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Perceiving the Good: An Agent Relative Account of Desire

By

Paul Reuter Pistone

Claremont Graduate University

2022

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Paul Reuter Pistone as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religion.

Patricia Easton: Chair
Claremont Graduate University
Professor of Philosophy
Executive Vice President and Provost

Graham Oddie
University of Colorado, Boulder
Professor of Philosophy

Gideon Manning
Claremont Graduate School
Research Associate Professor of Early Modern Studies

Kevin Wolfe
Claremont Graduate University
Assistant Professor of Religion

Abstract

Perceiving the Good: An Agent Relative Account of Desire

by

Paul Reuter Pistone

Claremont Graduate University: 2022

In this project I investigate and develop a theory of desire primarily focused on the metaphysics of desire. Since my theory of desire is an evaluative theory, I address discussions concerning value and goodness, and its relation to the ethics and metaphysics of desire. Defining a desire is a complex endeavor and so is determining how desires fit within our mental economy. To locate my position, I begin with an investigation of various, often opposing, theories of desire. I examine motivational theories, pleasure-based theories, reward/learning accounts, and evaluative models. Ultimately, I argue that none of these theories provides adequate explanation for the metaphysics or phenomenology of desire. After providing arguments against these approaches, I develop my position called the “agent relative” model. I argue that desire is affective and that all affect requires an attachment to the object. Attachments are essentially self-regarding; therefore, desire is essentially self-regarding. I argue that for S to desire P, is for S to see P as good-for S. It may be that for S to desire P, is for S to experience P as good rather than experiencing P as good for S’s own wellbeing. Nevertheless, I argue for the latter and hold that the former can be true of hope, but that hope and desire are different. Finally, I argue that given my evaluative theory of desire, a modified desire satisfaction account of well-being can connect the truths found in standard desire satisfaction models with an objective list model of well-being.

Dedication

To Anslem Min. At first, I found you difficult; but as I grew to understand you, I found you to be one of the most gracious, honorable, and kind men I've met. You taught me existence is richer than I had assumed. Because of you I came to believe that there isn't a division between the sacred and the profane. You instilled in me the value of the Ancients and the limits and strengths of various forms of reasoning. Learning Augustine and Aquinas from you changed my heart and my mind.

In Your gift we rest; there we enjoy You. Our rest is our place. Love lifts us up there, and Your good Spirit lifts our lowliness from the gates of death.¹

¹ Augustine, Confessions, XIII, 9. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110113.htm>

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I think my parents are the most excited about this. My mom, Jamie, is a bedrock in my life. Her creativity, compassion, strength, resilience, and dependability are virtues to which I aspire. My mom is the most caring and just person I know. Engaging me in philosophical conversations early in my life, she instilled in me the value of a good argument. My father, Walter, is a soft spoken, kindhearted, passionate, athletic, artistic, and an all-around brilliant man. His love of wisdom has been a model to me since I was young. My love of philosophy and literature largely comes from my dad. As an engineer and a computer science professor, conversations with my dad impressed upon me the value of logic and good research.

I would not have made it through my undergraduate education without Heather Pistone. Thank you for supporting me as I pursued my education and for editing my work even when it was painful. In many ways this should be dedicated to you.

A lot of time was spent on this and not on my kids: Andrew, and Nicole. They have learned patience, delayed gratification, and forgiveness. They have always been proud of me even when I let them down. Andrew and Nicole both are excellent at being human in ways I aspire to be.

I am deeply grateful to my partner. Not only for being amazing with Word but Amanda has loved and supported me even in the worst times. Her love is illuminative and instructive. She is probably the best asker of questions I know and with her creative intellect, loving heart, and insights into human psychology, she is a wonderful partner and fantastic interlocuter. Pretty much the entire package.

Many others deserve acknowledgement, but I'd be remiss to mention a few more: Stephen T. Davis for consistently working with me on improving my projects. JP Moreland for being a mentor, friend, and professor. Masahiro Yamada for expanding my understanding of the complexity of human psychology. Robyn Lehleitner for our long conversations and wonderful friendship, Joseph Komrosky for helping with the Chicago formatting of this project and for being a good friend. Garrett Miller for our long discussions about this stuff. Geoffrey Wiess for interesting me in judgment internalism. Ingolf Dalferth for being supportive, clear, and for serving as the chair for this committee until 2020.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE NATURE OF DESIRE

This project is about wanting. Specifically, it is about the nature and ethics of desire. In this first chapter, I will sketch the phenomena of desire and attempt to explain why a project of this kind is justified, and how I hope to advance our current understanding of desire and its role in human life. In the second chapter, I discuss and evaluate existing theories of desire. In the third chapter, I present and argue for a new theory of desire (which I call the “agent relative” theory), and in the fourth chapter I connect the agent relative theory of desire to an account of intrinsic good and well-being.

To set the stage, I start with a lengthy quote from Frankenstein. Frankenstein’s monster (who I will call “Frankenstein” for ease), finds the courage to approach the old blindman Mr. De Lacey, hoping for refuge, acceptance, and friendship. I think it is a wonderful glimpse into the complex relations desire bears to emotions, hopes, intentions, and actions.

[Frankenstein] “. . . I am an unfortunate and deserted creature, I look around and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen me and know little of me. I am full of fears, for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world forever.”

[Blindman De Lacey] “Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate, but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on your hopes; and if these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.”

[Frankenstein] “They are kind—they are the most excellent creatures in the world; but unfortunately, they are prejudiced against me. I have good dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless and in some degree beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.”

[Blindman De Lacey] “That is indeed unfortunate; but if you are really blameless, cannot you undeceive them?”

[Frankenstein] “I am about to undertake that task; and it is on that account that I feel so many overwhelming terrors. I tenderly love these friends . . . but they believe that I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome.”

. . .

The old man paused and then continued, “If you will unreservedly confide to me the particulars of your tale, I perhaps may be of use in undeceiving them. I am blind and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I am poor and an exile, but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature.”

[Frankenstein] “Excellent man! I thank you and accept your generous offer. You raise me from the dust by this kindness; and I trust that, by your aid, I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow creatures. . . . How can I thank you, my best and only benefactor? From your lips first have I heard the voice of kindness directed towards me; I shall be forever grateful; and your present humanity assures me of success with those friends whom I am on the point of meeting.”²

Everyone wants something. In the quote above, Frankenstein just wants to be accepted. This is a ubiquitous desire. We wish to stand out in our excellences and fit in when it comes to our mistakes. Wanting is something we do continually. I want a pizza, I want to type, I want a picture of my daughter. Wanting helps us explain action. Frankenstein wants to be accepted. He wants to be loved. He desperately desires to find kindness. You can see this in his words. You can see this in his actions. For example, allowing someone to beat him and not destroying their home when he knows it would bring him pleasure, seeking out other people, and being grateful for help. We have all felt the pangs of unrequited love. You want to be with a person, but it is not reciprocated. This is painful. We have all felt the confusion that comes along with romantic desire. Anne Frank has aptly expressed the contrary tensions that can be embedded in desire: “I’m in a state of utter confusion: on the one hand, I’m half-crazy with desire for him, can hardly be in the same room without looking at him; and on the other hand, I wonder why he should matter to me so much and why I can’t be calm again!”³ As Virgil reminds us desire also can cause us to do things we would not do were we in our right mind: “Sick with desire, and seeking

² Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 143-144.

³ Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 01/06/1944.

him she loves, from street to street the raving Dido roves.⁴ Desires can also be much more mundane. I am sure you have been at a restaurant that is missing a condiment that you love. You cannot stop thinking how much better the food would be with the addition of that condiment. Sometimes, however, we desire something, but it ends up that we actually did not want what we got. As Goethe says:

Distance, my friend, is like futurity. A dim vastness is spread before our souls: the perceptions of our mind are as obscure as those of our vision; and we desire earnestly to surrender up our whole being, that it may be filled with the complete and perfect bliss of one glorious emotion. But alas! when we have attained our object, when the distant there becomes the present here, all is changed: we are as poor and circumscribed as ever, and our souls still languish for unattainable happiness.⁵

Wanting can create a risky gambit. Sometimes we do not know exactly what we want. It may turn out that I want pizza but am not pleased when I get the pizza. What is going on in this situation? How is it possible that I can want P and get P, but my desire not be satisfied? It seems that desire, at the very least, has two levels which are open to confusion. There are instrumental desires and intrinsic desires. An intrinsic desire (on my view) is what lies at the “heart” of any desire. Imagine I would like to go for a run. I go and run for six miles. Afterward, I am not feeling satisfied. In this case, I conjecture I didn’t want to run so much as I wanted to relieve stress. Running doesn’t always work. This desire can be divided into two: the instrumental desire (the running) and the intrinsic desire (stress relief). Often one will obtain the object of the instrumental desire but not the object of the intrinsic desire. We become frustrated because we feel as if we didn’t get what we wanted. It is also confusing because in one way we did. Desires are puzzling. Desires are so commonplace and ordinary it seems as if we already know what they

⁴ Virgil and J. W. Mackail, *The Aeneid* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2019). IV.

⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, ed. Stanley Corngold, First edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012).

are. As St. Augustine says about time, “if no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who does ask me, I do not know⁶” We can also say something similar about desires. We know what desires are. We talk about wanting, and wishing, and hoping, all the time. Despite this, if someone asks what it means to want something, most will be left speechless. Desires are a fundamental aspect of human psychology. How can we be acquainted with desire so intimately on one level but have no idea about what desires are on another? In this project I attempt to explain the nature of desire and its connection to living a good life.

Imagine something that you desire. For me, I desire a good cup of coffee. Now think to yourself, what does it *mean* for you to desire whatever it is you desire? Perhaps you are like me, and you desire a good cup of coffee. At first pass it seems that if I desire a good cup of coffee, I want a good cup of coffee. But perhaps you are not like me. You do not want a good cup of coffee. So, we will represent the object of your desire with the variable “P”, and you can fill in the object that is desirable to you. We can say at this point that to desire P (a good cup of coffee in my case) is to want P. We can now derive the following definition: to desire P is to want P. If this definition is true, then desire = want. The definition is uninformative. If desiring is the same as wanting, then we must ask the further question – what is wanting? It is true that to desire P is to want P, but this is only trivially true. We should not be satisfied with trivially true answers. They do not explain anything to us. If we are looking to sort out the nature desire, we must determine what it is for us to want P. To determine what it is to want P, however, we must develop a theory of wanting.

⁶ St Augustine and Patricia Hampl, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, 1st edition (New York: Vintage, 1998). XI.

Now we encounter another problem. When I say I want a cup of coffee, is this accurate? In conversation we say things like this all the time. I want some food. I want a shower. I want a vacation. But in developing a theory of desire, we must be more precise about the nature of the object of our desires if we are to understand the nature of desire itself. Take the statement “I want a good cup of coffee” on its surface meaning. Under what conditions would I obtain the object of my desire? Say, I go to a coffee shop and order what I take to be a good cup of coffee; and I am holding this presumably good cup of coffee. In one basic sense I have obtained my good cup of coffee. So, I can set the cup down and go home, desire satisfied. But of course, no. Merely, holding this presumably good cup of coffee is insufficient for satisfying my desire. I do not want just to have a good cup of coffee; I want to *drink* a good cup of coffee. I do not want food merely within reach. I want to *eat* food. I do not want a shower just to look at and admire. I want to *take* a shower. I do not want a vacation that I could go on. I want to *take* a vacation. I do not want a friend. I want to *see* my friend and *talk* with my friend.

Desires then seem to be for engagements with the world.⁷ But they can also be for obtaining properties. Say I am mean person, but I want to be kind. Kindness is an attribute that people have – it is a property. I wouldn’t want to say kindness is out there in the world in the same way food or coffee is in the world. Being kind is not like drinking coffee. These respective desires have different satisfaction conditions. My desire to drink a good cup coffee can be satisfied if I drink that cup of coffee on a specific occasion. It is an engagement with the world. But my desire to be a kind person is not like this. I do not want to be kind on just one specific

⁷ I am borrowing from Robert Solomon’s use of the phrase. For him emotions are not passive they involve the agent’s engagement. They are affective engagements with the world. Desire, I hold, tends to be an engagement with the world. It makes demands on the world, is prompted by external stimuli, and can motivate us to act. See: Solomon, Robert C. (2003). “Emotions, thoughts, and feelings: What is a cognitive theory of the emotions, and does it neglect affectivity?” In A. Hatimoysis (ed.), *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 1-18.

occasion. I want to be persistently kind. I would like this to be a global character trait or at least a disposition that manifests itself more frequently than not. What I want is *to be kind*. So, it seems desires can be for engagements with the world and for exemplifying properties.

But desires can be for other things besides engagements and properties. Say I am watching TV. And on the TV, I see a turtle with some plastic wrapped around its neck. I can want this turtle to be freed from the plastic, but this desire is not for an engagement with the world. I am not going to free the turtle, and I do not want to travel to the turtle to remove the piece of plastic from its neck. In one sense this desire is for a property. It is a property of the turtle that I want (i.e., for the turtle to be freed from the oppression of the plastic). But in a more fundamental way, this desire is not for a property. It is not just a property that I desire. Certainly, it is not a personal property. I do not see that I and the turtle are one in that sense. What I desire is a state of affairs. I want it to be the case that the turtle is freed from the plastic. Of course, engagements with the world are states of affairs. But there are states of affairs that I can desire which do not involve my engagement or action. It seems then that I can desire engagements with the world, states of affairs, and properties.

Desires also function in particular ways. When I desire an engagement with the world, I am typically disposed to take actions that would bring about the engagement. When I desire a property, I am disposed to take actions that I believe are likely to bring it about that I acquire that property. Furthermore, it seems that I am pleased when I think about obtaining the object of my desire. I take pleasure in it seeming that P when I desire that P. For example, if I want a cup of coffee, I will take pleasure in it appearing that I have coffee or imagining drinking the coffee. Furthermore, when I achieve the object of my desire, I am pleased. I am also rewarded when I achieve the object of my desire, and I learn that I am rewarded by performing certain actions. If I

eat delicious food, I am rewarded and learn that this food is good. Thus, I learn to want this food. My want is reinforced by the reward. I also want states of affairs and properties that I find to be good. I want something that improves my well-being and the well-being of others. I want something that will give me freedom, pleasure, and life. I can also want things, of course, that I believe are bad for me, but in these cases, there is something about the object of my desire that seems good for me. For example, I love to eat chocolate cake late at night, but I know eating chocolate cake is bad for me and eating chocolate cake at night is very bad for me. But the experience of eating chocolate cake (especially at night – for me) is ever so wonderful. It is very pleasurable. I see it as good in this way. I can also be wrong about the objects of my desire. Imagine I want to spend time with my friend Matt. So, I call him, and we meet up for coffee. I am excited and looking forward to meeting him, but while I am hanging out with him, I find myself bored and have a desire to leave. Matt, for some reason that night, was a bore (now Matt is never a bore, but just imagine). I didn't want to hang out with Matt *per se*, I wanted the experience typical of hanging out with Matt. I wanted a lively, fun conversation with someone who knows me very well. Further, imagine again that I want a cup of coffee. So, I get one and drink it. Upon drinking it, however, I find I am very dissatisfied. It turns out that the coffee was decaf! What I really wanted was not just a cup of coffee, I wanted the pleasure that the caffeine would give me.

