

# Hedonism Reconsidered

ROGER CRISP

*St Anne's College, Oxford*

This paper is a plea for hedonism to be taken more seriously. It begins by charting hedonism's decline, and suggests that this is a result of two major objections: the claim that hedonism is the 'philosophy of swine', reducing all value to a single common denominator, and Nozick's 'experience machine' objection. There follows some elucidation of the nature of hedonism, and of enjoyment in particular. Two types of theory of enjoyment are outlined—internalism, according to which enjoyment has some special 'feeling tone', and externalism, according to which enjoyment is any kind of experience to which we take some special attitude, such as that of desire. Internalism—the traditional view—is defended against current externalist orthodoxy. The paper ends with responses to the philosophy of swine and the experience machine objections.

## 1. Hedonism's Decline

Hedonism has a distinguished philosophical history. It was central in ancient philosophy. One interpretation of Plato's *Protagoras* has Socrates defending the view, and it is taken seriously in many other dialogues, including the *Philebus* and the *Republic*. Aristotle analyses it closely in his *Ethics*. It was defended vigorously by the Epicureans and Cyrenaics, and attacked equally vigorously by the Stoics. More recently, hedonism was the standard view of the British empiricists from Hobbes to J.S. Mill.<sup>1</sup>

In the twentieth century, however, hedonism became significantly less popular. There are at least three reasons for this. First, Mill's attempt to deal with the objection that hedonism was the 'philosophy of swine', using his distinction between higher and lower pleasures, was thought to be either an

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<sup>1</sup> See esp. or e.g. Plato, *Protagoras*, 353c1-355a5 (for discussion, see Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. and annot. Taylor, 174-9; Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, 81-3); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 7.11-14; 10.1-5; on Epicurus, Cicero, *De Finibus*, 1.30-54; on Aristippus, the founder of the Cyrenaic school, Xenophon, *Memoirs of Socrates*, 2.1; 3.8; on the Stoics, Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.85-6; Hobbes, *Human Nature: or the Fundamental Elements of Policy*, 7.3; Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2.20.3; Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, app. 2.10; *Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.9.8; Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1.1; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2.2.

abandonment of hedonism or incoherent.<sup>2</sup> Second, G.E. Moore provided several vigorously stated arguments against hedonism in chapter 3 of his influential *Principia Ethica*. Finally, while hedonism was down, Robert Nozick dealt it a near-fatal blow with his famous example of the experience machine.<sup>3</sup> The result has been that these days hedonism receives little philosophical attention,<sup>4</sup> and students are warned off it early on in their studies, often with a reference to Nozick. This is what happens, for example, in James Griffin's influential *Well-Being*.<sup>5</sup> The reference to Nozick comes three pages into the main text, and that is the end of hedonism.

My hunch is that people no longer take Moore's criticisms all that seriously, especially since the publication of the preface to the revised edition of *Principia* in which Moore admits that the book 'is full of mistakes and confusions'.<sup>6</sup> The two major concerns are versions of the philosophy of swine and the experience machine objections.

Philosophers of religion used to aim at persuading their audience to accept the truth of theism. These days, it is quite common to find them trying merely to show that theism is not unreasonable.<sup>7</sup> In this paper, I want to do the same sort of thing for hedonism. I shall try to articulate the most plausible version of hedonism, before showing how hedonists might deal with the philosophy of swine and experience machine objections. My conclusion will be that the 'unkindness' of recent ethics towards hedonism is not justified.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Hedonism

First, then, let me try to specify more precisely the kind of hedonism I want to discuss. It is not psychological hedonism, the view that human action—or perhaps rational and deliberate human action—is motivated by a concern for the greatest expected balance of pleasure over pain. Nor is it a view about morality, such as hedonistic utilitarianism, according to which the right thing to do is maximize impartially the balance of pleasure over pain.<sup>9</sup> Nor is it a

<sup>2</sup> See Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2.3-8; and, for an example of the objection to the distinction, see Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 168-78.

<sup>3</sup> *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 42-3.

<sup>4</sup> In fact the same general complaint was well made in 1926 by Blake in the first paragraph of his 'Why Not Hedonism? A Protest'. There are of course modern exceptions: see e.g. Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics*, chs. 5, 7; Tännsjö, *Hedonistic Utilitarianism*, ch. 5. Fred Feldman, in e.g. his *Pleasure and the Good Life*, offers only what I shall call below an 'enumerative' hedonistic theory, not an 'explanatory' one. That is, he allows 'good-for-making' properties other than pleasantness or enjoyableness into his account of well-being.

<sup>5</sup> See also e.g. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, 12-14.

<sup>6</sup> *Principia Ethica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Plantinga, 'Reformed Epistemology'.

<sup>8</sup> See Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, 83.

<sup>9</sup> This enables the hedonist about well-being to side-step the objection that hedonists must ascribe weight to 'evil pleasures'. There is nothing to prevent a hedonist about well-being

view about the good, since the kind of hedonism I have in mind is consistent with the view that there are non-hedonist values, such as aesthetic values. Nor is it a view about what makes for a good life, or a good human life.<sup>10</sup> Nor, even, is it a view about happiness, which may well be understood most plausibly in a non-hedonistic way.<sup>11</sup> Rather, I wish to discuss hedonism as a theory of well-being, that is, of what is ultimately good for any individual.<sup>12</sup>

A question arises for any ethical theory about what its *focus* might be. Does it concern actions, say, or character, or virtue? Or does it concern several or all of these, perhaps with primacy attached to one notion in particular? The same question arises for theories of well-being. Which question should they begin with? Perhaps: What is it most rational to do, from the self-interested point of view? Or: Which actions will most further well-being? Which question to begin with is, to some extent, a matter of other theoretical commitments one has. But I believe a strong independent case can be made for the focus of a theory of well-being on the goodness of the *lives* of individuals for the individuals living those lives. So our question is: What makes a life good for an individual?

Over the last few decades in particular, several useful distinctions have been drawn between different types of theory of well-being. One is between those that claim well-being to consist only in some kind of (conscious) mental state, and those that allow well-being ultimately to be affected or even constituted by states of the world, understood independently of mental states.<sup>13</sup> Hedonism must surely be a mental state theory. We should try to

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from allowing that such pleasures contribute to well-being, but should be given no weight in moral decisions, or indeed prudential ones (since hedonists need not believe that well-being always grounds self-interested reasons, regardless of its nature or source).

<sup>10</sup> For the distinction, and use of it in criticism of Aristotle, see Glassen, 'A Fallacy in Aristotle's Argument about the Good'.

<sup>11</sup> See Haybron, 'Happiness and Pleasure'.

