans are that I will privilege and attempt to synthesize herein. One is broadly Aristotelian and focuses on the similarities that obtain across humans in terms of their functioning well as the kinds of things they are: that is, as human beings. The other vision focuses on humans as unique selves, with different sets of intrinsic desires. In presenting this latter vision of humans, I will draw on Jacques Lacan’s view of human subjectivity. There are, of course, other visions of what humans are that might be privileged when one is constructing a theory of human well-being. For instance, there are theologically informed visions that might be considered (e.g., Chapters 10, 11, and 16, all in this volume). Though I intend for the account of human well-being that I provide in this chapter to be acceptable to theists and non-theists alike, I should perhaps explicitly note that, in my view, a thorough exploration of the metaphysics that best supports this account reveals that it is not only compatible with theism, but actually points us toward theism (for the details concerning why I believe this, see Lauinger, 2012, pp. 123–178).

Here is an outline of what follows. I start by briefly discussing mental state theories. Then I discuss objective list theories at some length, and, while doing this, I will occasionally comment on pro-attitude theories (e.g., desire theories).<sup>2</sup> After that, I present the hybrid theory of well-being that I favor and defend it against some objections. Last, I conclude the paper.

### **Mental State Theories**

Mental state theories come in different types, but all of them centrally claim that nothing can enter the content of any given human’s well-being except certain of his or her psychological states.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, the contrast here is with theories that allow for more than just one’s mental states to enter the content of one’s well-being. Such theories are sometimes called *state-of-the-world theories* because they allow states of the world beyond one’s mind (e.g., states

of bodily health such as that of having a well-functioning cardiovascular system) to be included within the content of one's well-being (Griffin, 1986, p. 7). Though I will not provide a detailed argument against mental state theories here, I do want to provide a brief sense of why I reject them.

In constructing a mental state theory, it is most common, and also most plausible, to privilege pleasure, understood as positive affect, or instead to privilege favorable beliefs about one's life or the conditions of one's life. Accordingly, a mental state theorist might say (a) that one's well-being consists in, and only in, one's experience of positive affect or, instead, (b) that one's well-being consists in, and only in, one's having favorable beliefs about one's life or the conditions of one's life.

With regard to mental state theories that privilege positive affect, I think that such theories are implausible because we often have experiences that enhance our well-being even though they involve no positive affect or even mildly negative affect. For instance, often when I am teaching or writing, it seems to me that I am intrinsically (i.e., noninstrumentally) gaining in well-being by accomplishing something while my affect is neutral or even mildly negative, if only because of the cognitive exertion involved. And I am not peculiar in this regard. Indeed, people often take themselves to be intrinsically gaining in well-being by accomplishing things through work, but where these accomplishments are not accompanied by positive affect. Similar remarks can be made about time spent with one's children. I sometimes help my 9-year-old daughter with math homework, and this activity is often mildly negative, affect-wise, for me, simply because (a) it requires some cognitive effort on my part and (b) it is mildly unpleasant to see my daughter experience frustration with the math problems (indeed, she sometimes cries!). Still, whether positive affect is present for me or not, I believe that I intrinsically gain in well-being almost every time I help my daughter with her math homework because the relationship between us is strengthened almost every time we do this activity together. And, again here, I am not peculiar. Parents often believe that they are intrinsically gaining in well-being while spending time with their children without there being any positive affect present for themselves.

Turning now to mental state theories that privilege favorable beliefs about one's life or the conditions of one's life, we might ask whether the favorable beliefs in question need to be true in order to be aspects of one's well-being. It seems unpromising to answer "no," for it seems unpromising to make beliefs that need not be true the centerpiece of a theory of well-being. Naturally, we

could add the amendment that the favorable beliefs in question must be true in order to be aspects of one's well-being. However, if we do that, I think that we are thereby abandoning the parameters of a mental state theory of well-being. After all, a belief that is true seems to be more than just a state in one's own mind. It seems, that is, to be a state in one's own mind that somehow corresponds to or represents how things are in reality, where "somehow corresponds to or represents how things are in reality" cannot convincingly be spelled out without appealing to something external to one's own mind.

Speaking generally, our minds are not closed in on themselves, as, indeed, our beliefs, desires, and intentions are all typically directed outward (i.e., toward some kind of interaction with the world beyond our minds). In view of this, it might well be a mistake to begin our welfare theorizing with the assumption that well-being is entirely internal to the mind.

### **Initial Comments on Objective List Theories**

Objective list theories are centered on the basic goods—that is, general goods such as friendship (i.e., close personal relationships), accomplishment, and knowledge. Objective list theories claim that something (anything) is an aspect of one's well-being if and only if, and because (a) it is a basic good or (b) it is a state of affairs that instantiates a basic good for oneself.<sup>4</sup> An example will make the instancing relation that is in play here clearer: If I am reading an academic article and learning from it, objective list theorists will say that I am gaining in well-being inasmuch as I am gaining instances of the basic good of knowledge for myself. Importantly, objective list theories are pro-attitude independent theories in that they entail (a) that each basic good is a fixed component of one's well-being regardless of whether one has any kind of pro-attitude toward it and (b) that each state of affairs that instantiates a basic good for oneself is an aspect of one's well-being regardless of whether one has any kind of pro-attitude toward it and, more generally, regardless of whether it connects at all to one's pro-attitudes. Also, as standardly understood, objective list theories are pro-attitude independent theories in that they entail (c) that, for any given thing that is included within the content of one's well-being (be it a basic good or an instance of a basic good), one's pro-attitude(s) toward this thing cannot directly affect the degree to which this thing is intrinsically prudentially good for one. There might be logical space available for objective list theorists to deny (c) from the previous sentence,

but, that said, it would be highly unusual for an objective list theorist to make this denial.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in what follows I will use “objective list theories” and “objective list theorists” in ways that assume that objective list theories do indeed entail the immediately preceding (c).

In virtue of being pro-attitude independent theories, objective list theories differ from pro-attitude theories of well-being. The core idea behind pro-attitude theories is to seize on some kind of pro-attitude (e.g., intrinsic desire, enjoyment, or favorable belief) and then to claim that something (anything) is an aspect of one’s well-being if and only if and because one has the designated kind of pro-attitude toward it. Pro-attitude theories are often complicated in certain ways. For instance, a desire theorist might claim that one’s well-being is composed not of those objects that one actually (intrinsically) desires to obtain, but rather of those objects that one would (intrinsically) desire to obtain if one were better informed with respect to nonevaluative information than one actually is. Complications aside, though, the core idea behind pro-attitude theories is straightforward: it is that something (anything) that is an aspect of one’s well-being is so because one has the designated kind of pro-attitude toward it.