Desires can also be seen to make demands on the world. There is something about desires that involves a felt need. The world must be like this. This can also be expressed by the normative claim that the world ought to be like this. This relates to what is called the direction of fit. Beliefs are true when they match the way the world is. But desires are not like this. Desires are satisfied in the other direction. That is, a desire is satisfied when the world is the way *I want*

it to be. I want the world to match my mental state. It seems, in this way then, that desires can be thought of as making demands on the world. But this demand on the world is not identical to the thought “the world must be like this.” There is a particular phenomenology of desire that is distinct from the judgement that the world must be like this. To be in a desirous state has a felt texture of experience. If I am a philosophical zombie, I can be disposed to bring P about, but I cannot experience a felt need. If I am unconscious, I can be disposed to act in particular ways and be disposed to experience a felt need, but I cannot be said to experience this felt need. The phenomenology of desire is an important datum on desire. An account of desire should cover this datum.

Desires also come in a standing variety and an occurrent variety. A standing desire is wanting something that you are not currently attending to. For example, you may desire to be healthy or desire that your family be healthy. There are also occurrent desires. Occurrent desires amount to conscious desires. I want to take a nap. I want to drink a cup of coffee. A standing desire may not have a phenomenology. I may become aware of my standing desires when I am prompted to reflect on my mental states. If you asked me “do you want your children to be healthy?” I would, of course, respond “yes.” An outside agent may be able to tell what my standing desires are more accurately than I can. You can extrapolate one’s standing desires, I think, by analyzing their actions. It seems as if our standing desires can be determined by analyzing our behavior. In other words, they have a sort of dispositional profile. To determine S’s standing desire is to notice that S is disposed to act in ways favorable to bringing about P.⁸ This, however, seems to be equivalent to the epistemic aspect of being able to attribute desires to another person. This epistemic aspect fails to account for the nature of the standing desire. That

⁸This may also be related less to actions as it is to seeing something as good and related mental states.

is, it does not seem to be a metaphysical account of standing desires. Moreover, even if I account for my standing desires as a disposition to act (or a disposition to have a disposition to act) in a particular way, it fails to address the fundamental features of a desire. If I want my children to live a healthy life it is true that I will be disposed (other things being equal) to perform actions that I believe will realize this desire. But there must be a reason I want this state of affairs in the first place. I may be disposed to behave in a particular way, but it seems we must address the more fundamental question; namely, why am I disposed to act in this way?

An occurrent desire is a conscious state of desiring. I am aware of my desire, and it is consciously active in my mental economy. I have a felt need to drink a cup of coffee. I am experiencing the state of wanting. If I want to drink a cup of coffee, then I will (1) tend to be disposed to take actions I believe are conducive to actualizing that state of affairs, (2) tend to take pleasure in it seeming that I have actualized the state of affairs, (3) tend to learn that particular states of affairs are rewarding, and (4) evaluate the actualization of this state of affairs as good or good for me.

What I hope I have done here is to express some of the main data and complexities of desire that require explanation. I hope that this discussion has impressed upon the reader the need for a theory of desire. In what follows I will address 1-4 described in the previous paragraph. I will start with what is considered to be the standard model of desire – namely the motivational theory of desire. I will then move on to address the pleasure-based theory of desire. After this I will detail the learning-based theory. And finally, I will present a variety of evaluative models of desire, and then advance an argument for a species of the evaluative model.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORIES OF DESIRE

There are many competing accounts of the nature of desire and explanations regarding how it functions in human life. When offering a theory regarding something's nature, it is important that it explain phenomena supported by all the relevant data. In Chapter 4 I take up in detail what six criteria I use for evaluating the soundness of a theory, it would be useful to get a sense of what constitutes a good theory. A good theory, to quote Stephen Hawking, is simple (while unifying the observed phenomena) and testable:

A theory is a good theory if it satisfies two requirements. It must accurately describe a large class of observations (scope) on the basis of a model that contains few arbitrary elements (low ad hoc and high explanatory power), and it must make definite predictions about the results of future observations (predictability). For example, Aristotle believed Empedocles's theory that everything was made from four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. This was simple enough but did not make any definite predictions. On the other hand, Newton's theory of gravity was based on an even simpler model, in which bodies attracted each other with a force that was proportional to a quantity called their mass and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. Yet it predicts the motions of the sun, the moon, and the planets to a high degree of accuracy.⁹

Drawing Hawking's point out a bit farther, Empedocles's 4-Elements Theory of Nature was not a good theory in the end because it was not useful in prediction; whereas Newton's theory of gravity qualifies as a good theory because it offers a simple, unified theory that has

⁹ Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time*, 10.

predictive power. Hawking seems to be hinting at several criteria: scope (explaining the data), few ad hoc elements, internal consistency (unifying the data consistently), simplicity, and predictability. These are all explanatory virtues that a good theory should exemplify. Similarly, Gilbert Harman claims that a good explanation should be simple, less ad hoc, and useful in predictions. That is, each lemma of a theory should work together to increase the likelihood of the conclusion.¹⁰ Theories about mental states should function in the same way as theories about everything else. Theories of desire ought to give an account of the data of desire in the simplest, most comprehensive, and consistent way, *and* provide explanatory (predictive) power. If one theory does not give an account of the data of desire, then this is a weakness in the scope of the theory. In this chapter we will examine the main types of theories of desire, drawing on strong exemplars of each kind. The purpose of this survey is to put the basic features of each account before us, and to motivate a deeper examination of evaluative theories in the 3rd chapter. In chapter 4, I return to a careful examination of each theory to make a case for, what I am calling, the “agent relative evaluative” theory of desire.

I begin with the motivational theory of desire. This, by most accounts, is the standard theory of desire. Second, I detail the pleasure-based theory of desire. This is taken to be the main rival of the motivational theory. Third, I discuss the rewards-based theory of desire. Fourth, I investigate evaluative theories, which I argue are the more promising type of theory of desire. In doing this, I begin with the doxastic evaluative theory. Next, I account for the perceptual evaluative agent neutral theory; and while I find this theory to be the most promising of theories,

¹⁰ Harman, Gilbert H. “The Inference to the Best Explanation.” *The Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (1965): 88–95. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2183532>, 2.

I contend it falls short in its explanation of the motivational aspects of desire and its connection to affect. I conclude the chapter with a sketch of the evaluative agent *relative* theory of desire.¹¹

2.1 - The Motivational Theory

Motivational theories¹² of desire are also called “action-based” theories of desire and should be called “dispositional” theories of desire. While there are a variety of motivational theories, they generally hold that desires have propositional content, and desires are a mental state held towards that content, i.e., propositional attitudes. Desires cannot be the same as sensations because sensations do not have propositional content. For example, the pain in my foot is not about the table I walked into but rather, it is the sensation felt. By contrast, desires are about states of affairs. My desire for a cup of coffee has the content *that this is a good cup of coffee*. Just as my belief about the quality of the coffee has propositional content (e.g., that this is a good cup of coffee) my desire has the same content, that this is a good cup of coffee. Beliefs are different kinds of propositional attitudes than desires. Beliefs enable one to rationally navigate the world and desires motivate us to action. Motivational theories generally hold that if S desires that P, then S is disposed to take actions that S believes will likely bring about P. Döring and Eker, in “Desires without Guises,”¹³ claim that desires have a dispositional profile. That is, desires are dispositions combined with a set of beliefs which motivate the action of an

¹¹ From here on out I will refer to this view as the “agent relative” theory of desire.