<sup>12</sup> Often I shall speak merely of what is good for an individual, meaning 'what is good (overall) for' and therefore including also what is bad for an individual. Thomas Hurka ('"Good" and "Good for"') suggests banishing the phrase 'good for' from philosophical ethics, because of its ambiguity. But the distinction between what is good 'impersonally', in the sense of making a world or universe good, and what is good for an individual, in the sense of making her life better for her than it would otherwise have been, seems to me fundamental. The closest Hurka comes to describing this sense of 'good for' is as 'good from the point of view of', but this notion itself seems to cut across the distinction between 'good' and 'good for'. It may be that, from my point of view, Moore's beautiful world, never seen by anyone, is good, and that, from my point of view, my headache's coming to an end is good for me. See Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 83-4.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Griffin, *Well-Being*, ch. 1. The contrast here is not as stark as it might appear, since on some views the content of mental states is tied to states of the world, and most of the goods listed by non-mental-state theorists as constituents of well-being involve mental states in some sense or other (consider, say, accomplishment, or knowledge).

avoid, then, that use of 'pleasure' in which it can refer to an *activity*, as in 'Golfing is one of my pleasures'.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed we should try as far as possible to avoid talk of 'pleasure', for a reason noted by Aristotle and many writers since: '[T]he bodily pleasures have taken possession of the name because it is those that people steer for most often, and all share in them'.<sup>15</sup> This, of course, is why a version of the philosophy of swine objection against hedonism—that the hedonist is advocating the life of sensualism—arises so readily. To avoid such difficulties, let me use 'enjoyment' instead of 'pleasure', and 'suffering' instead of 'pain'.<sup>16</sup>

So with these points in mind we might define hedonism as the view that what is good for any individual is the enjoyable experience in her life, what is bad is the suffering in that life, and the life best for an individual is that with the greatest balance of enjoyment over suffering.<sup>17</sup>

This seems to me correct as far as it goes. But before moving on we should note another important distinction between two questions one might ask about well-being, and hence two levels of theory providing answers to those questions.<sup>18</sup> The first—and prior—question is something like: 'Which things make someone's life go better for them?'. Answers here might mention substantive goods such as enjoyable experiences, accomplishment, or knowledge, or something more abstract, such as the fulfilment of informed desires. These answers we might call *enumerative* theories of well-being. The second question is: 'But what is it about these things that *make* them good for people?'. Take accomplishment. Someone might claim that what makes accomplishment good for someone is its perfecting her human nature. That view might be called perfectionist. Someone else might claim that something's being an accomplishment is itself what makes it good—'being

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<sup>14</sup> For a classic discussion of this notion in the context of Aristotelian ethics, see Owen, 'Aristotelian Pleasures'. Failure to attend to the distinction between this usage and the use of 'pleasure' to refer to a mental state vitiates David Brink's attempt to interpret Mill's theory of well-being as objectivist, in 'Mill's Deliberative Utilitarianism'.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 7.13, 1153b33-5.

<sup>16</sup> See Nowell-Smith, *Ethics*, 138; Goldstein, 'Hedonic Pluralism', 53; Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, 108. Note that I am using enjoyment in a broad sense to include the pleasantness of, say, certain moods to which the subject need not be attending. Rachels ('Six Theses about Pleasure', 247-8) suggests 'unpleasure' as the antonym of 'pleasure', but I prefer 'suffering' as it is in common use. It is worth noting a further possible reason for hedonism's decline at this point: the concentration in philosophy on the 'good' aspects of well-being as opposed to the bad. To many people, the hedonistic account of what is bad for people seems on the face of it more plausible than the hedonistic account of what is good.

<sup>17</sup> Since it is not necessarily a conscious mental state, I believe that 'propositional' pleasure (being pleased *that* e.g. one has won some prize) should be excluded from hedonism, except in so far as it constitutes enjoyable experience (as one might enjoy contemplating the fact that one has won the prize). Feldman (*Pleasure and the Good Life*), however, offers an account of pleasure which is entirely propositional.

<sup>18</sup> See Frankena, *Ethics*, 84; Moore & Crisp, 'Welfarism in Moral Theory', 599.

an accomplishment' is itself a '(good-for)-making' property. This position might be called an objective list theory. And all answers to the second question we might call *explanatory* theories.

This distinction is somewhat rough. Often someone will offer an enumeration which is also intended to be explanatory, and an explanatory theory might well be expressed as an enumeration (a perfectionist, for example, might in her enumeration list only 'perfection of human nature'). But it is surely important that any theorist of well-being be prepared to answer both kinds of question, and this brings us back to hedonism. Since I have not stipulated that enumerations be restricted to 'intrinsic', non-instrumental, or 'final' goods, a hedonist may list, say, accomplishment as a constituent of a person's well-being. Or she may—perhaps more informatively—list only enjoyable experiences, or even enjoyment. But even this last position is consistent with an answer to the second, explanatory question with reference to, say, perfection of human nature: Enjoyable experiences or enjoyment are good because it is human nature to experience them, and well-being consists in the perfection of human nature. This kind of view—combining a restriction to enjoyable experiences or enjoyment at the level of enumeration with explanatory perfectionism—seems to me not to capture the spirit of the hedonist tradition (though admittedly the enumerative/explanatory distinction has not been recognized in that tradition as clearly as it might have been). Rather the hedonist, as I shall understand her, will say that what makes accomplishment, enjoyable experiences, or whatever good for people is *their being enjoyable*, and that this is the only 'good-for-making' property there is. This brings us to the question of what it is for an experience to be enjoyable, and that is the topic of my next section.

### 3. Enjoyment

Wayne Sumner helpfully distinguishes between internalist and externalist conceptions of enjoyment or pleasure.<sup>19</sup> On the internalist view, found in Hume and Bentham, what enjoyable experiences have in common 'is their positive feeling tone: an intrinsic, unanalysable quality of pleasantness which is present to a greater or lesser degree in all of them'. The standard objection to the internalist view is that introspection and reflection make it clear that there is no such common quality of enjoyableness to all of the things we in fact enjoy: 'eating, reading, working, creating, helping'.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, 87-91.

<sup>20</sup> Griffin, *Well-Being*, 8. For the same line of objection to internalism, see Gosling, *Pleasure and Desire*, 37-40; Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics*, 130; Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, 92-3; Feldman, *Utilitarianism, Hedonism, and Desert*, 8, 132; Bernstein, *On Moral Considerability*, 25; Carson, *Value and the Good Life*, 13-14; Sobel, 'Varieties of Hedonism', 241.

So perhaps, then, we should adopt an externalist model of enjoyment, according to which 'what all pleasures share is not a homogeneous feeling tone, but the fact that they are...objects of some positive attitude on our part'.<sup>21</sup> Which attitude? The obvious one, as noted by Shelly Kagan in a nice exegesis of the dialectic, is desire.<sup>22</sup> Kagan himself, however, suggests that the move to an externalist account may be too swift.<sup>23</sup> We might admit that enjoyment is not a single common 'component' of enjoyable experiences, but allow enjoyment to serve as a single 'dimension' along which experiences can vary. Kagan uses an analogy with the volume of sounds. Volume, he suggests, is not a 'component' of auditory experiences, but 'an aspect of sounds, with regard to which they can be ranked'. If pleasantness is like volume, then arguing that pleasantness is not a single property common to pleasurable experiences, because of the qualitative differences between them, would be like arguing that, because sounds are so different from one another, there is no single quality of volume.

How is the distinction between components of experiences and dimensions of variation meant to work? Take the sound of a tinkling bell, and the sound of a honking horn. The components of each are, respectively, tinkling and honking. Volume, Kagan suggests, is not a 'kind' of sound. So a loud tinkling is the same sound as a soft tinkling, whereas a loud honk is a different sound from a loud tinkling.