Many, though not all, objective list theorists fill their theories out in Aristotelian-perfectionist terms, claiming that the basic goods are not only components of each human’s own well-being but are also completing or fulfilling of each human’s own human nature.<sup>6</sup> Usually this position is elaborated on by claiming (a) that each of us is a certain kind of thing, namely, a human being; (b) that, in virtue of this being so, each of us has a human nature that he or she can complete or fulfill; (c) that each of us completes or fulfills his or her own human nature by exercising, developing, or actualizing those capacities that he or she has that are constitutive of the well-functioning of the human being as such (e.g., the capacity to deepen or to maintain friendships, the capacity to accomplish worthwhile tasks, and the capacity to gain knowledge of oneself and the world in general); and (d) that, for each of us, the completing or fulfilling of his or her own human nature is the same thing, metaphysically, as his or her gaining in individual well-being. To be clear, the philosophers who accept this metaphysical identity claim are aware that there is a conceptual distinction between well-being (i.e., prudential value) and perfectionist value.<sup>7</sup> They are aware, that is, that (as a conceptual matter) prudential value consists in one’s living well or doing well as the *individual* one is, whereas perfectionist value consists in one’s living well or doing well as the *kind* of thing one is: namely, a human being. Still, they are

convinced that due reflection reveals that there is a metaphysical identity relationship in play here.

Though objective list theorists agree with each other that there is one true list of basic goods, they disagree with each other to some extent about which items are on this one true list. There seems to be a solid consensus among objective list theorists that knowledge, accomplishment, health, friendship, and aesthetic experience are basic goods.<sup>8</sup> However, there does not seem to be much agreement regarding other items, ones such as pleasure, happiness (where this is taken to differ from pleasure even if it involves pleasure), freedom or autonomy, meaningfulness, life, play, moral virtue, religion, and self-acceptance. It will help, for this chapter, if we have on hand a working list of basic goods. We need not hold that this list is set in stone. The point is simply to have a fairly convincing list on hand so that we can rely on it as a way of helping us (a) to understand objective list theories well and then later (b) to understand well the particular hybrid theory that I favor. Here, then, is a working list of basic goods: knowledge, accomplishment, health (i.e., both bodily and mental health), friendship, aesthetic experience, and pleasure.<sup>9</sup>

Aside from pleasure, this working list of basic goods does not contain any items that are purely psychological. Knowledge involves true belief, and, as I indicated earlier, a belief that is true seems to go beyond the limits of one's own mind. Accomplishment involves the actual doing of something worthwhile, where this standardly involves moving one's physical body in certain ways (e.g., as when a basketball player makes a difficult shot). Health involves the well-functioning of the physical body, and so it is not a purely psychological item. Much of friendship takes one beyond one's own mind, for much of friendship involves doing things with one's friend, where this itself involves moving one's physical body (e.g., as when one goes on a walk with one's friend). Aesthetic experience is the experience of something beautiful, where what is beautiful is typically something that is (entirely or at least partly) external to one's own mind, as is the case when one witnesses the beauty of a mountain or hears the beauty of a song on the radio, and thus aesthetic experience typically takes one beyond one's own mind.

Let me now discuss measurement on objective list theories. Start here with the basic good of friendship and a particular human. We can have this human provide self-rating scores by answering questions such as "How strong, on a scale of 1–7 (where 7 stands for "very strong" and 1 stands for "very weak") is your relationship with (a) your parents, (b) your siblings, (c) your children, (d) your significant other or spouse, (e) your work colleagues, and (f) other

friends of yours?" I do not know exactly how best to word the questions in play here, but presumably the more narrowly focused they are, the more accurate will be the self-ratings. One obvious problem with these kinds of questions is that recent events can significantly skew self-rating scores. For instance, if the human at issue has just had a bad fight with his or her significant other, this could lead him or her to give a significantly lower rating score than is accurate for the strength of his or her relationship with his or her significant other. I am not sure how best to mitigate this problem, but perhaps it is best (a) to have the human at issue do the self-ratings many times over the course of a year and then (b) to seize on his or her median self-rating scores.

To provide a fuller picture and also to some extent to correct for inaccuracies in self-ratings, we could interview friends and family members to get their evaluations of how well the human in question is doing in his or her personal relationships. We might also have an expert (e.g., a psychologist) interview the human in question, and this expert could provide an assessment of how well this human is doing in his or her personal relationships.<sup>10</sup> Also, if we are worried that the self-ratings might be infected with a high degree of inaccuracy because the questions being asked are too general, then perhaps we could use experience sampling, the day reconstruction method, or brain scanning in order to supplement and, to some extent, correct the measurements arrived at through the self-ratings.<sup>11</sup> With regard to experience sampling, we could text the human at issue at random moments and have him or her provide a self-rating in relation to friendship at these moments (e.g., if this human is at work when we text him or her, he or she could say how things are going with his or her work colleagues, friendship-wise, at that moment). With regard to the day reconstruction method, we could have the human at issue recall the previous day in an episode-by-episode way and then have him or her provide self-ratings for each episode in relation to friendship. With regard to brain scanning, if there are specific areas of the brain that are typically activated when people are engaging in friendship, then perhaps there is a way to use brain scanning to help us in measuring how well the human in question is doing in relation to friendship. As a final comment here, if the culture that the human in question belongs to is known to have a bias of some sort in relation to friendship, then perhaps we could adjust (i.e., discount or inflate) this human's self-rating scores to whatever extent would be needed to correct for the cultural bias in question.

In practice, we would probably never be able to use all of these just mentioned measurement methods and considerations to help us in measuring

the well-being of the human in question in relation to the basic good of friendship. In principle, though, we could do this. However, even if we were to do this, there would still be more measurement work to do for we would still need to answer a question about the weightings that are in play here. Indeed, there are various relationships in play here (e.g., relationships with parents, siblings, and children), and, to come up with a fairly accurate measurement of this human's level of well-being in relation to friendship, we would need to know how much each one of these relationships matters for this human's level of well-being in relation to friendship. But suppose, if only for the sake of argument, that we can resolve this worry and in turn come up with a fairly accurate measurement of this human's level of well-being in relation to friendship. Furthermore, suppose (if only for the sake of argument) that, by using the same kinds of measurement methods and considerations discussed in the previous two paragraphs, we can attain a fairly accurate measurement of any given human's well-being in relation to any given basic good. Even then there would still be the question of how well off any given human is *overall* (and so not just in relation to this or that basic good). To answer this question of how well off any given human is *overall*, we would need to know how the basic goods are objectively ordered—that is, we would need to know if the basic goods are arranged in an objective hierarchy and, if so, which basic good is primary, which basic good is secondary, and so on. Most (though not all) present-day objective list theorists maintain that there is no objective ordering or hierarchy among the basic goods.<sup>12</sup> But, if this is correct, how should we proceed? Perhaps the best option is to count each basic good as being of equal weight (i.e., when we are trying to come up with an *overall* measurement of any given human's well-being). A second option is to claim that there is no truth about any given human's *overall* level of well-being (i.e., there are only truths about each human's level of well-being in relation to each basic good). And there might be other options besides these two.