¹² The convention of calling these theories a “motivational theory” is misleading. An individual can be motivated to act without having a desire. Because desires, on these theories, reduce to mere dispositions to obtain an end, it is more fitting, as Graham Oddie suggests, to refer to these them as “dispositional theories.” I agree with Oddie about the misleading conventional label, however, for the sake of ease, I will follow convention by referring to these theories as “motivational theories” unless more specificity is required.

¹³ Sabine A. Döring & Bahadır Eker, “Desires without Guises: Why We Need Not Value What We Want,” in *The Nature of Desire*, eds. Julien Deonna and Federico Lauria (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 79-117.

agent to obtain that which they desire. Standing desires and occurrent desires have similar dispositional profiles. To have a standing desire for P is to be disposed to act in ways favorable to bringing about P. These standing desires are not present to the mind of the agent but are true of the agent. A common example of a standing desire is to live a long and healthy life. I want to live a long and healthy life even if I am not currently thinking about living a long and healthy life. If I am sleeping, it is still true of me that I want to live a long and healthy life. Individuals can have standing desires even when they are not entertaining the object of desire. An occurrent desire, on the other hand, has this same dispositional profile but includes conscious mental states. For example, I currently want to drink a good cup of coffee. I can feel this desire and am aware of the desire. If there were a cup of good coffee here, I'd likely make plans to obtain it and take actions that would make it likely that I could drink it. Doring and Eker hold that a necessary condition for a desire amounts to:

(D1) Necessarily, for any agent a , any proposition p , any time t , and any act type φ , if, at t , a desires that p , then a is disposed at t to φ in circumstances where a takes her φ -ing to be conducive to p 's being the case.¹⁴

On the Doring-Eker model it is not required that an agent be able to bring about P. But a *belief* that she could bring about P is required. If a thinks that doing some action (φ -ing) is conducive to bringing about P, then she would perform φ . In addition, Doring and Eker suggest another requirement for having a desire:

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 83.

*(D2) Necessarily, for any agent a, any proposition p, any time t, if, at t, a desires that p, then there is at least one act type ϕ such that, at t, a does not think her ϕ -ing not to be conducive to p's being the case.*¹⁵

D2 implies that if S desires that P, S must think that S could bring about P. If you desire that P, then you take obtaining P not to be impossible. One could claim that this seems wrong. I can desire that I was never born. I could want this very badly. I could also want it to be the case that I didn't say that rude thing yesterday. This seems to be a clear counterexample. Doring and Eker reply that these mental states are not desires. Rather, they are wishes or hopes.¹⁶ Hopes and wishes are phenomenologically like desires, but the phenomenology is not essential to the desire. What is essential to desire is the dispositional profile. This similarity between hopes, wishes, and desires is a peripheral issue. Wishes and hopes are not the same as desires since it is possible to wish for something that is impossible for me to bring about. However, one cannot desire something that is impossible to bring about.¹⁷

Common among motivational theories of desire is the notion that if you believe that P has been obtained then you do not desire P. Doring and Eker state this in their third principle (D3).

*(D3) Necessarily, for any agent a, any proposition p, any time t, if, at t, a desires that p, then, at t, a does not think p already to be the case.*¹⁸

D3 implies the death of desire principle. In their view, if S desires that P and S believes that P obtains, then S will no longer desire P. The reason for this is straightforward. If a desire is

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 97.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 89.

a dispositional profile to obtain P, and S believes that P obtains, then the disposition has performed its task and its manifestation conditions are no longer present. Michael Smith also holds to the death of desire principle. Smith holds that desires are motivating reasons. He says:

P1. R at t constitutes a motivating reason of agent A to ϕ iff there is some ψ such that R at t consists of a desire of A to ψ and a belief that were he to ϕ he would ψ ¹⁹

Motivating reasons, for Smith, dispose the agent to bring about her goal. Once this goal is obtained, then there are no longer reasons to pursue the goal. If I desire to be a dentist and I become one, the question, “is it your goal to be a dentist?” would be absurd. It seems that all accounts of the motivational theory entail the death of desire principle. If a desire merely is the disposition to bring about your desired end, and you believe you have achieved this goal, then you are not disposed to bring it about any longer.

One could suggest, however, that while this may be commonly held, not all motivation theories have to hold to the death of desire principle. If for S to desire that P is for S to be disposed to bring about P and S brings about P, S can still be said to have this disposition. Just as in salt’s solubility in water: if the salt has dissolved, it doesn’t follow from this that the salt is no longer soluble. If a vase is fragile, it doesn’t follow that when it breaks it is no longer fragile. What does follow is that there is no longer a vase. But desires are not like this. I (unlike the vase) still exist even when I have satisfied my desire. That is, when the manifestation conditions are met for my disposition to obtain P, unlike the vase, I still exist and so do my dispositions. If I want P, then I am disposed to bring about P. Believing that P does not entail that I am no longer disposed to bring about P. It is still true of me that I am disposed to bring about P, but I no longer do bring about P because I have obtained P. It could be claimed that this is true of standing but

¹⁹ Smith, Michael. “The Humean Theory of Motivation,” 36.

not of occurrent desires. If a desire amounts to a disposition, then there cannot be any real distinction between standing and occurrent desires other than the manifestation conditions being met. A disposition is something an agent has regardless of its manifestation conditions. So, if (as on the motivational theory) a desire amounts to a disposition to act, then the only difference between a standing and occurrent desire is an external condition. Which implies there is nothing essentially different between the two kinds of desires.

So, it seems that you can be a motivational theorist and reject the death of desire principle only if you reject the phenomenology of desire. We hold to the death of desire principle because often when we obtain what we want, we are satisfied and no longer feel the need for it.²⁰ But this has nothing to do with our behavioral dispositions. I may still be disposed to obtain P, but just not act on the disposition because the disposition has manifested itself. A manifestation of a disposition does not lead to the annihilation of the disposition. Since the phenomenology related to desire is not an essential aspect of desire for the motivational theorist and because the manifestation of a disposition does not lead to an annihilation of the disposition, you can still have a desire for P even if you have obtained P in this view.

It is easy to see why held by motivational theorists. The reason the death of desire principle is so commonly is that for motivational theorists, desires amount to goals. Desires, for Smith, are one constituent of motivating reasons. The motivating reason is a combination of a means-to-ends belief and a desire. For example, suppose I believe that if I get up and walk to the refrigerator, then I will find a soda. If I open the refrigerator, I can get the soda out and open it and drink it. If, in addition to this means-end belief, I also want the soda, then I have a motivating reason to get the soda. The content of the desire is determined by its functional

²⁰ This is not always the case. I can want a picture on my wall, get it, and still want it there.

role.²¹ Further, desires are just a specific functional role to bring about a state of affairs. This implies, as mentioned above, that desires do not need any phenomenology. One may not be aware of her desire, but she can become aware of it when she starts to form beliefs about her motivating reasons. This lack of phenomenology seems strange to many, but the opaqueness of desires should not lead one to eliminate the feelings that accompany desire. One may have many feelings related to or about her beliefs and wants, but these feelings are associated with the motivating reasons and the content of the desire. These feelings and emotions are not an essential constituent of the desires themselves. What is essential to having a desire is having a dispositional profile, as described by Doring and Eker. Smith too holds this to be the case. Getting to the point here, for the motivational account, having a desire amounts to having a goal. Smith claims:

[W]hat kind of state is the having of a goal? It is a state with which direction of fit? Clearly, the having of a goal is a state with which the world must fit, rather than vice versa. Thus having a goal is being in a state with the direction of fit of a desire. But since all that there is to being a desire is being a state with the appropriate direction of fit, it follows that having a goal just is desiring²²

Of course, having a goal tends to correlate with²³ having a set of beliefs that aid the achieving of the goal. Smith and Eker and Doring, it should be noted, are not the only motivational theorists who hold that desires are dispositions to bring about states of affairs when

²¹ Smith, Michael. "The Humean Theory of Motivation," 57.