It is questionable, however, whether this distinction captures anything of great metaphysical significance. We would indeed be inclined to say that the soft tinkling is the same sound as the loud tinkling. But that is because we usually focus on aspects of how things sound other than how loud they are. In fact loud sounds do form a kind.<sup>24</sup> I might ask you to group sounds together according to their volume, and you would then categorize the loud tinkling with the loud honk, and the soft tinkling with the soft honk. As Kagan himself goes on to say, 'it seems ... that there is a sense in which a specific volume is indeed an ingredient of a given sound'. Drawing distinctions between components, dimensions of variation, and ingredients of experiences does not seem a profitable direction in which to move.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, 90.

<sup>22</sup> Kagan, 'The Limits of Well-Being', 170.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 172-5. Kagan cites the influence of unpublished work by Leonard Katz.

<sup>24</sup> In his *Values and Intentions*, 177, Findlay speaks of loudness and sweetness as examples of 'peculiar qualities of what comes before us in sense-experience'; see Goldstein, 'Why People Prefer Pleasure to Pain', 350.

<sup>25</sup> Further criticism of Kagan and Katz can be found in Sobel, 'Pleasure as a Mental State'. Sobel, however, appears (232) to run together Kagan's internalist 'dimension' view with his externalist suggestion that pleasure is experience desired in a particular way (Kagan, 'The Limits of Well-being', 173). Daniel Haybron has suggested to me that Kagan might base something like his distinction on the fact that components of experience can be isolated, while dimensions cannot. So if you hear a tinkling and a honking at once, you can attend to either the tinkling or the honking, but you cannot attend simply to the volume of

So must we then adopt an externalist model, perhaps using the notion of desire or preference? In response to the apparent lack of homogeneity in different enjoyable experiences, this is what Sidgwick did: '[T]he only common quality that I can find in ... feelings [of enjoyment] seems to be that relation to desire and volition expressed by the general term 'desirable'...I propose therefore to define Pleasure...as a feeling which, when experienced by intelligent beings, is at least implicitly apprehended as desirable'.<sup>26</sup>

Sidgwick's use of the notion of desirability, rather than that of being desired, is problematic. One possible problem is apparent in his restriction of the definition to 'intelligent beings'. To view some experience as desirable, even 'implicitly', might be said to require a level of cognitive capacity above that possessed by many of the non-intelligent beings we believe capable of enjoyment. But perhaps lower animals can be said in a sense to evaluate certain things as desirable. The more serious problem with Sidgwick's definition is that it detaches enjoyment from actual desire. It seems possible that I should apprehend a feeling as desirable, and yet not desire it, and it is hard to understand how this could be a case of enjoyment. It is the conative state of desiring, that is to say, rather than the cognitive state of apprehending some feeling as desirable which is a candidate for a major role in a theory of enjoyment.

One suggestion along these lines has been that the desire in question be for an experience to continue, for its own sake.<sup>27</sup> We might call this a version of 'preference hedonism'.

Sumner objects to this view as follows: 'Whatever its object, a desire can only represent (or result from) an *ex ante* expectation that the continuation of some state or activity will be experienced as gratifying; the satisfaction of the desire cannot guarantee the *ex post* gratification'.<sup>28</sup> Sumner's objection here seems to be the following. Take some experience *e* at time *t*, which I desire to continue. According to the preference hedonist, what would make *e* enjoyable would be the satisfaction, at *t*<sup>1</sup>, of my desire. But, Sumner objects, *e* might continue, thus satisfying my desire, and turn out not to be enjoyable.

Sumner goes on to suggest that one can think of many valuable experiences—such as the birth of a baby or a romantic moment—which are not improved by prolongation: '[W]here many pleasures are concerned, more is not necessarily better'. Justin Gosling earlier provided the examples of a per-

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the experience, perhaps because the volume is a property of the tinkling or honking. But again I see the properties here as analogous. Just as a tinkling can be said to have the property of being loud, so an instantiation of loudness can be said to have the property of being a tinkling. This is not how we commonly speak, of course, but that is a matter of contingency. Further, there seems nothing to prevent my attending to volume in particular in some array of sounds.

<sup>26</sup> Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, 127.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. Brandt, 'The Concept of Welfare', 268-9.

<sup>28</sup> 'The Evolution of Utility', at 111.

son 'enjoying a subtle whiff of scent, where the pleasure is in the ephemeral quality of the experience, and the person would be nauseated at the thought of lingering over it', and of someone who is enjoying breaking some good news to someone else but who must realize that they cannot go on doing so.<sup>29</sup>

This seems a good line of objection to preference hedonism so understood. To avoid Sumner's point about *ex post* gratification, the preference hedonist should insist that the desire and its satisfaction are contemporaneous. Imagine that I am enjoying the experience of teeing off in a game of golf. According to preference hedonism, my enjoyment consists in my having that experience, and my desiring to have it (the satisfaction of my desire, of course, follows from this combination).

A version of preference hedonism which makes the desire in question contemporaneous with its satisfaction seems able to make sense of the alleged problem cases. Take the whiff of perfume. Gosling's objection is that the enjoyment of smelling it cannot consist in the subject's desire that the experience continue, both because part of the enjoyment lies in the ephemerality, and because the subject would find the prospect of its continuation nauseating. But the object of the subject's desire is best not seen as for the continuation of the experience. That introduces the gap between desire and satisfaction that led to Sumner's first problem. Rather the experience I desire when I am enjoying the whiff of perfume is that very experience. I may be quite aware that its continuing would make me sick, and hence not desire that (though I may well desire its continuing in the absence of nausea). And there seems no difficulty in accounting for the enjoyment I find in ephemerality as an experience that I desire as it is, rather than an experience that I desire to continue.

But enjoyment cannot merely be an experience desired by its subject. A creative artist, who finds creativity acutely stressful, might desire that stress for itself, perhaps because she believes it to be valuable in itself as a necessary part of the creative process.<sup>30</sup> Here the preference hedonist might try to specify further the kind of desire in enjoyment. The subject must desire the experience, in some sense, for *how it feels*, and not for some property or believed property independent of feeling.<sup>31</sup> But now imagine that I have never experienced serious pain. I might, during my first experience of it, desire it for its novelty, at least for a short time—and there is no need to think that I must somehow be enjoying the novelty. I desire the pain for how it feels, but

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<sup>29</sup> Gosling, *Pleasure and Desire*, 65.

<sup>30</sup> For further examples, see Rachels, 'Is Unpleasantness Intrinsic to Unpleasant Experiences?', 193.

<sup>31</sup> As Kagan puts it, the desire must be 'an immediate response to E's occurrent phenomenal qualities (i.e., its qualia)' ('The Limits of Well-Being', 173).



there is no enjoyment here.<sup>32</sup> Well, might we say that the experience must be desired because it feels *good*? But this brings us back to an internalist model: Enjoyable experiences are those, and only those, that feel good.

On the face of it, this might not seem such a bad place to end up. For on the internalist model we can easily distinguish between the cases of the artist and my novel pain on the one hand, and those of, say, basking in the sun or enjoying listening to Brahms, on the other. The latter two experiences are desired because they feel good, the former for other reasons. But what about the 'heterogeneity argument' against internalism that caused all the trouble in the first place? According to this argument, when we introspect we can find nothing common to the experiences we enjoy that might be characterized as 'enjoyment'.