### Where Objective List Theories Err

As a start here, it is worth emphasizing that the domain of prudence or well-being seems to be much more personal or individual-focused than other normative or evaluative domains (e.g., the domain of morality and the domain of perfectionist value).<sup>13</sup> How, then, might we capture the especially



personal or individual-focused nature of well-being? The most common way to do this is to claim that, in order for something (anything) to count as an aspect of one's well-being, it must be nonvacuously connected to (i.e., dependent on) one's own pro-attitudes.<sup>14</sup> I think that this is the correct thing to do. Indeed, though I disagree with pro-attitude theorists inasmuch as they refuse to place an objective value constraint on well-being, I agree with pro-attitude theorists on the point that well-being is a pro-attitude dependent kind of value. To be clear, in holding that well-being is pro-attitude dependent, I do not have concerns about autonomy or sovereignty over one's own life in mind; rather, I am concerned with capturing the personal psychological fulfillment that seems to be essential to well-being.

To provide some support for (a) the claim that well-being is a pro-attitude dependent kind of value and, in line with this, (b) the claim that objective list theories are inadequate, I will make three distinct but related sets of points. Each focuses on the pro-attitude of intrinsic desire, which is the pro-attitude that I take well-being necessarily to depend on. With regard to these three sets of points: the first concerns prudential deliberation, the second concerns certain cases of tie-breaking, and the third concerns the way in which certain desires are bound up with people's life histories. After I make these three sets of points, I will very briefly consider what objective list theorists might say in response.

### Prudential Deliberation

Suppose that someone named Dottie is deciding between buying House A and House B. And suppose that Dottie says the following to her friend: "The price for House A is much lower than the price for House B, and I want the lower priced home, all else equal, since I want to be as free as possible of financial worries. Also, House A is prettier and in a prettier neighborhood, and I do want the aesthetics of my home and neighborhood to be as good as possible. However, there are some reasons to favor House B. House B is closer to work, and I want the shortest possible commute, since that would reduce stress and increase enjoyment in my life. In addition, House B is closer to my friends and family members, and I do want to live as close as possible to them. So, right now, I am torn." I think that, when we engage in prudential deliberation, we do what Dottie is doing here. On the one hand, we consider desire-independent goods such as pleasure, aesthetic experience, and

friendship, and we focus on the ways in which and the extents to which these desire-independent goods might be instantiated in our lives; and, on the other hand, we consider our own desires and how strongly we want the different objects that are open to us.

Now imagine that Dottie's friend is a convinced objective list theorist, and imagine that, after hearing Dottie discuss House A and House B, Dottie's friend replies: "Dottie, in deciding between buying House A and buying House B, it is smart to consider factors such as cost, aesthetics, proximity to work, and proximity to friends and family members. But you also keep mentioning your own desires. That is a serious mistake. Since your own desires play no direct role in constituting your well-being, it is important simply to ignore them when you are making decisions about your well-being. This holds true regardless of whether the context is trivial (e.g., as when you are deciding between ice cream flavors or kinds of candy) or weighty (e.g., as when you are deciding between career paths or romantic partners)." This advice seems to me both strange and bad: strange because people do not ignore their own desires when engaging in prudential deliberation, and bad because it seems unwise for people to ignore their own desires when engaging in prudential deliberation.<sup>15</sup>

### Tie-Breaking, Desire Strengths, and Well-Being

It is reasonable to think that people sometimes choose between two options, each of which promises them the same amount of well-being as measured from the objective list theory point of view. For example, a high school student might be choosing between playing football or soccer in the fall, and these two options might be equal in terms of how much they would add to his well-being; that is, if we are considering the matter from the objective list theory point of view—which entails our taking into account the degree to which each of these two options would instantiate basic goods such as pleasure, accomplishment, health, and friendship in this high school student's life. But now suppose that this high school student has a significantly stronger intrinsic desire to play soccer than he does to play football, and, in line with this, suppose that he has significantly stronger intrinsic desires for the instances of basic goods that would come to him through playing soccer than he does for the instances of basic goods that would come to him through playing football. In this case, it seems that we should say that

the soccer option provides this high school student with more well-being, overall, than the football option does. Yet we cannot say this if we are objective list theorists about well-being. Rather, we can say this only if we admit that desire strengths can directly affect the degree to which states of affairs intrinsically prudentially benefit people.

### Desires, Life Histories, and Well-Being

The point that desire strengths can directly affect the degree to which states of affairs intrinsically prudentially benefit people seems to be relevant not only in tie-breaking cases such as the one just discussed, but also in cases involving certain desires that are bound up with people's life histories. In supporting my position on this matter, it will help if I begin by making some background comments about Lacan's view of human subjectivity.

Lacan accepts various claims about human subjectivity. Here are some of them.<sup>16</sup> (1) The real subject (i.e., the real agent) is unconscious and is constituted by a dynamic structure that involves chains of signifiers (i.e., words) and intrinsic desire (i.e., noninstrumental motivational force). (2) Some of these chains of signifiers form the core of the subject in that (a) they somehow govern all of the less central chains of signifiers and (b) they are strongly charged with, or animated by, desire. (3) For each human, his or her childhood—and, more generally, his or her life history—plays a crucial role in determining which chains of signifiers are at the core of his or her subjectivity. (4) From the standpoint of conscious, rational thought, it is extremely difficult to understand why any given human's subjectivity has the particular chains-of-signifiers-plus-desire-flow structure that it has; this is so because the rules that unconscious thought follows (e.g., metonymy) are very different from the rules that are characteristic of conscious, rational thought.<sup>17</sup> (5) Though the conscious ego takes itself to be the real subject, it is in fact a phony gloss that covers the real, unconscious subject. (6) The real, unconscious subject is by no means entirely cut off from consciousness, as, indeed, it often juts into consciousness, making itself known through slips of the tongue, through denegation, through the conversation topics that people are receptive to or that they select as being worthy of discussion, and so on.<sup>18</sup> (7) By talking with an analyst or a lay person who is a good listener, and by not censoring one's thoughts as one talks, one can uncover one's subjectivity—that is, one can bring to consciousness some of the particular

chains-of-signifiers-plus-desire-flow structure that constitutes one's subjectivity. (8) Insofar as one's subjectivity is brought to consciousness, one gains in self-knowledge, at which point true healing or growth can begin to occur (e.g., if one has been suffering from a psychological problem, the problem might be eliminated or have its force mitigated).