²² *Ibid.* 55

²³ Stalnaker, Robert. *Inquiry* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 10.

paired with particular beliefs. Robert Stalnaker claims, “to desire that P is to be disposed to act in ways that would tend to bring it about that P in a world in which one's beliefs whatever they are, were true²⁴” It doesn't follow from this that one *must* bring about the desired end. You can desire that P and not bring it about that P. But you at least need some kind of either mere disposition to bring about P or a mental representation²⁵ that plays the causal role of disposing you to bring about P. These requirements for the motivational theory sit happily with Smith's point about the direction of fit. Beliefs have a mind-to-world direction of fit while desires have a world-to-mind direction of fit. The desire implies the attitude that “the world should be this way.” The world should fit with my desires. If something has this direction of fit, then it is a desire. Smith claims:

- (1) Having a motivating reason *is, inter alia*, having a goal
- (2) Having a goal *is* being in a state with which the world must fit
and
- (3) Being in a state with which the world must fit *is* desiring.²⁶

Desires are essential ingredients of motivating reasons on this Humean picture. Desires cannot operate alone. For desires to have a dispositional profile (that is, for desires to function to enable someone to bring about what it is the person wants) they also need to interact with beliefs. I cannot want a cup of coffee without also believing (or accepting) that there is some action that

²⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

²⁵ See Fred Dreskie's *Explaining Behavior: Reasons in a World of Causes*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988). And his *Naturalizing the Mind*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995),

²⁶ Smith Michael, “The Humean Theory of Motivation,” 55.

would make it likely to obtain a cup of coffee.²⁷ I can't be disposed to getting the coffee if I think I am unable to get the coffee. Since motivating reasons are merely desires plus means-ends beliefs and desires require means-ends beliefs to operate, desires amount to motivating reasons. For Smith a motivating reason is a belief-desire pair. However, if desires amount to a disposition to take actions that are conducive to bringing about the end, then desires require beliefs. One cannot be disposed to take actions that will bring about P, unless one holds that actions x, y, or z are conducive to bringing about. It seems to me, then that for desires to be dispositional they require something like beliefs about the means of obtaining P. If I am correct about this, then all desires (under the motivation/dispositional theory) involve beliefs and therefore fall into the category of motivating reasons.

Federico Lauria has an interesting objection to the motivational theory. He claims that desiring that if P entails acting to bring about that P, then the desire will not count as satisfied if the S gets P when S got P independently of S's actions. He states that even if the desire is satisfied, the "norm" (doing that which enables you to obtain P) was not met. So, while it seems that the motivational theory may do a good job of articulating the causal relations you are in with regard to standing desires, they do not do a good job articulating the nature of occurrent desires.²⁸

Further, it seems that someone can want something and not be disposed to taking actions to bring about getting that thing. If, as in Lauria's example, Romeo is suffering from

²⁷ It is possible that I can want coffee, but no coffee is around. However, according to Ecker and Doring, for one to desire coffee, one must believe there is an action one could take that would bring about having the coffee.

²⁸ Lauria, Federico. "The "guise of the ought- to- be": A deontic view of the intentionality of desire." in *The Nature of Desire*, eds. Julien Deonna and Federico Lauria (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 149.

depression and wants Juliet to faire well, he may not be disposed to do anything to bring this about. But it hardly follows that Romeo does not want her to be well. Of course, he fails to have the stated dispositional profile.²⁹

Timothy Schroder has similar objections. One such objection is a desire for a committee to make a decision in his favor without his intervention. He states:

Suppose I desire that a committee make up its mind in my favor without my intervention. This is a state of affairs I might want very much, yet because of the very nature of the desire it makes no sense to try to act so as to satisfy it. What I want is that the committee make a certain decision without my needing to do anything.³⁰

In this case, it seems that if I desire that the committee make a decision in my favor, I could still be disposed to doing something that would swing their decision my way. But, as noted, my desire is not this simple. I want the committee to decide in my favor, and I want them to do so without my intervention. I may want a promotion (a decision in my favor by the committee), but I really do not want to do anything that would swing their decision my way. I want them to recognize my achievements and notice that I deserve the promotion without any more action to convince them on my part. Even the thought of acting to convince them at this point makes me feel uncomfortable. I also trust the committee. I believe they are the best judges of who should and who should not receive promotions. Imagine that I trust their judgement over my own. What I want is for the committee to make this decision and I do not want to do

²⁹ *Ibid.* 152.

³⁰ Schroder, Timothy. *The Three Faces of Desire*, 17.

anything to sway their fair decision. If this is possible, it shows that S can desire P without being disposed to taking actions to bring about P.

Another such objection comes from Galen Strawson. Strawson imagines a race of people who are unable to act but who nevertheless have desires:

The Weather Watchers are a race of sentient, intelligent creatures. They are distributed about the surface of their planet, rooted to the ground, profoundly interested in the local weather. They have sensations, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, desires. They possess a conception of an objective, spatial world. But they are constitutionally incapable of any sort of behavior, as this is ordinarily understood. They lack the necessary physiology. Their mental lives have no other-observable effects. They are not even disposed to behave in any way.³¹

For these unusual creatures, action is not part of their lives. It may be that they do not even have a conception of action. However, Wendy the Weather Watcher could still want the sky to be clear and blue. She could still want the clouds to not be present. But it isn't the case that Wendy can, or wants to, do anything that would prevent the clouds from returning. She lacks the conception of intentional action. Strawson holds that if we find it difficult to imagine a case of wanting without a disposition to act, it is because we are:

deeply habituated to action and action-based thinking If a Weather Watcher is not only constitutionally incapable of action but doesn't even possess the concept of intentional action, there will obviously be no necessary link between it wanting something not to happen and its wishing it could do something about it.³²

³¹ Strawson, Galen. *Mental Reality*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984. 251.

³² *Ibid.* 255.

Doring and Eker object to this by claiming that:

If Wendy were to think that her imagining a snow shower is conducive to there being a snow shower and if she were capable of making herself imagine something, she would make herself imagine a snow shower, *ceteris paribus*.³³

What they think this shows is that an agent can be inclined to act even if she is *de facto* incapable of action. That is, Wendy the Weather Watcher could be disposed to act even if she is incapable of action in the actual world. This kind of analysis seems to reduce to absurdity. If we can add anything into the antecedent then we can make anything possible, as Strawson suggests. He says:

To say that W is necessarily now disposed to act in certain ways because of the truth of this conditional is like saying that a lump of plastic is now disposed to conduct electricity because its constituent parts could be reorganized to constitute gold.³⁴

Strawson's point here is strong. What we are concerned about is the essential aspects of desire. If Wendy can be said to want the sky to be blue while being incapable of any kind of action related to bringing this about, then Wendy can have a desire without any sort of disposition to action. The kind of conditional analysis that Doring and Eker perform, while interesting, is too liberal to be informative about the essence of desire.