Internalism as I have characterized it is the view that enjoyment is a single 'feeling tone' common to all enjoyable experiences. One might attempt to make room for heterogeneity in a pluralistic version of internalism, claiming that while enjoyableness is indeed to be understood internally, there is a plurality of feeling tones. This raises the question of why these, and only these, experiences are to be described as enjoyments. Stuart Rachels offers such a view, and suggests three ways in which one might attempt to explain the unity of enjoyment.<sup>33</sup>

- (1) Enjoyments are just those experiences that are intrinsically good due to how they feel.
- (2) Enjoyments are just those experiences that are good for the people who have them due to how they feel.
- (3) Enjoyments are just those experiences that one ought to like merely as feeling; liking is an appropriate response to enjoyments alone considered merely as feeling.

Position (3) is perhaps better understood as a form of externalism, since the unity of enjoyable experience is characterized by reference to the attitude of liking.<sup>34</sup> The other two positions are quite similar, so given my focus on well-being let me consider the second. There clearly could be a difference between monistic and pluralistic versions of internalism about well-being, as

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<sup>32</sup> It seems to me that there can also be enjoyment without desire. Imagine an ascetic who very strongly wishes that the enjoyment he is experiencing from being near to someone sexually attractive to him would stop. I fail to see why this must be construed as a case of conflict of desires.

<sup>33</sup> See Rachels, 'Is Unpleasantness Intrinsic to Unpleasant Experiences?', 197-8. Rachels's points are in fact about suffering, but they apply as well to enjoyment.

<sup>34</sup> So it is unclear why Rachels allows this to be a form of the view that (un)pleasantness consists in features intrinsic to experiences (ibid., 187).

opposed to enjoyment. Consider for the sake of argument on the one hand the view that well-being consists only in feeling warm, i.e. that this is the only experience that is good for people because of how it feels, and on the other the view that well-being consists only in feeling warm and in hearing the sound of a buzzing bee, i.e. that these are the only experiences good for people because of how they feel. No reference is made in either of these views to enjoyment, and there is little doubt that the two experiences in question feel quite different.

Rachels and I, however, are discussing not well-being broadly understood, but enjoyment. And if the two theories just mentioned are amended to claim that what is good for people about these experiences is that they *feel good*, then we appear to be back with a monistic form of internalism about enjoyment.

If the advocate of heterogeneity is seeking in enjoyable experiences something like a special sensation, such as sweetness, or a tingle or feeling located in a certain part of the body, such as an itch or 'pins-and-needles', or indeed something like a perceptual quality such as redness, she will fail. But there *is* a way that enjoyable experiences feel: They feel enjoyable. That is, there is something that it is *like* to be experiencing enjoyment, in the same way that there is something that is like to be having an experience of colour. Likewise, there is something that it is like to be experiencing a particular kind of enjoyment (bodily enjoyment, perhaps, or the enjoyment of reading a novel), in the same way that there is something that it is like to be having an experience of a particular colour. Enjoyment, then, is best understood using the determinable/determinate distinction, and the mistake in the heterogeneity argument is that it considers only determinates. Enjoyable experiences do differ from one another, and are often gratifying, welcomed by their subject, favoured, and indeed desired. But there is a certain common quality—feeling good—which any externalist account must ignore.<sup>35</sup> The determinable/determinate distinction also helps us to be clear about the role of 'feeling' in this analysis: Feeling good as a determinable is not any particular kind of determinate feeling.

There is a further feature of enjoyment which may cause confusion here. Enjoyment, though it is a 'quale' in the sense that there is something it feels like to experience it, is ordinarily in a sense second-order or intentional: Enjoyment is usually taken *in* some 'first-order' property of one's experiences.<sup>36</sup> One enjoys experiencing the warmth of the fire, the taste of the mango, the wit of Jane Austen. As Aristotle puts it, it is 'a sort of superven-

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<sup>35</sup> See Duncker, 'On Pleasure, Emotion, and Striving', 399-400; Davis, 'Pleasure and Happiness', 312; Goldstein, 'Hedonic Pluralism', 52; and further references in Rachels, 'Is Unpleasantness Intrinsic to Unpleasant Experiences?', nn. 29, 30.

<sup>36</sup> There are also purely enjoyable states such as euphoria.

ient end, like the bloom on the faces of young men'.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, it may be tempting to offer a purely 'intentional' account of enjoyment. But while there is indeed nothing amiss in saying, say, 'I enjoy ballooning', this statement can be elucidated as, 'I am a person who is disposed to gain enjoyable experience from ballooning'; and, for the hedonist, it is the enjoyment alone in enjoyable experience that matters.

Because introspection may well lead one in the direction of looking for something analogous to a sensation, I think the internalist would be well advised to refer to our ordinary understanding of enjoyment. First, enjoyableness is usually taken to be a single property of a variety of experiences. Eating, reading, and working—to use three of Griffin's examples—are very different from one another. But if you experience each, I may ask you: 'Did you enjoy those activities? Did you enjoy the experience of those activities? Did your experiences in each case have the *same felt property*—that of being enjoyable?'. Of course, they are all enjoyable in different ways and for different reasons; but they are all enjoyable. Second, I can ask you to *rank* those experiences in terms of how enjoyable they are. Note that this is not asking you which you prefer, since you may have preferences which are not based on enjoyment. Nor is it asking which is better. It is asking you to rank the experiences according to the degree to which you enjoyed each.

The internalist model of enjoyment is perhaps the default one, and has been dropped by philosophers largely because of the heterogeneity argument. But that argument is spurious. Enjoyable experiences do indeed differ in all sorts of ways; but they all feel enjoyable. So among many others Locke was right: '[Pain and pleasure] like other simple ideas cannot be described, nor their names defined; the way of knowing them is, as of the simple ideas of the senses, only by experience'.<sup>38</sup>

William Alston objects to internalist accounts such as these that they lack what he calls 'external support':

In the case of sensory qualities ... we can tie down the quality to a certain kind of stimulation; people ordinarily get red visual sensations when and only when their optic nerves are stimulated by stimuli of a certain physical description. Moreover, certain kinds of variations in the physical properties of the stimulus can be correlated with judgments of degrees of properties of the sensation, such as hue, saturation, and shade. These correlations support our confidence in purely introspective discriminations between visual qualities. Nothing of the sort is possible with pleasantness. This quality, if such there be, does not vary with variations in physical stimuli in any discernible fashion. Nor can anything much better be found on the response side.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.4, 1174b32-3.

<sup>38</sup> Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2.20.1. See also the helpful discussion in Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, 87-9.

<sup>39</sup> 'Pleasure', 341.

This claim of Alston's was published in 1967. Since that time, quite a lot of research has been done on enjoyment 'on the response side'. Brain-imaging studies have shown that the 'dopamine system' is involved in every kind of enjoyment, whether physical or mental. It used to be thought that this system was the basis of enjoyment, but on the basis of research by Kent Berridge and others, it is now thought that the dopamine system underlies desire rather than enjoyment.<sup>40</sup> So where is the correlate of enjoyment in the brain? One answer is the 'opioid' circuit, which involves the chemical release of endorphins and encephalins. It has been shown that opioids are involved not only in the pleasures of appetite, but also in social pleasures such as the feeling of security engendered by social bonding. Further, it has been suggested that one of the most important centres in the brain for enjoyment, as opposed to desire, is the ventral pallidum, a region deep in the brain; and that cell structures nearer the surface, in the orbitofrontal cortex, are involved in enjoyment, each form of enjoyment being linked with a particular subset of neurons. And there are other ideas. Research here is in its early stages, but it now seems beyond doubt that some physical correlates for some forms of enjoyment have already been discovered.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. The Philosophy of Swine?