Though I believe that Lacan's view of human subjectivity places far too much emphasis on the unconscious and not nearly enough emphasis on consciousness, I am nonetheless convinced that there is something right and important about Lacan's view of human subjectivity. Here consider two sets of comments. (1) The way that people conceive of themselves and talk about themselves suggests that there is something right and important about Lacan's view of human subjectivity. A brief anecdote will help to illustrate this point. My wife's parents recently sold their house, and my wife was sad about this. This was the house that she grew up in, and the thought of no more Christmases there, no more summer visits there, no more waking up in her old bedroom, and so on was hard for her to accept. All of this sounds ordinary, but I was struck when my wife said that she felt as though an important part of herself had suddenly been ripped out. Given Lacan's view of the subject, this way of putting the matter is apt. It stands to reason that, for my wife, there are certain chains of signifiers that essentially involve *the being there* of the house that she grew up in and that have long been part of the core of her subjectivity. For the house to be sold is for her suddenly to lose these chains of signifiers and thus suddenly to lose an important part of the chains-of-signifiers-plus-desire-flow structure that constitutes her subjectivity (i.e., for the house to be sold is, in that sense, for her to have an important part of herself suddenly ripped out). (2) Consider the word "Manhattan." For one person, this word might be unconsciously bound up with "so much to do," "electrifying," "the only place I want to live," "full of interesting people," and so on. But, for another person, this word might be unconsciously bound up with "crowded," "smells like urine," "overwhelming," "exorbitantly expensive," "full of mean people who say whatever the hell they want to say," and so on. Now consider the word "golf." For one person, this word might be unconsciously bound up with "happy summer days with my dad," "I wish my dad were still alive, so that I could tell him how much I love him," "miss my dad," and so on. But, for another person, "golf" might be unconsciously bound up with "rich snobs," "men wearing pink polo shirts and talking about their investments," "rich people do not know what hard work is," and so on. The general point here is (a) that words and chains of words can connect to other

words and chains of words in one's unconscious in ways that are extremely difficult to understand from the standpoint of conscious, rational thought and (b) that one's beliefs and desire flow can become bound up with these unconscious words and chains of words in such a way as to have a significant influence on how one behaves and, more generally, lives. For example, because of unconscious connections involving words and chains of words, one person can be strongly inclined to stay away from Manhattan, while another person can be strongly inclined to make sure that he or she lives in Manhattan.

Now let us return to the claim that desire strengths can directly affect the degree to which states of affairs intrinsically prudentially benefit people. Objective list theories reject this claim. But if we consider certain desires that are bound up with people's life histories, I think that we can see that the objective list theory position is in error. Consider the person who has positive unconscious associations with the word "Manhattan." If this person lives in Manhattan and gains in well-being from doing so, then objective list theorists can point to the pleasure, aesthetic experience, and so on that this person derives from living in Manhattan. But I doubt that this suffices as a full explanation of the amount of well-being gained here. To provide a full explanation here, it seems to me that we need to reference this person's life history and the various intrinsic desires related to Manhattan that have over time become embedded in this person's subjectivity; that is, in this person's dynamic chains-of-signifiers-plus-desire-flow structure. Similar remarks can be made about the example involving the person who unconsciously associates golf with his dad in positive ways. In accounting for the amount of well-being that this person derives from playing golf, objective list theorists can point to the pleasure, health, and so on that this person derives from playing golf. But, as an explanation, this seems to fall short, for it leaves out this person's life history and the various intrinsic desires related to playing golf that have over time become embedded in this person's subjectivity; that is, in this person's dynamic chains-of-signifiers-plus-desire-flow structure.

Two clarifications are in order here. First, with regard to both the Manhattan case and the golf case, I am not saying that objective list theorists are wrong about *which* states of affairs enter the content of well-being. Indeed, I think that, in both of these cases, objective list theorists are correct about which states of affairs enter the content of well-being. What I am saying is that objective list theorists are wrong about *how much* well-being is contained in the states of affairs that enter the content of well-being in these

cases. In the Manhattan case, the states that enter the content of the person's well-being are states that instantiate pleasure, aesthetic experience, and so on for this person; however, the degree to which these states intrinsically prudentially benefit this person seems to depend partly on this person's intrinsic desires for these states, where these intrinsic desires are themselves bound up with this person's life history and with the fact that the word "Manhattan" is strongly charged with intrinsic desire for this person. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds for the golf case. Second, objective list theorists can appeal to people's life histories when they are explaining people's well-being. However, in the process of doing this, objective list theorists must bracket (i.e., abstract from) people's desires in such a way as to retain their claim that well-being is a pro-attitude independent kind of value. In bracketing people's desires in this way, objective list theorists are, I think, bracketing something that is essential to people's well-being.

### Very Briefly Considering What Objective List Theorists Might Say in Response

In responding to the preceding three sets of points that I have made, objective list theorists might claim that desire fulfillment is on the list of basic goods. Making this claim would go some way toward answering the concerns that I have raised, as, indeed, making this claim would constitute an acknowledgment on the part of objective list theorists that desires should not be ignored in a theory of human well-being. I am not aware of any objective list theorists who *do* claim that desire fulfillment is on the list of basic goods. However, Mark Murphy is an objective list theorist who comes close to doing this.<sup>19</sup> And, in any case, there is no bar, in principle, to an objective list theorist's doing this. If an objective list theorist were to do this, he or she would thereby be claiming that desire fulfillment is an aspect of one's well-being regardless of whether one wants it and, more generally, regardless of whether it connects at all to one's pro-attitudes.<sup>20</sup> This claim might be paradoxical, but, even so, it is not inconsistent. There are, however, two problems with this claim that are worth noting. One: it is difficult to see objective list theorists accepting that desire fulfillment is prudentially beneficial for a person in cases where the desires being fulfilled are defective (e.g., because they are seriously immoral or exceptionally unhealthy). Much of the appeal of objective list theories lies in the fact that they can easily avoid the problem of defective desires that

plagues desire theories of well-being. However, if objective list theorists were to claim that desire fulfillment is on the list of basic goods, then the problem of defective desires would become a problem for objective list theories, too.<sup>21</sup> Two: even if objective list theorists were to claim that desire-fulfillment is on the list of basic goods, a lack of psychological fulfillment would still be built into their theory inasmuch as their theory would still entail that all of the basic goods (e.g., health, accomplishment, knowledge, and friendship) are aspects of one's well-being regardless of whether one wants them and, more generally, regardless of whether they connect at all to one's pro-attitudes.