Graham Oddie,³⁵ discussing Dennis Stampe, states that if desires are merely dispositions to bring about P, then the reason for bringing about P would be mysterious. It seems that if

³³ Sabine A. Döring & Bahadır Eker, "Desires without Guises: Why We Need Not Value What We Want," in *The Nature of Desire*, eds. Julien Deonna and Federico Lauria (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 79-117.

³⁴ Strawson, Galen. *Mental Reality*, 275.

³⁵ Oddie, Graham. "Desire and the Good: In Search of the Right Fit." in *The Nature of Desire*, eds. Julien Deonna and Federico Lauria (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 33.

desires are merely dispositions to act in ways to bring about a state of affairs or obtain a property, then the reason why we desire P rather than Q is mysterious. If there is an evaluative aspect to desires, then I have some reason for the goal of my desire. If I see P as good or otherwise represent P as good, then I have reason for and an explanation of why I want P. If I represent P as better than Q, then I have reason for wanting P over Q. It seems as if motivational theories of desire fail to provide minimally rational grounds to, as Daniel Friedrich³⁶ says, act in pursuit of one's desired ends.

Furthermore, it seems that there is, as Friedrich (discussing Brentano) puts it, a mental force to desire.³⁷ Brentano talks about modes of presentation. He claims that make a judgement is existence affirming not existence ascribing.³⁸ In a claim such as "Ben Franklin was a Politician," the existence of Franklin does not show up in the content. Because of this, it is not clear how this can be a statement regarding Franklin's existence. However, Franklin's existence seems to be built into the mode of presentation or the "intentional mode." These modes of presentation are not built into the content of the statement, but since it is an existence judgement, Franklin's existence seems highly relevant. It seems Brentano thought that existence-affirming is built into the statement. Franklin's existence seems to be not present in what is represented, but rather the existential affirmation is present in how it is being represented. This "how" it is being represented, is akin to mental force. In distinguishing mental force from mental content, Friedrich gives the example of Hamlet. He says, "contrast, for example, believing that Shakespeare wrote

³⁶ Friedrich, Daniel. "Desire, Mental Force and Desirous Experience." in *The Nature of Desire*, eds. Julien Deonna and Federico Lauria (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 59.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 59-71.

³⁸ Brentano, F.C. 1930/1966b. *The True and the Evident*. Edited by O. Kraus. Translated by R.M. Chisholm, I. Politzer, and K. Fischer. London: Routledge.

Hamlet with entertaining that proposition in thought. While the two mental states have the same content, believing that Shakespeare wrote Hamlet involves representing that content with a certain force, namely as a purported fact.³⁹ Just as existence is represented in the mode of a cognitive mental force, so too content can be represented in a positive or negative light via an evaluative mental force.⁴⁰ There seems to be a connection between evaluative mental force and phenomenal character of desire. That is, there is some phenomenal character to desire that is not present in beliefs or other dispositional states. This is an evaluative mental force. It seems good to me, or it feels good to me. This may be related to a hedonic state in some cases. I want P and part of my wanting P is this distinctive “what it is like” to want P. This is not captured by the motivational theory. To remove the phenomenal character of desire, *contra* Smith, to a large extent removes the desire. It seems that pleasure is not desire (it lacks propositional content and intentionality) and desire is not a kind of pleasure. Desires represent the way the world should be from a perspective and pleasures do not. In desirous experience, the desired end has a feeling tone. That is a felt need,⁴¹ says Friedrich. It can manifest itself as “this must become reality.”⁴²

Another issue with the motivational theory is its insistence on the death of desire principle. It is commonly claimed that when I desire something, I want what I currently do not believe I have. Imagine the case that I want a copy of the Monet’s *Water Lilies*, so I take steps to obtain a copy. I order one. It arrives. Typically, it is claimed that at this point I no longer want the copy of the painting. I have it and so I do not want it any longer. But I think this is wrong. It

³⁹ Friedrich, Daniel. “Desire, Mental Force and Desirous Experience,” 61.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 61.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 67-71.

⁴² *Ibid.* 68.

is true that I often want what I do not have, but I also want things that I do have. In the case of the painting – I think it would be fair to characterize my desire as the desire to have the painting *Water Lilies* hanging on my wall. On Monday I want to have this painting hanging on my wall. And on Thursday when it arrives, I hang it up immediately, so on Thursday I have the painting hanging on my wall. Do I no longer have the same desire? Some would say “yes.” After hanging the painting, I no longer have the desire to have *Water Lilies* hanging on my wall since I, in fact, do have the painting hanging on my wall. Rather, I would like to keep the painting on my wall. But it seems to me that this is a mistake. If you asked me: “Paul, do you want the painting to be hanging on your wall?” I would answer, “Well yes. That’s why I bought it.” I still desire the painting to hang on my wall despite the fact that it is hanging on my wall. The evidence for this desire is that I leave it on my wall. Likewise, imagine I want to drink a cup of coffee, so, I buy one and begin drinking it. Someone may ask me, “Paul do you want to drink the cup of coffee that you are currently drinking?” And I would, of course, reply “yes.” I would still desire to drink this cup of coffee even after I obtained the desired end and am engaged in drinking it.

So why then is it commonly held that once I obtain my desired state of affairs, (or believe I have obtained it) I no longer have the desire? I think there are several reasons. The first culprit is the idea that desires have a direction of fit.⁴³ John Searle⁴⁴ claimed that the difference between beliefs and desires is the direction of fit. Beliefs have a mind-to-world direction of fit and desires have a world-to-mind direction of fit. Beliefs aim at truth. Their direction of fit is mind to world.

⁴³ This notation can be traced back to GEM Anscombe’s discussion in her book, *Intention*. Pg. 56. Anscombe, G. E. M. 1957: *Intention*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. But apparently, J.L Austin used it first in his paper, “How to Talk-Some Simple Ways: Austin, J. L. 1953: “How to Talk-Some Simple Ways”. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 53, pp. 227-46.

⁴⁴ Searle, John. *Rationality in Action*. (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2001). 37-38

My belief is true when it fits the way the world is. When I am wrong about something, my belief about that thing should change to fit the world. It isn't the case that the world should change to fit my beliefs. Desires, it is claimed, are much different. Their goal is satisfaction or realization. If my desire does not fit the way the world is, this is not a failing on my part. The aim of desire is for the world to change to fit with the content of my desire.⁴⁵ So, it seems that my desires are for the world to be a certain way. When the world is the way I desire – my desire is no longer required.

This is to think of desires as goals. If I have the goal to be a doctor and I become a doctor, it would be odd to ask, "Is it your goal to be a doctor?" I would answer, "Well, it was my goal, but I obtained that goal, so I am not working toward it any longer." Goals do die when we obtain them; and new goals arise. But while desires may function teleologically to some extent, they do not function as goals do. If it is my goal to have *Water Lilies* on my wall and if I succeed in fulfilling my goal, then I no longer have this goal. If you asked me, "Is it your goal to have *Water Lilies* on your wall?" I would find your question absurd. But if I desire to have *Water Lilies* on the wall you may ask me the question, "Do you want that painting on your wall?" and this would not be absurd. The question, of course, may make me feel self-conscious and flabbergasted. However, the question about my desire, unlike the question about the goal, would at least be intelligible.