An objection to hedonism almost as old as the view itself is that it is committed to the idea that all enjoyable experiences are on the same level. Listening to a late Beethoven sonata is valuable for the same reason as purely physical sex—because it is enjoyable. It may be *more* enjoyable perhaps; but there is no important qualitative distinction between the two according to hedonism, whereas many would want to say that such experiences are really on entirely different evaluative levels.

Consider the following example to illustrate the point:

*Haydn and the Oyster.* You are a soul in heaven waiting to be allocated a life on Earth. It is late Friday afternoon, and you watch anxiously as the supply of available lives dwindles. When your turn comes, the angel in charge offers you a choice between two lives, that of the composer Joseph Haydn and that of an oyster. Besides composing some wonderful music and influencing the evolution of the symphony, Haydn will meet with success and honour in his own lifetime, be cheerful and popular, travel and gain much enjoyment from field sports. The oyster's life is far less exciting. Though this is rather a sophisticated oyster, its life will consist only of mild sensual pleasure, rather like that experienced by humans when floating very drunk in a warm bath. When you request the life of Haydn, the angel sighs, 'I'll never get rid

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<sup>40</sup> I do not wish to claim that neuroscientists have uniform or clearly-worked-out conceptions of desire and enjoyment. But they probably begin with our common-sense understanding of the two, and it is at least interesting that they see no problem in drawing a distinction between them.

<sup>41</sup> See Phillips, 'The Pleasure Seekers', 36-40.

of this oyster life. It's been hanging around for ages. Look, I'll offer you a special deal. Haydn will die at the age of seventy-seven. But I'll make the oyster life as long as you like'.<sup>42</sup>

If all that matters to my well-being is enjoyable experience, must there not come a point at which the value of the oyster life outweighs that of the life of Haydn? And if so, is that not a strong objection to the reductionist view that only enjoyment matters? And is it not especially strong against a hedonism based on the monistic, internalist conception of enjoyment I defended in the previous section, since the same 'stuff' is what makes each life valuable and there is no way of distinguishing between them on the basis of external attitudes?

As is well known, J.S. Mill, developing some lines of argument from Plato's *Republic*, sought to answer this kind of objection by distinguishing between 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures, on the basis of a distinction between quantity of pleasure (understood in terms of intensity and duration) and quality:

It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.

If I am asked, what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account.<sup>43</sup>

Mill's argument has come under a great deal of scrutiny, and it is commonly thought that he faces a dilemma.<sup>44</sup> Either the higher pleasures are higher because they are more pleasurable or enjoyable, in which case no special distinction between higher and lower pleasures can be drawn on the basis of anything except intensity and duration; or they are higher for some other reason, such as their being more 'noble', in which case Mill has abandoned hedonism by allowing non-hedonistic values into his formal theory.

In earlier work I suggested a way in which Mill might avoid the dilemma.<sup>45</sup> Logically Mill is not prevented from claiming that properties such as nobility do in fact increase the enjoyableness of experiences, thus

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<sup>42</sup> Crisp, *Mill on Utilitarianism*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2.4-5.

<sup>44</sup> See sect. 1 above, and n. 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Mill on Utilitarianism*, 33-5.

adding a dimension along which value can increase in addition to intensity and duration. But this solution fails to get Mill entirely off the hook, since it is not clear why, if nobility can increase enjoyableness and hence value, it cannot be a good-making property in its own right, nor why an experience could not be noble without being in the slightest enjoyable.<sup>46</sup>

I now want to suggest that Mill was on the right track, but that to bring out his main point requires us to change the structure of his position a little. Essentially, the context of Mill's argument was as follows. Earlier empiricists had seen pleasure as something like a sensation, the value of which depended on two factors only: intensity and duration. Mill was inclined to accept this view as far as it went, merely seeking to add a third determining factor: quality. If we are reluctant to allow that enjoyment is a sensation, however, we are likely to want to deny any special role to intensity. We may well account for one experience's being more enjoyable than another on the ground of its greater intensity, but 'intensity' here seems just another property of the enjoyed experience. Nor is intensity so understood restricted to bodily enjoyments. I might judge one massage as more enjoyable than another because of its intensity; but I might make the same sort of judgement between the enjoyment I take in listening to the opening of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 and that in a Debussy étude. It might be suggested that an internalist conception of enjoyment, according to which enjoyment is a special kind of feeling, is committed to the idea that increases in the intensity of that feeling must increase the level of enjoyment. But this is to assume that internalism is committed to the sensation-model of enjoyment, the view that enjoyment is a determinate rather than a determinable. Enjoyment itself is not something that can be more or less intense. Enjoyed experiences can be so, and this as we just saw can affect enjoyableness. But one not-very-intense experience (listening to the Debussy, say) may well be found far more enjoyable than some very intense experience (such as the adrenalin rush from the first cigarette of the day). It may be claimed, of course, that what Mill meant by intensity was not intensity of sensation, but intensity of enjoyment.<sup>47</sup> But enjoyment is more or less intense, as enjoyment, only in the sense that the experience in question is more or less enjoyable. Intensity so understood does not provide an independent criterion of assessment.

Duration can also be seen as yet another property or quality on which the degree of enjoyableness of some experience depends. I may judge one massage to have been more enjoyable than another because of its having been longer; and, again, the same point applies to mental pleasures. If I have a day to spare, and am offered a choice between reading Shakespeare's sonnet 'Let me

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<sup>46</sup> *Utilitarianism* 2.9 may be read as claiming that it is absurd to deny that 'a noble character is always the happier for its nobleness'.

<sup>47</sup> See Sidgwick, *Methods*, 94.

not to the marriage of true minds' or *Hamlet*, one of the reasons I might anticipate more enjoyment from the latter is purely because of its greater length.

So I am rejecting Mill's quantity/quality distinction as he construes it. If one experience is more enjoyable than another, it must be because the qualities of the two experiences differ in some way. But those qualities may well be intensity or duration. Nevertheless, what is at the heart of Mill's position on evaluating pleasures seems correct, and provides us with a way of avoiding the Haydn/oyster problem.

It may have been the dream of some hedonists—Bentham perhaps—that one could invent some kind of objective scale for measuring the enjoyableness and hence the value of certain experiences, independently of the views of the subject. But that—as Plato and Mill saw—is merely a dream. In most cases, the final arbiter on how enjoyable some experience is, and how it compares to some other, is the subject herself. It is true that even a subject's own view isn't guaranteed correct: She may suffer from some kind of cultural bias or self-deception, for example, leading her to play down how enjoyable some kind of experience actually was for her, or her memory may be unreliable.<sup>48</sup> But what those who experience enjoyment say must be given proper attention in a satisfactory account of the value of enjoyment.