Admittedly, there are other responses that objective list theorists might have to the preceding three sets of points that I have made.<sup>22</sup> For instance, some objective list theorists would note (a) that pleasure is one of the basic goods and (b) that there are other basic goods that necessarily carry with them some degree of psychological fulfillment inasmuch as they necessarily involve pro-attitudes (e.g., the basic good of friendship necessarily involves the desire to spend time with one's friend and care for one's friend). This response would help, for it would go some way toward acknowledging that psychological fulfillment matters for well-being. Still, this response would (in my view) fall short in that it would not ensure that every aspect of one's well-being brings with it some degree of psychological fulfillment. However, Guy Fletcher has advanced an objective list theory that is unique in that it entails that *all* of the basic goods have pro-attitudes as necessary components (2013, pp. 214–216). Thus, on Fletcher's objective list theory, every aspect of one's well-being *would* bring with it some degree of psychological fulfillment. There are, however, two criticisms that I have of Fletcher's objective list theory.<sup>23</sup> One: Fletcher's list of basic goods is as follows: achievement, friendship, happiness, pleasure, self-respect, and virtue (2013, p. 214). This list excludes knowledge and health. But it seems that both knowledge and health should be on any objective list theorist's list of basic goods. Yet neither of these items contains a pro-attitude as a necessary component. Two: Fletcher's objective list theory does not seem to capture the connection between what one intrinsically wants and what is intrinsically prudentially beneficial for one in quite a strong enough way. Here consider the individual-deliberative perspective in relation to well-being. When engaging in prudential deliberation, one *might* consider the question of whether an option that is open to one contains within itself a pro-attitude that one has. But still, the questions "Do I *want* this option that is open to me?" and "*How much* do I want this option that is open to me?" seem to be far more central to prudential deliberation

than the question “Does this option that is open to me have a pro-attitude of mine inside it?”

### **A Hybrid of Objective List and Desire Theories of Well-Being: The Desire-Perfectionism Theory**

Most extant hybrid theories of well-being are subjective-objective hybrids in that they incorporate both a pro-attitude constraint and an objective value constraint—that is, they entail that each human’s well-being is directly constituted by some kind of pro-attitude and some kind of objective value.<sup>24</sup> The primary aim of incorporating a pro-attitude constraint is to capture (a) the especially personal or individual-focused nature of well-being and, in line with this, (b) the psychological fulfillment that seems to be essential to well-being. And the primary aim of incorporating an objective value constraint is to avoid the problem of defective pro-attitudes that seems to plague all pro-attitude theories. The problem of defective pro-attitudes can be put as follows: it seems that humans sometimes have the relevant kind of pro-attitude (e.g., intrinsic desire, enjoyment, or favorable belief) toward states of affairs that do not seem to be good in any way, including the prudential way. Though pro-attitude theorists have tried hard over the years to come up with ways of avoiding the problem of defective pro-attitudes (e.g., by moving to second-order pro-attitude theories or to idealized pro-attitude theories), I do not think that they have been successful (for a defense of this point that focuses on desire theories in particular, see Lauinger, 2012, pp. 23–57).

I favor a particular subjective-objective hybrid theory of well-being that I refer to as *the desire-perfectionism theory*.<sup>25</sup> This label is appropriate because this theory relies on intrinsic desire for its pro-attitude constraint and on perfectionist value for its objective value constraint.

To begin to understand the desire-perfectionism theory, we can consider Aristotelian-perfectionist objective list theories of well-being. Such theories take the basic goods (e.g., knowledge, friendship, health, and accomplishment), at the start, to be components not only of each human’s perfection as a human being, but also of each human’s well-being. By contrast, the desire-perfectionism theory does *not* take the basic goods, at the start, to be components of each human’s well-being. Indeed, the desire-perfectionism theory takes the basic goods, at the start, *only* to be components of each



human's perfection as a human being. The qualification "at the start" matters because the desire-perfectionism theory entails that, once some (any) human being intrinsically desires some (any) basic good, then, at that moment, this basic good becomes a component of this human's well-being.

In line with the foregoing remarks, we can understand the desire-perfectionism theory as centrally claiming the following:

Something (anything) is intrinsically prudentially beneficial for some (any) human if and only if, and because, (a) this thing is either a basic good or a state of affairs that instantiates a basic good for this human, where the basic goods are items such as knowledge, friendship, health, and accomplishment and where the basic goods are being conceived of as perfectionist goods and not as components of well-being, and (b) this human intrinsically desires this thing (or, if this human does not intrinsically desire this thing, then it is at least true that this thing is, for this person, an instance of a basic good that this human intrinsically desires).

With regard to the parenthetical comment contained in condition (b), the desire condition, my point is this: for any given state of affairs that instantiates a basic good for someone, it need not be true that he or she intrinsically desires this state of affairs in order for this state of affairs to count as an aspect of his or her welfare because it is enough if he or she simply intrinsically desires the basic good that this state of affairs instantiates for him or her. Here consider an undergraduate student named Bob. Suppose that Bob is sitting in his ethics class and that he has no desire to know anything about Sidgwick's ethical views—say, because he has never even heard of Sidgwick.<sup>26</sup> But suppose also that Bob does have an intrinsic desire for knowledge. If the teacher begins lecturing on Sidgwick's ethics, and if Bob in turn gains knowledge of Sidgwick's ethical views, then Bob's intrinsic desire for knowledge is thereby (*pro tanto*) satisfied. Even though Bob here has no antecedent desire for the state *his gaining knowledge of Sidgwick's ethical views*, the obtaining of this state does (*pro tanto*) satisfy an intrinsic desire that Bob antecedently has: namely, the intrinsic desire for knowledge.<sup>27</sup> And that is enough to fulfill the desire condition of the desire-perfectionism theory. In sum, the idea here is that, in order for any given state of affairs to count as an aspect of one's well-being, its obtaining must (at least *pro tanto*) fulfill an intrinsic desire that one has. This is, I believe, enough to secure the psychological fulfillment that is essential to well-being.

There are various objections that might be leveled against the desire-perfectionism theory. Though I will not address all of these objections, I will address some of them.