The second culprit is the widespread influence of the motivational theory of desire itself. That is, I think the reason some people hold to the death of desire principle is that they assume some kind of motivational theory of desire. Under this theory it is argued that to desire that P is

⁴⁵ See Mark Platts, *Ways of Meaning: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Language*, Second Edition, (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1997), 256-7.

to be disposed to taking actions that you believe are likely to bring about P. But once I have brought about that P, I do not need to bring it about. It is already the case. The main issue, in my opinion, is that the motivational theory of desire tends to conflate goals with desires. Michael Smith in his paper, “The Humean Theory of Motivation,” claims that, “having a goal just is desiring.”⁴⁶ This, however, is incorrect. I can *want* something but not have any kind of *goal* related to obtaining that thing. I can want to eat ice-cream late at night but – despite this desire – eating ice-cream at night is not one of my goals. Actually, it is one of my goals to avoid eating ice-cream late at night. To be fair, the motivational theory of desire claims that to desire P is to have a kind of dispositional profile.⁴⁷ But according to Smith, the content of my desire is determined by its functional role, and he claims that desires simply are dispositions.⁴⁸ However, this dispositional profile can, according to Smith, be identified as a goal. It seems, then, that if having a world-to-mind direction of fit entails having a desire, and desires are goals and, further, to have a desire is to have a dispositional profile, then having a dispositional profile amounts to having a goal. However, having a goal cannot be a desire since you can have a desire for something without having a goal of obtaining it. And the truth conditions for having a goal differ from the truth conditions of having a desire. For example, I can have a goal to have a Monet on my wall, but once I hang the painting on my wall, I no longer have that goal. But with desires, it is different. I can want a Monet on my wall, but when I hang it on my wall it is still true of me that I want it on the wall.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ See Eker and Doring’s “Desire Without Guises.” In Deonna J. & Lauria F. (eds). *The Nature of Desire*. Oxford University Press.

⁴⁸ Smith, Michael, “The Humean Theory of Motivation,” 57-58.

The third culprit for people holding to the death of desire principle is the phenomenology of desire. When I want a sandwich and I eat a sandwich I no longer desire a sandwich. So, my desire dies. At thanksgiving, I really want to eat all the good food. So, I gorge myself. After which I do not want any more food. So, it can be said that I no longer want to eat good food. My desire has died. But this also seems inaccurate. When I gorge myself – I feel sick. Feeling sick is not desirable. More food would cause me to feel sick and since I do not want to feel sick, I do not want any more food. After I ate the sandwich, I was full. Eating more food would, as in thanksgiving, cause me to feel ill. This is a state of affairs I do not want. When I desire thanksgiving dinner, I do not desire to feel sick. But this is what I got. I do not want to feel pain. When I desired the food, I desired to either taste the meal or be full. Feeling full is a pleasant sensation as is tasting good food. And when I am sick, I do not have a pleasant sensation. When I feel sick, I actually want a pleasant sensation. The desire for feeling full and the desire for a pleasant sensation does not die once you are full or feel good. After eating a reasonable amount and feeling full, if you asked me, “Paul do you want to be full?” I would say “yes I do.” Or if you asked me, after gorging myself at thanksgiving, “Paul do you want a pleasant sensation?” I would answer, “yes, I do.” It seems to me that the desire has not died at one level. That is, the intrinsic desire has not died. And typically, the instrumental desire will not die either. I may want to eat turkey because I enjoy the taste, but I also have a stronger desire to not feel ill. So, while I would enjoy tasting more turkey, I would prefer to not feel nauseous; and these desires (to taste turkey and to not feel nauseous) can exist at the same time. If I want to experience the taste of turkey at time t and at t_1 after eating some I would not want to eat any more, this is not because I already tasted turkey. It is because I know that eating more would make me nauseous. It is not the case that satisfying my desire kills the desire. I think the phenomena can more accurately be

described as the change of weight of my desires. At time t , I wanted turkey. This desire appeared large to me. But at time t_1 as I approached the loosening-my-belt threshold my desire to not be nauseous appears larger than my desire for more turkey. When I have realized my desired state of affairs, it typically is not the case that I no longer want that state of affairs. And if I lose my desire, it is not because I have obtained a desired end. It is, rather, because I'd prefer not to feel ill more than the previously stated desired end. And so, I think that the death of desire principle is false.

If it is the case that the death of desire principle is a necessary condition for the motivational theory and the death of desire principle is false, then the motivational theory is false. But as I argued earlier, I do not think that the death of desire principle is a *requirement* for the motivational theory. Nevertheless, the motivational theory does seem to support this principle and the principle seems to be evidence for the theory. Since I take it that there are good reasons to doubt the death of desire principle then I think there are also good reasons to suspect the adequacy of the motivational theory as a theory of desire.

In addition, I want to emphasize that it seems as if the motivational theory changes the subject from mental states to behaviors—just as is the case with functionalism. When a functionalist explains a mental state such as pain, she does so by the ramseyfication of the mental event into a law-like causal sequence. For example, pain, on functionalism, is a relational event. Pain can be construed as that state one is caused to be in when suffering bodily damage, which also tends to cause grimacing and other expressions of pain. But when we investigate this causal sequence, it seems it has nothing to do with pain at all. Functionalism removes the phenomenal quality of pain. Pain is essentially phenomenal, meaning it is felt and it is not about something or some state of affairs beyond its experience. Furthermore, desires are phenomenal as well.

Friedrich makes a good point about the phenomenal nature of desire and the motivational theories' inadequacy in addressing it. When I desire P, it has a felt texture of experience for me. If I removed this felt texture of experience, then it seems as if I would not be desiring P any longer. I may still be motivated to obtain P but this motivation may take the form of an intention rather than a desire. I can intend to do P but not desire to do P. The point here is that when you read the motivational theories of desire, it becomes clear that they are not talking about wanting. They have changed the subject from the psychological event of wanting to the mere disposition to a state about. Furthermore, it seems Strawson, and Schroder have given good examples of being able to desire P while not being motivated to bring P about. Oddie has brought out the lack of an explanatory cause of the desire if it is a mere disposition to act. And Lauria poses a troubling point about the motivational theories' inability to explain divergent methods of satisfying desires. It seems that the motivational theory inadequately accounts for some essential data of desire.

2.2 - The Pleasure-Based Theory:

The pleasure-based theory of desire, as described by Caryl Morillo and Galen Strawson, has it that to desire P is for one to either be disposed to take pleasure in it seeming that P or to have an internal state which realizes gratification in the idea of obtaining P or in obtaining P. Strawson's account of desire focuses on the essence of the psychological state. Most of his defense of the pleasure-based model of desire comes from his attack against the motivational theory of desire. Strawson claims that wanting to bring something about is not part of the essence of desiring that thing. He argues that the reason why we think that desiring P requires being

disposed to bring about P is because we are deeply habituated to action and action thinking.⁴⁹ To illustrate this point, Strawson imagines a race of individuals who are incapable of action and action-based thinking. He says:

The Weather Watchers are a race of sentient, intelligent creatures. They are distributed about the surface of their planet, rooted to the ground, profoundly interested in the local weather. They have sensations, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, desires. They possess a conception of an objective, spatial world. But they are constitutionally incapable of any sort of behavior, as this is ordinarily understood. They lack the necessary physiology. Their mental lives have no other-observable effects. They are not even disposed to behave in any way.⁵⁰

These weather watchers, Strawson claims, are metaphysically possible. It is simply not the case that wanting something to happen entails wanting to make it happen or being disposed to making it happen. What this shows, Strawson hopes, is that being disposed to act is not a necessary condition for desire. Again, Strawson wants to get at the essential nature of desire and not what is most common among desiring agents. The weather watchers not only fail to have the capacity to act but they also fail to have the conception of action. It is not psychologically possible for them to have the disposition to act when they lack the capacity to act. Certainly, they may have the second order capacity to act but since they lack the first order capacity to act, they cannot be said to be disposed to act. Nevertheless, without the capacity to act, it seems fair to say that Wendy the weather watcher wants the sky to be blue today. She can be relieved with the sky

⁴⁹ Strawson, Galen. *Mental Reality*, 255.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 251.

is blue. She may feel satisfied when she sees the blue sky. She may hope the sky is blue or wish it is blue but the reason she wishes or hopes the sky to be blue is because she wants it to be blue.