So imagine someone who has just drunk a cool glass of lemonade and has also completed her first reading of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. If we ask her to rank, on a scale of enjoyableness, the experience of drinking the lemonade against that of reading the novel, she may well rank the novel higher than the lemonade. Why? There is much more to this judgment than mere duration. There is nothing to prevent our judge's claiming that it would not matter how long the experience of enjoyable drinking could be prolonged: She would never enjoy it as much as she enjoyed the novel. For what she enjoyed in the novel was its wit, its beautiful syntax, and its exquisite delineation of character. The loss of such enjoyments (that is, enjoyable experiences)—in the context of her own life—could never be compensated for, in terms of enjoyment alone, by *any* amount of lemonade pleasure.<sup>49</sup>

So a hedonist, once she takes sufficient note of the fact that we refer to many more qualities than that of duration in explaining what we find enjoyable in our experiences, has the resources to explain the vastly greater value we put on certain enjoyable experiences without introducing non-hedonist elements into the account of well-being. To insist that the internalist hedonist must allow that the life of the oyster at some point becomes more valu-

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<sup>48</sup> Many of these sources of error in self-reporting are well discussed in the 'positive psychology' literature. Daniel Kahneman, for example, notes that bad weather affects self-reports: 'Objective Happiness', 21.

<sup>49</sup> This would, then, be a case of what Griffin calls 'discontinuity' (*Well-being*, 85-9).

able than that of Haydn is just to rule out the Millian solution of the problem at the outset. There is nothing in the kind of internalism I have described using the determinable/determinate distinction that is inconsistent with allowing that the assessment of the enjoyableness and hence the value of an experience might depend partly on the phenomenological quality of that experience, that is, on what the subject is taking enjoyment *in*. Yes, the oyster's life becomes increasingly more enjoyable and valuable as it is extended; but it never, perhaps, becomes as enjoyable as the life of Haydn.

At this point a hedonist about well-being may wish to admit the existence of certain non-hedonistic aesthetic values, the appreciation of which can be enjoyed to such an extent that such enjoyments become discontinuously more valuable than certain bodily pleasures. But it is still enjoyment alone that matters to well-being. Nobility on its own, for example, does not make an experience better for its subject. But, if enjoyed, it may justify a preference for one kind of experience over another, of whatever duration.

But, the anti-hedonist may insist, if we are to ascribe such value, or at least significance in appraisal of value, to the enjoyment of appreciating the beauty of Jane Austen's syntax, should we not admit that such appreciation on its own, without enjoyment, can increase a person's well-being? Or at the very least that what is adding value in such cases is an 'organic whole' composed of appreciation (which may well be valueless without enjoyment) and enjoyment?<sup>50</sup> Here the hedonist must first claim that, on reflection, we should conclude that pleasureless appreciation is without value for the individual herself, though of course it may make for, say, a better human life, or add to the aesthetic value instantiated in the history of the universe in some way.<sup>51</sup> What about organic wholes? The hedonist will have no objection to allowing in reference to aesthetic appreciation at the level of enumerative theory. That is, enjoyable appreciation of aesthetic value may feature on the list of goods constituting well-being. But at the level of explanatory theory, she will insist that what makes such appreciation good for the subject is its being enjoyed, and that alone. Reference may be made to aesthetic value, as we have seen, in explaining what makes the experience enjoyable and what is being enjoyed. But allowing any contribution to welfare in such cases to come from the appreciation itself leaves unanswered the following question: If, as the organic whole theorist suggests, appreciation can contribute to welfare alongside enjoyment, why can it not contribute on its own?

The hedonist, then, appears to have a response to the philosophy of swine objection, as stated in terms of the Haydn/oyster case. But now consider a new version of that problem, in which the angel in charge offers to manipulate my desires in the case of the oyster, so that even were I fully acquainted

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<sup>50</sup> See Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 82-3; Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, app. 1.

<sup>51</sup> See Edwards, *Pleasures and Pains*, 102-5; and sect. 5 (D) below.



with the kind of pleasures in each life, I would now desire the oyster life much more strongly, and would, during my life as an oyster, have very strong desires for the experience I was having. (If I express doubt concerning whether an oyster *could* have very strong desires for anything, the angel will respond by saying that this particular oyster will really be just like a human being who happens to have very strong desires for oyster pleasures.) Is the hedonist not committed to the view that the oyster life will be better for me?

If the effect of altering my present desires, and the desires of the oyster, is to affect my judgment, then all that the angel has done is to create a scenario in which I am not in a position properly to judge my levels of enjoyment. But it may well be that my judgment is not affected. I may be a compulsive hand-washer, but know perfectly well that were I to listen to some music rather than stand at the sink for the next few hours, I would have a much more enjoyable time.

### 5. The Experience Machine and the Value of Accomplishment

Hedonism is a form of mental state theory, according to which what matters to well-being is experiences alone. That leaves it open to objections based around the following notorious case described by Robert Nozick:

*The Experience Machine.* Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain ... Would you plug in? What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside?<sup>52</sup>

Nozick believes that the experience machine example shows that various things do matter to us in addition to our experiences: (1) we want to do certain things; (2) we want to be a certain kind of person; (3) we want to be able to make contact with a reality deeper than one that is entirely man-made. We might call these the values of accomplishment, personhood, and authentic understanding.

Let me avoid the question whether we as individuals would plug in to such a machine, since it raises a variety of unnecessary technical and empirical issues, and also is likely to elicit answers influenced by contingent and differing attitudes each of us might have to risk. Rather let me restate the example in terms of the well-being inherent in various parallel lives. First consider P. P writes a great novel, is courageous, kind, intelligent, witty, and loving, and makes significant scientific discoveries. In other words, her life includes all three of the things Nozick suggests we value in addition to mere experience. Let me add, in the light of some further doubts Nozick has about

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<sup>52</sup> Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 42-3. See also Nozick, *The Examined Life*, 104-8.

such machines in general, that P makes her major life choices quite autonomously.<sup>53</sup> And let me stipulate also that P enjoys all these aspects of her life.

Now consider Q. Q is connected to an experience machine from birth, and has experiences which are introspectively indiscernible from P's (imagine that the superduper neuropsychologists have somehow copied P's experiences, which are then 'replayed' to Q). According to hedonism, P and Q have exactly the same level of well-being. And that is surely a claim from which most of us will recoil.

What can the hedonist reply? It might be worth noting first that the hedonist is not able to appeal to the notion of broad or wide content to argue that the experience of genuine accomplishment, with all its attendant intentional attitudes, is entirely different from the experience of quasi-accomplishment on the machine.<sup>54</sup> That might help a mental state theorist willing to allow good-making properties other than those of enjoyment. But the fact remains that P and Q—just because their lives are introspectively indistinguishable—enjoy their lives equally. One might indeed argue that, in terms of broad content, enjoying really completing a typescript of a novel is different from enjoying the mere appearance of completion. But the two experiences are nevertheless equally enjoyable.