### Objection 1

For its pro-attitude constraint, the desire-perfectionism theory appeals to the pro-attitude of intrinsic desire. But one might object to this. One might think, in particular, that it is better to appeal to enjoyment. Indeed, if we consider currently circulating subjective-objective hybrid theories of well-being, we will see that most of these theories do appeal to enjoyment for their pro-attitude constraint (e.g., Adams, 1999, pp. 93–101; Kagan, 2009). My primary reason for thinking that enjoyment is the wrong pro-attitude to invoke should be clear from the first section of this chapter: people often have experiences that enhance their well-being even though they involve no positive affect and thus no enjoyment (e.g., various working and parenting experiences fit this description). Admittedly, one might use the word “enjoyment” in an extended sense, whereby enjoyment need not involve positive affect. But why would one bother with this move? This is not how we use “enjoyment” in ordinary language. Granted, if we were unable to invoke desires, perhaps invoking enjoyment and then using “enjoyment” in an extended sense would be called for. But, of course, we can invoke desires.

### Objection 2

For its objective value constraint, the desire-perfectionism theory appeals to perfectionist value. But anyone who is skeptical of perfectionist value will object to this appeal. The objection in question here could be specified in different ways. For instance, one might doubt that there is such a thing as human nature, and thus one might doubt that any given human can have a human nature that can be completed or fulfilled. Alternatively, one might accept that there is such a thing as human nature, but one might doubt that completing or fulfilling human nature could constitute a genuine form of value. This doubt could be filled out (a) by pointing to certain nasty human capacities such as selfishness and greed that seem to be central to human nature and then (b) by asking the question “Why should the exercise, development, or actualization

of these central but nasty capacities be viewed as a genuine form of value?" Here is my response. If we adopt a nonevaluative conception of human nature, then, yes, nasty human capacities such as selfishness and greed seemingly must be deemed central to human nature. However, in appealing to perfectionist value, we can and should adopt a conception of human nature that is irreducibly evaluative. The idea here, then, is this. Ask the question "What capacities are central to human nature such that the exercise, development, or actualization of them constitutes the well-functioning of the human being as such?" Then answer by saying, "The capacities that should be singled out here are the capacity to deepen or to maintain friendships, the capacity to accomplish worthwhile tasks, the capacity to gain knowledge of oneself and the world in general, and so on." Thus we are led to the view that the basic goods (e.g., friendship, accomplishment, and knowledge) are perfectionist goods; that is, goods that are constitutive of the well-functioning of the human being as such. Of course, in my view, if one functions well as a human being, then that is not enough, on its own, for one's well-being to be advanced. Indeed, for one's well-being to be advanced, one's functioning well as a human being must positively grip one's own individual psychology, that is, by (at least *pro tanto*) satisfying an intrinsic desire that one has. One final point here: if one finds my appeal to perfectionist value too problematic to accept, one might still accept a welfare theory that is a hybrid of objective list theories and desire theories and that is very similar to the desire-perfectionism theory; the idea here is that, instead of conceiving of the basic goods as perfectionist goods, one might conceive of them as goods that are objective in a generic or unspecified manner.

### Objection 3

In my view, the most important objection to the desire-perfectionism theory is the missing desires objection. This objection comes from objective list theorists, and it can be put as follows: "The desire-perfectionism theory implies that, if someone lacks the desire for friendship, or health, or accomplishment, etc., then this basic good is not a component of his or her well-being. But that is highly implausible. For, even if someone lacks the desire for friendship, or health, or accomplishment, etc., the fact remains that he or she lives a richer or fuller life—that is, a life higher in well-being—inasmuch as he or she engages in friendship, or attains health, or accomplishes something, etc."

Because I have dealt with this objection at length in previous work (Lauinger, 2012, pp. 84–120; Lauinger, 2013a), I will merely sketch the line of response to it that I favor. The first point to note is that, barring unusual cases such as those involving psychological disorders, people *just do* intrinsically desire the basic goods: friendship, health, accomplishment, and so on. Indeed, it seems that intrinsic desires for the basic goods are simply *built into* the vast majority of people. So, barring unusual cases, the missing desires objection does not arise or apply. With regard to unusual cases, some of these can be left aside because they are fanciful. Others, however, are nonfanciful (i.e., realistic) and therefore must be considered. What, for instance, can be said about cases involving psychological disorders? Do severely depressed humans really have intrinsic desires for accomplishment? And do those with eating disorders really have intrinsic desires for health? I think that, for some cases involving psychological disorders, a careful examination will reveal that, against the initial appearances, the humans in question really do intrinsically desire the basic good in question, in which case the missing desires objection does not arise or apply. For example, I think that, if we thoroughly examine cases of severe depression, then we will conclude that severely depressed people actually do want accomplishment (on this point, see Lauinger, 2012, pp. 94–98). There are, however, other cases involving psychological disorders where I admit that the humans in question lack desires for the basic good in question. For cases of this kind, I must deny that the basic good in question adds to the well-being of the humans in question. Though I am not completely comfortable making this denial, I believe that, in all cases where the humans in question lack desires for the basic good in question, there are actually good reasons to deny that the basic good in question adds to the well-being of the humans in question (e.g., see Lauinger, 2012, pp. 101–105, where I discuss extremely autistic individuals who seem to lack desires for the basic good of friendship).

#### Objection 4

Earlier I noted that the desire condition of the desire-perfectionism theory entails that, for any given state of affairs that instantiates a basic good for someone, it need not be true that he or she intrinsically desires this state in order for this state to count as an aspect of his or her welfare because it is enough if he or she simply intrinsically desires the basic good that this state instantiates for him or her. Pro-attitude theorists (e.g., desire theorists) and

others might object that this kind of psychological fulfillment or connection to a person's pro-attitudes is not substantial enough. But think of the matter this way. It seems too strong to claim that, in order for any given state of affairs to count as an aspect of one's well-being, one must have a pro-attitude toward this state of affairs. There are, after all, plenty of things that intrinsically prudentially benefit us even though we have no pro-attitude toward them (say, because we do not even know about them). So it seems that we need to move to a different, less direct kind of connection between pro-attitudes and the states of affairs that are aspects of well-being. It is this line of thought that has led me to formulate the desire condition of the desire-perfectionism theory in the way that I have. One further point here: I think that, if a state of affairs that is an aspect of one's well-being is actually obtaining and one is consciously aware of its actually obtaining, then one inevitably will form (or else will already have) an intrinsic desire for it. Here we can return to the example involving Bob, who intrinsically desires knowledge but who does not have any antecedent intrinsic desire to know anything about Sidgwick's ethical views (say, because he has never even heard of Sidgwick). If the state of affairs *Bob's gaining knowledge of Sidgwick's ethical views* is actually obtaining, and Bob is consciously aware of its actually obtaining, then I think that it is inevitable that Bob will form an intrinsic desire for this state, where this intrinsic desire is something that flows out of Bob's intrinsic desire for the basic good of knowledge. Granted, it is logically possible for a human to have an intrinsic desire for a basic good and yet to lack an intrinsic desire for a state of affairs (a) that falls under this basic good, (b) that is actually obtaining, and (c) that this human is consciously aware of. Still, I believe that, in all nonfanciful cases, there inevitably will be an overflow of intrinsic desire (i.e., of noninstrumental motivational force) for the basic good in question to the state that falls under this basic good, provided that this state is actually obtaining and that the person in question is consciously aware of this state's actually obtaining. This seems to me to be a matter of psychological necessity for humans in our world (i.e., the actual world) and in metaphysically possible worlds that are close to ours (i.e., ones with the same laws of nature and substantially similar histories).

### Objection 5

One might object that, if that we adopt the desire-perfectionism theory, then the task of measuring well-being will be too difficult. So let me here

say something about how measurement might proceed on the desire-perfectionism theory. In measuring the amount of well-being contained in any object that is an aspect of one's well-being, we need to consider both (a) the amount of perfectionist value for oneself that this object contains and (b) the strength of one's intrinsic desire for this object (or, if one has no intrinsic desire for this object, we must consider the strength of one's intrinsic desire for the basic good that this object falls under). Or, more simply put, in measuring well-being, we must consider both the objective value factor and the desire factor. Let me take each of these factors in turn.

Regarding the objective value factor, we can do what objective list theorists might do when measuring well-being, except that we can stress that we are here measuring perfectionist value, not well-being. Thus we can use the same measurement procedures that I outlined when discussing measurement on objective list theories at the end of the section "Initial Comments on Objective List Theories," though, again, we would here be measuring perfectionist value, not well-being. The ultimate aim would be to arrive at a measurement for each human that at least somewhat accurately tells us how much perfectionist value he or she is deriving (a) in relation to each basic good and what falls under it for him or her and (b) in overall terms. As I indicated at the end of that section, there are difficulties that attach to measurement within objectivist parameters. Perhaps most notably, there is a question to ask about the weightings for the basic goods. Should we be taking all of the basic goods to be of equal worth (i.e., when measuring how much objective [i.e., perfectionist] value they contain for each human)? The desire-perfectionism theory could be worked out in different ways here, but my own preference here is to assume an equal weighting for each basic good because all of the basic goods (i.e., knowledge, accomplishment, friendship, health, aesthetic experience, and pleasure) seem to me to make equal contributions to the well-functioning of the human being as such.

Turning now to the desire factor, let me note four sets of points. (1) As I indicated earlier, desires matter in tie-breaking cases: if two objects that are aspects of one's well-being have an equal amount of perfectionist value for oneself, and if one has a stronger intrinsic desire for one of these objects, then the more strongly intrinsically desired object contains more welfare value for oneself than the less strongly intrinsically desired object. This tie-breaking point matters for the ordering of the basic goods in one's life. Since I think

that all of the basic goods have an equal weighting in terms of the amount of perfectionist value that they contain for oneself, it follows that they will be prudentially ordered for oneself in accordance with the strengths of one's desires for each of them. Thus, if one more strongly intrinsically desires friendship than any other basic good, friendship will have more intrinsic prudential value for oneself than any other basic good. (2) I believe that there are various actual cases of the following sort: out of two states of affairs that are aspects of one's well-being, the first state contains (at least slightly) more perfectionist value for oneself than the second state, and yet the second state contains more welfare value for oneself than the first state, where this is so because one has a much stronger intrinsic desire for the second state than for the first state. (3) I am not sure, as of now, what to say about measurement in relation to the desire factor for cases where (a) one lacks an intrinsic desire for a state of affairs that is an aspect of one's well-being while (b) one has an intrinsic desire for the basic good that this state of affairs falls under for oneself. Obviously, in such cases, we must consider the strength of one's intrinsic desire for the basic good that this state of affairs falls under. But that is a very general claim, and it does not tell us much about how, exactly, to proceed in such cases. (4) Speaking generally, I have to admit that I do not, as of now, have a fully worked out view regarding measurement on the desire-perfectionism theory. While I am confident that human well-being is a function of, and only of, perfectionist value and intrinsic desire, I am not sure, as of now, about the exact proportions that are in play here for perfectionist value and intrinsic desire.

### Conclusion

There are two different visions of what human beings are that I have privileged in constructing the desire-perfectionism theory. One vision is a broadly Aristotelian one according to which humans have various capacities that are central to their functioning well as to the kinds of things they are—that is, as human beings. This broadly Aristotelian vision captures something necessary for well-being, but it is, as it were, only half of the story. The other half of the story derives from a vision of human beings as unique individuals with different sets of intrinsic desires, and, importantly, this desire-focused vision

of humans is itself informed by a Lacanian view according to which each human self is constituted by a particular and dynamic chains-of-signifiers-plus-desire-flow structure.<sup>28</sup> Whereas the broadly Aristotelian vision stresses our common human nature and the fact that, at some deep level, we are all the same and function well as humans in the same ways, the desire-focused vision stresses the fact that, at some deep level, we are all different and, in particular, have different sets of intrinsic desires. Hopefully this chapter has given us reason to believe that these two different visions can be combined into one coherent whole to produce a true and adequately informative account of human well-being.

### Notes

1. I use “well-being,” “welfare,” and “prudential value” as synonyms.
2. Pro-attitudes are favorable attitudes.
3. Roger Crisp is a well-known proponent of one kind of mental state theory, namely, *welfare hedonism*: the view that well-being consists in, and only in, pleasure (2006, pp. 98–125). If one believes that well-being is necessarily experiential (i.e., such that nothing can prudentially benefit a person unless it enters into his or her experience), then one will be strongly inclined to accept welfare hedonism (on this point, see Bramble, 2016, p. 207). I do not believe that well-being is necessarily experiential. That said, I do believe that each human’s well-being must be “strongly tied” to him or her. I have written about this matter in relation to objective list theories (Lauinger, 2013b), and what I say there can be adapted to the hybrid theory of well-being that I am defending in this chapter.
4. John Finnis (1980, pp. 59–99), Mark Murphy (2001, pp. 6–138), Martha Nussbaum (2000, pp. 70–86), Christopher Rice (2013), and Guy Fletcher (2013) are examples of philosophers who are objective list theorists. Also, some eudaimonic theories of well-being in psychology seem to be objective list theories (e.g., see Ryff & Singer, 2008), and some theories of well-being advanced by scholars working in the field of public health are objective list theories (e.g., see VanderWeele, 2017).
5. To my knowledge, Finnis is the only actual objective list theorist who says things that push in the direction of denying (c). Both his comments on pleasure being required for a full participation in a basic good (1980, p. 96) and his comments on subjectively ordering basic goods in one’s life (1980, pp. 103–106) push in this direction. However, even in Finnis, I cannot find any clear denial of (c).