Intuitions appropriately reflected upon are unavoidable in ethical theory. But one problem with the experience machine example, as it is often employed in lectures to first-year undergraduates as well as in the literature, is that it is used too swiftly, as a way of dispatching hedonism quickly and hygienically before moving on to some other view. It is true that the intuitions of many of those who are inclined to reject hedonism when faced with the experience machine example will stand up to their own calm reflection. But what I shall suggest in the remainder of this section is that there are considerations often not taken fully into account in such reflection that, once given appropriate weight, show that wholesale rejection of hedonism as unreasonable and implausible is not justified. Several of these lines of argument have their analogues in the debates between consequentialists and their critics, and the general moral of the story is that hedonism deserves at least the run for its money that consequentialism gets—and that it certainly used to get in ancient times.<sup>55</sup> For ease of exposition, I shall concentrate on the value of accomplishment. All of the arguments below apply to accomplishment, though it is important to note that versions of most of them apply also to the alleged values of personhood, authentic understanding, and autonomy.

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<sup>53</sup> Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 44-5.

<sup>54</sup> For this distinction, see e.g. Putnam, 'The Meaning of "Meaning"'; Burge, 'Individualism and the Mental'. For its use in an attempt to defend hedonism, see Donner, *The Liberal Self*, Cornell University Press, 1991.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Wardy acutely described hedonism to me as 'the consequentialism of the ancient world'.

### *(A) Inherent Pleasure*

Accomplishment of course involves many experiences, and they are often experiences people tend to enjoy.<sup>56</sup> In writing a novel, the planning of the plot, the exercise of the imagination in developing the characters, the engagement with writing itself, and the contemplation of one's achievements throughout and at the conclusion of the process may all be hugely enjoyable. This is not a knock-down point against a non-hedonistic account of the value of accomplishment. But it does draw attention to the fact that those goods cited by non-hedonists are goods we often, indeed usually, enjoy. Much more problematic than accomplishment for a hedonist would be a case of a good which is both widely accepted as a contributor to well-being, and never enjoyed.

### *(B) The Paradox of Hedonism and Secondary Principles*

Let us assume that the non-hedonist remains unpersuaded. On reflection, she thinks, the enjoyment of accomplishment is only part of the story about what makes it valuable for people; accomplishment has its own value, independent of the enjoyment inherent in and consequent on it. The hedonist may now try to draw inspiration from some of the things consequentialists say about non-consequentialist moral principles, such as those forbidding killing or requiring loyalty. According to one standard line of consequentialist argument, accepting and acting on such 'secondary' principles is itself justified by consequentialism, since the results of doing so will be better—in consequentialist terms—than those of any attempt consistently to live by the consequentialist principle alone.<sup>57</sup> Killing people is usually bad overall, from the consequentialist point of view, and loyalty, as part of a personal relationship, good.

If we allow that in the usual case someone will enjoy accomplishing more than accomplishing less, then there are good reasons to think that motivation by non-hedonist beliefs may be more successful, by hedonist lights, than motivation by hedonist beliefs.<sup>58</sup> One version of the paradox of hedonism is that one will gain more enjoyment by trying to do something other than to enjoy oneself. The tennis player who forgets about enjoyment and focuses on winning will enjoy the game more than were she to aim explicitly at enjoyment. What the hedonist has to note in addition is that the player who thinks

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<sup>56</sup> See Sidgwick, *Methods*, 401. Sidgwick claims that such goods 'seem to obtain the commendation of Common Sense ... in proportion to the degree of [their] productiveness [of pleasure]'.

<sup>57</sup> The term 'secondary' is from Mill, *Utilitarianism*; see 2.24. For a well-known recent version of the argument, see Railton, 'Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality'. Interestingly, Railton makes his case for consequentialism via the paradox of hedonism and distinctions between different forms of hedonism.

<sup>58</sup> See Sidgwick, *Methods*, 403, 405-6.

that winning really matters is going to find it easier to focus on that as a goal, and to be more strongly motivated to achieve it. Thus, over time, human beings have developed dispositions and understandings of goods that, though apparently non-hedonistic, are in fact securely based on their capacity for the promotion of enjoyment.<sup>59</sup>

Also worth mentioning here is Mill's associationist suggestion in *Utilitarianism* that human beings often slide from valuing something as a means to enjoyment to valuing that thing as an end in itself.<sup>60</sup> Mill's example is money; but a structurally similar argument could be made for accomplishment.

### *(C) The Evolution of Values*

The previous argument seeks to explain the internal evaluative view on accomplishment: why it is that creatures like us may rationally have developed non-hedonistic dispositions and beliefs. We are goal-seeking beings, and enjoy the process of achieving goals and its completion. Belief in the independent value of those goals can itself increase that enjoyment. But there is a further, external, perspective to take on our non-hedonistic evaluative beliefs, and this involves considering their historical origin. Accomplishment provides a good example of how this kind of argument might proceed. It goes almost without saying that the values each of us hold are at the very least heavily shaped by the cultural and social practices in which we found ourselves from a very young age. The attitudes—in particular attitudes of praise and blame—of others, especially of our parents, have a huge influence on what we end up valuing.

At this point, we can pull back the focus to consider the development of human values as a whole from their origins in groups or societies very different from our own. It would be surprising if human values had not been affected to some extent by the attitudes of our hunter gatherer ancestors in the Stone Age, which in Europe, Asia and Africa began about two million years ago and ended as recently as about 4000 BCE. Those who achieved more in the field—who brought back more meat, or more fungi and fruit—would have been rewarded by their fellows, partly with a larger share of the available goods, but also with esteem and status within the group. Now this story is of course not on its own sufficient to debunk the claim of accomplishment to independent non-hedonic value for individuals. But it does, I suggest, throw that claim into some doubt. Could it not be that our valuing of accomplish-

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<sup>59</sup> See Railton, 'Naturalism and Prescriptivity', 167-9; Kawaii, 'The Experience Machine and Mental States of Well-being', 384.

<sup>60</sup> Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 4.5-7. For a nicely stated modern version of this argument, making reference to Brandt and Railton, see Silverstein, 'In Defense of Happiness: A Response to the Experience Machine', 293-6.

ment is an example of a kind of collective bad faith, with its roots in the spontaneous and largely unreflective social practices of our distant ancestors?

This and the previous argument apply not only to accomplishment, but also to authenticity, which is one of the values often alleged to be violated on the experience machine. Valuing honesty, transparency, genuineness, and so on, has a clear pay-off: It fends off deception, and thereby assists understanding of the world, which itself issues in a clear evolutionary advantage.

#### *(D) The Anhedonic Life*

Here is another kind of argument the hedonist may carry across from the debate over consequentialism, in particular the debate over the welfarism at the heart of central consequentialist views such as utilitarianism. When it is claimed that there are non-welfarist goods, such as desert or equality, which might add value to an action or a state of affairs independently of any contribution to well-being, a standard welfarist response consists in isolating those alleged goods in cases where nothing beneficial to individuals comes of them, and then questioning their status. Do we really think that there is anything to be said for punishing a criminal, even if it does no one any good and harms the criminal? Do we really think that there is anything to be said for equality, even in cases in which its promotion harms all concerned?

Consider now the life of R. R's life is as far as is possible like P's, with all the enjoyment—and the suffering—stripped out. So R writes a great novel, but takes no pleasure in what she is doing or in what she achieves. She is not especially gloomy or depressed, and is motivated by the thought that accomplishment will advance her own well-being and that she has a moral duty to use her talents. Is it plausible to think that R's life is of any value *for her*? We might well think that R's accomplishment is admirable, as part of a good human life. Or we might think it makes her life more meaningful in some sense. But is it plausible to think that it could make her life better for her if she herself does not enjoy what she does or reflection on it, and in that sense does not care about these things?

This case, however, might be said at most to suggest only that enjoyment is a necessary condition for well-being, not its only constituent. Perhaps well-being consists wholly or partly in an 'organic whole', comprising genuine accomplishment on the one hand, and enjoyment of that accomplishment on the other.<sup>61</sup> It would indeed be a mistake, as G.E. Moore pointed out, to think that because accomplishment on its own does not contribute to well-being, it cannot therefore be a real contributor in the company of other goods. Indeed, it may even be the case that enjoyment alone of something which is no accomplishment, but is believed to be so by the enjoyer, is without value.

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<sup>61</sup> See sect. 4 above.

Now I have to accept that this is a logically available view. But, as I have already suggested, the idea of an organic whole involves a mystery. Accomplishing something, and the enjoyment of accomplishment, seem conceptually quite distinct, and the case of R shows that they can come apart in cases that may at least be imagined without too much difficulty. The question that remains to be answered by an advocate of this kind of organic whole view is this: If accomplishment can make a contribution to well-being when it is enjoyed, why do we find that it cannot do the same in the absence of enjoyment? After all, its 'good-making' features are present in both kinds of case. Until that question is answered, the case of the anhedonic life remains problematic for a non-hedonist theory of well-being.

### *(E) Perspectives*

Accomplishment as a constituent of well-being is tied in various significant ways to values other than well-being. When someone writes a great novel, the greatness of the novel itself—its aesthetic value, or its historical significance, say—is essential to understanding why it is that we count such activities as potentially part of well-being. But because of this link to values beyond well-being, the significance of accomplishment may be thrown into doubt. It is of course true that, viewed from the inside, what I accomplish may matter a good deal to me. I may plan my life around what I might accomplish, and make many sacrifices to achieve my goals. But the internal viewpoint is not the only one available. As Thomas Nagel puts it, 'In seeing ourselves from outside we find it difficult to take our lives seriously'.<sup>62</sup> We might imagine P's comparing her novel-writing to the work of God, for example. What is writing even a novel as fine as *Middlemarch* or *War and Peace* compared to creating the universe? Or imagine that we could all write as well as Eliot and Tolstoy.<sup>63</sup> Would we then think so highly of the achievements of those who write such books? Further, if the idea is that the value of accomplishment lies in achieving our potential, why do we think Mozart's achievements so much more significant than those of a mouse who, by murine standards, excelled as much? And, of course, in the end all human activities will turn to dust. From the point of view of eternity, why does anything I do matter?

I am not saying that these questions about perspective cannot be answered. But answered they must be by anyone claiming that accomplishment makes an independent contribution to well-being. Enjoyment, because it has no intrinsic link with non-welfarist values, is not so prone to perspectival doubt. It may be true that part of my enjoyment in what I accomplish depends on beliefs I have about the significance of that accomplishment. So the external

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<sup>62</sup> Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 214.

<sup>63</sup> See Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 241, 245.

viewpoint may in fact lead to a decrease in my enjoyment. But enjoyment itself does not seem to demand justification from the outside in the same way as accomplishment, since it makes no grand claims for significance. Enjoyment seems just obviously worth having in one's life, and that is the end of it.

(F) *Agency*

Accomplishment involves doing. We ascribe value to this doing independently of its outcome.<sup>64</sup> Imagine that Michelangelo had had a pupil more brilliant even than himself, and that he had allowed this pupil to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The credit for the painting would have gone not to Michelangelo himself, but to the pupil. This kind of credit or admiration mirrors the blame that is directed at the captain and Pedro his henchman in Bernard Williams's famous case of *Jim and the Indians*, in the scenario in which Jim refuses to take part himself in the killing.<sup>65</sup> Consequentialists, of course, have long doubted the huge significance ascribed to agency in our common-sense evaluations. But the intuitions of those less sympathetic to consequentialism may also be weakened by consideration of, for example, the so-called 'paradox of deontology': Does a rule against killing to prevent more killings not involve a self-indulgent or fetishistic focus on agency?<sup>66</sup> Perhaps accomplishment involves the same sort of over-valuing of what people do over what happens.

(G) *Free will*

Enjoyment, as a value, does not seem to depend on freedom of the will. Q, whose experiences are the result of a 'playing back' of the recorded experiences of P, enjoys her life as much as P. Again, accomplishment is in a different category. If accomplishment is to merit the various attitudes of admiration we take towards it, and earn a place as a constituent of well-being, it must be the case that either libertarianism or compatibilism is true. Both of these views are notoriously problematic. Many argue that libertarianism is incoherent, and equally many that compatibilism, as a form of determinism, does not allow sufficient room for the kinds of evaluation and assessment of action inherent in our ordinary practices. If accomplishment is merely the 'occurrence' in my life of some productive process leading to value, it is unclear why any special contribution should be made to my well-being in particular, as opposed, say, to the well-being of some spectator. Again, the onus of proof here is on the proponent of the view that accomplishment makes an independent non-hedonist contribution to well-being to provide an

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<sup>64</sup> See my 'Utilitarianism and Accomplishment'.

<sup>65</sup> Williams, 'A Critique of Utilitarianism', 98-100.

<sup>66</sup> See Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, ch. 4.

adequate theory of free will to back this claim up. Appeals to our intuitions about specific cases of accomplishment are not enough.

To conclude. My aim was not to prove hedonism about well-being beyond reasonable doubt, but to suggest that such hedonism is at least not an unreasonable position. My hope is that my positive formulation of the view itself, and my suggestions of ways in which it might be defended against two especially problematic objections, have achieved this modest goal. Maybe the time will come for us to bury hedonism for good; but that time is not now.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Earlier versions of this paper were delivered at a symposium to mark the retirement of C.C.W. Taylor; the Minnesota Interdisciplinary Workshop on Well-being; a workshop at the Dept. of Philosophy, University of Copenhagen; the Oxford Moral Philosophy Seminar; the LSE Political Theory seminar; the University College Dublin Philosophy Seminar; the Cerberus Society, Balliol College, Oxford; the Birkbeck College Philosophy Seminar; the University of Hertfordshire Undergraduate Philosophy Society; and the University of Gothenberg Philosophy Seminar. I am grateful to participants in discussion at all of these meetings. I wish to thank the following in particular for helpful comments and discussion: David Bengtsson, John Broome, Lesley Brown, Myles Burnyeat, Lesley Brown, Krister Bykvist, Clare Chambers, Fred Feldman, Graham Finlay, Lorenzo Greco, Daniel Haybron, Nils Holtug, Brad Hooker, Dan Hutto, Brendan Larvor, Richard Layard, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, Andrew Mason, Andrew Moore, Morten Nielsen, Toby Ord, Catherine Paxton, Ingmar Persson, Thomas Petersen, Robert Pulvertaft, Stuart Rachels, Daniel Robinson, Paul Robinson, Richard Ryan, Jesper Ryberg, Matty Silverstein, John Skorupski, David Sobel, Rowland Stout, Wayne Sumner, Valerie Tiberius, Robert Wardy.



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