6. In psychology and everyday life the word “perfectionism” connotes unreasonable expectations of flawlessness for oneself or others. But in philosophy the word does not have these connotations.
7. Finnis (1998, p. 91) and Murphy (2001, pp. 76–80) are two examples of objective list theorists who accept that well-being (i.e., prudential value) and perfectionist value are metaphysically identical.
8. For some substantiation of this point, see Lauinger (2012, pp. 59–60).
9. In justifying any proposed list of basic goods, there are different methods that one might employ. For instance, following Tyler VanderWeele, one might emphasize that the items on one’s proposed list (a) are generally viewed as ends (and so not as merely instrumental goods) and (b) are nearly universally desired by humans (2017, p. 8149). Or again, one might proceed (a) by sifting through the objects of one’s own desires until one finds some general items that one judges always to be intrinsically good for oneself and then (b) by asking others, both within one’s own culture and outside one’s own culture, what they find when they sift through the objects of their own desires, all with the aim of arriving at a duly refined list of basic goods. Though I know that my proposed working list of basic goods is controversial, it seems to pass muster with respect to the two reasonable methods of justification that I have just mentioned (for more discussion of this matter, see Lauinger, 2012, pp. 59–70, 115–120). Also, I say “working” list because I am open to revising my proposed list.
10. These thoughts of mine on self-ratings, interviews with friends and family members, and interviews with experts are adapted from what others have said about life-satisfaction measurements (e.g., see Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2009, pp. 64–66).
11. For a discussion of experience sampling and the day reconstruction method, see Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, and Stone (2004) and for comments concerning brain scanning or, more generally, physiological measures of well-being, see Kahneman and Riis (2005, pp. 298–300).
12. Some present-day objective list theorists hold not only that there is no objective ordering or hierarchy among the basic goods, but, indeed, that there is a thoroughgoing incommensurability among the basic goods and their instances, one that renders the task of measuring well-being largely irrelevant on objective list theories (e.g., Finnis, 1980, pp. 81–133; Murphy, 2001, pp. 182–187).
13. Other philosophers have stressed this point (e.g., Sumner, 1996, pp. 20–25).
14. This claim is sometimes referred to as the *thesis of internalism* about a person’s good. For two well-known discussions of this thesis, see Railton (2003, p. 47) and Rosati (1996).
15. For more discussion of this last point, see Lauinger (2012, pp. 82–83).

16. The content of this paragraph is largely based on (a) my reading of Lacan (1992, pp. 311–325) and Bailly (2009) and (b) discussions I have had with Wilfried Ver Eecke.
17. “Metonymy” refers to associative connections among words and chains of words (e.g., if I am thinking of the college where I teach and then I think of my office, that is a metonymic move).
18. Denegation is, as Lionel Bailly notes, “saying the opposite of what you unconsciously mean” (2009, p. 59). Bailly elaborates: “But the experienced analyst knows instantly when she/he hears denegation (*‘Of course, he’s likeable enough’* nearly always means I don’t like him)” (2009, p. 69).
19. Murphy says that inner peace is on the list of basic goods, where inner peace is the good of having no desires that one believes to be unsatisfied (2001, p. 123).
20. In saying “regardless of whether it connects at all to one’s pro-attitudes,” I am referring to pro-attitudes that are *external to* desire-fulfillment itself. Since desire-fulfillment contains the pro-attitude of desire inside itself, this clarification is worth making.
21. Granted, there might be a way out for objective list theorists here (e.g., they might say that the basic good in question is not desire fulfillment as such, but rather is something narrower, such as *harmless* desire fulfillment). Still, even if a way out exists here, convincingly articulating it would take some work.
22. These other responses do not conflict with (and so might be combined with) the response whereby objective list theorists claim that desire fulfillment is on the list of basic goods.
23. Christopher Woodard (2016, p. 163) has previously discussed criticisms of Fletcher’s objective list theory that are similar to the two that I am noting here.
24. For a discussion of other kinds of hybrid theories of well-being (e.g., subjective-subjective hybrids, see Woodard, 2016, pp. 169–170).
25. I have previously used this label, “the desire-perfectionism theory” (Lauinger, 2012).
26. In this example, Bob does not desire to know about Sidgwick’s ethical views because Bob has never heard of Sidgwick. But there are cases where people are aware of states of affairs that instantiate basic goods for them and yet where they lack desires for these states of affairs due to erroneous beliefs that they have. This, then, is another reason for formulating the desire condition of the desire-perfectionism theory in the way that I have (on this point, see Lauinger, 2012, p. 85, where I discuss a graduate student who falsely believes that her dissertation is a failure and who in turn has lost the desire to finish her dissertation, when in fact finishing her dissertation is an instance of accomplishment that is prudentially beneficial for her).
27. Here one might ask: “But why do you think that Bob intrinsically desires the basic good of knowledge? Why should we not think, instead, that Bob simply wants *certain kinds* of knowledge?” I believe that, in all cases involving normally functioning humans, people do want knowledge as such, friendship as such, and so on (on this point, see Lauinger, 2012, pp. 87–91).
28. In synthesizing Aristotelian and Lacanian ideas, I have been influenced by discussions with Wilfried Ver Eecke and by reading Alasdair MacIntyre (2004, pp. 1–38).

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## Author Note

For helpful comments on this paper, thanks to the editors of this volume: Matthew Lee, Laura Kubzansky, and Tyler VanderWeele. And for helpful discussion, thanks to all participants at the Interdisciplinary Workshop on Happiness, Well-Being, and Measurement at Harvard University in April of 2018. This work was supported in part by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation and by the Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness. The views expressed in this chapter represent the perspective of the author and do not reflect the opinions or endorsement of any organization. I have no known conflict of interest to disclose. Correspondence concerning this chapter should be directed to William A. Lauinger, Chestnut Hill College, 14 E Gravers Lane, Philadelphia, PA 19118 (lauingerw@chc.edu).

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