Furthermore, it is not clear that, even in our case, appeal to action or dispositions to action are necessary for explaining many of our other mental state (e.g., sensations, emotions, beliefs, etc.)⁵¹ Such appeals, of course, are common but are not fundamental in understanding the nature of the mental events.

What is essential to the nature of desire, according to Strawson, is wanting or liking. Merely stating “wanting is essential to desire,” however, is not informative. Wanting is just a synonym for desire. These assertions reduce to the claim that it is required for S to desire P that S desires P; this claim is clearly circular. However, saying “liking is essential to desire” is informative. It can be analyzed as the claim, it is required for S to desire P that S likes P. Strawson also claims that being a desire is to be disposed to feel satisfied or pleased or happy at the idea of the fulfillment of the desire or the satisfaction of the desire.⁵² That is, wanting may be essentially connected with “dispositions to be pleased or satisfied in certain circumstances⁵³” If someone, such as infant, can feel pleased under certain circumstances, then, Strawson thinks, it is clear that someone who doesn’t have the conception of acting to obtaining the desired object can desire it as well. Infants clearly have desires. These infants do not yet have a conception of action. So, if these two last claims are both true then a conception of action is not required for a desire. It also seems that if someone (say Mary) has been paralyzed her entire life, she has no

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 259.

⁵² *Ibid.* 280-84.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 266-7.

disposition to act. Nevertheless, Mary certainly can be said to have desires. If she likes something, she will want it- so says Strawson.

It may be objected that weather watchers, infants, and paralyzed individuals are disposed to bring something about given the right circumstances. For example, suppose person B were to have the right kinds of beliefs Z such that if B had Z, then B would take actions to bring about P. This claim (i.e., if B had Z, then B would be disposed to bring about P), adds too much into the antecedent of the conditional (i.e., If B had Z). Strawson thinks that while it is not true that the weather watchers are disposed to bring about P but if P occurs, they are pleased that P occurred. It seems then they can desire that P without being disposed to take actions to bring P about.

If the above objection is taken seriously, then one ought to agree that anything can be disposed to do anything. It is true that if the molecules in this computer were rearranged in the correct way, it could get up and walk away. It doesn't follow from this counterfactual claim, however, that my computer is disposed to walk. The issue here is that while it may seem right to claim that Mary or Wendy could have the desire that P if they were situated such that they would act, if this is true, anything can have any disposition. You can infer a rule from the conditional claim. The rule is that if P had Z, then P would X. Anything, though, can be substituted for the Z variable and the X variable. The rule is just too broad. If the rule were fitting, then all sorts of ridiculous claims would be true. For example, my water bottle could fly if its molecules were arranged in the correct way. It is absurd to say that my water bottle has the disposition to fly, however. Since applying this rule clearly gives you absurd results, there is little reason to apply the rule to desire specifically. It does appear to be true that if one is not pleased at the thought of obtaining P, then it is unlikely that he wants P. What these replies indicate is that action is not required for desire but being pleased at obtaining the desired state of affairs is essential. If one

insists that for S to desire P, S must feel as if there is something he can do to bring about P, then this is to already assume that desire requires intentional action. But this kind of move is to just beg the question. You cannot argue that being disposed to take action Q is essential for desiring P when you take it that being disposed to take an action is sufficient or necessary for desire. To insist on this is to pound the table in a “Marburgian” fashion.⁵⁴

Furthermore, desire itself does not require beliefs. But intentional action does. If I am disposed to take action Z because I believe that Z-ing would bring about P, then it seems as if the only way I am able to act is if I have both a belief and a desire. I want P and can obtain P only if I believe that actions will enable me to do so. So, acting requires beliefs in a way desire does not. Since action requires beliefs and desire does not, it seems that desires cannot merely be dispositions to act.⁵⁵ So, just as hydrogen and oxygen together have the disposition to quench thirst but are two different things, beliefs and desires together lead one to action. Nevertheless, as oxygen and hydrogen are not the same thing as water and have independent essences, desires and beliefs may create dispositions to act and both have independent natures.

Desire requires a conscious subject. Dispositional states do not. A robot can be disposed to bring about P, but it should not be said to want P.⁵⁶ Furthermore, affective states seem to be required for desires, but motivational states do not. Strawson claims, “Weather Watchers have no dispositions to action or behavior, their claim to have desires is firmly grounded both in their strong affect dispositions and in their dispositions to have conscious experiences of desiring this

⁵⁴ “Marburgian” refers to Martin Luther’s debate about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist with Ulrich Zwingli that took place in Marburg, Germany. When Zwingli would push for a symbolic interpretation of “this is my body” Luther would pound the table and utter “This is my body” as if this was a sufficient retort.

⁵⁵ Strawson, Galen. *Mental Reality*. 276.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 282.

or that.”⁵⁷ Strawson does note that being pleased at either the thought of fulfilling your desire or in actually fulfilling your desire is not unbreakable. But as Timothy Schroder claims, on the pleasure-based theory’s behalf, pleasure is the essential or fundamental face of desire.⁵⁸ There is much by way of intuitive force behind the pleasure-based model. When my desires are satisfied, I feel typically pleasure. When they are thwarted, I typically feel displeasure. I become excited when I expect a desire to be fulfilled or imagine it being satisfied. The pleasure-based theory is also able to make more sense of the connection of phenomenology of desire, action, and motivation than the motivational-dispositional theory. Someone may be disposed to act, and this disposition could be characterized as an intention or a habit or willing. When someone does what they intended to do it is not intimately connected to pleasure. The occasions on which you are pleased when you do what you intended to do are often explicable by way of appealing to a desire.⁵⁹

Now it seems to me even with all the intuitive appeal, the pleasure-based theory ultimately fails. When Strawson claims that pleasure and desire can come apart I think he is exactly correct. This indicates that pleasure is not essential to desire. To illustrate this, I think we should use a similar example to the weather watchers.

Imagine a race of people called the “ahedonists”. The ahedonists are unable to experience pleasure in any way. But they have beliefs, intentions, and all of the other mental events we have. Now consider Amy the ahedonist. Amy sees a cup of water and forms the desire for this water. It seems that Amy can want this water even if she will not get any pleasure from drinking

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 284.

⁵⁸ Schroder, Timothy. *Three Faces of Desire*, 28.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 29.

it or obtaining it. Perhaps she is disposed to getting the water and feels as if she needs the water. Perhaps, she sees the water as good for her. But nevertheless, being an ahedonist, she gets no pleasure from either imagining that she has the water or from actually drinking the water.

It seems as if the ahedonists are metaphysically possible. If they are possible, then what this indicates is that pleasure is not essential to desire. Amy can want a cup of water and derive no pleasure from seeming to obtain it or from obtaining it. The same reasons why being disposed to bringing it about that you get P are not required for desire also apply to pleasure. Therefore, if being disposed to action is not essential to desire then neither is pleasure.

Another issue with the pleasure-based theory is that it seems as if pleasure is an effect of getting what you want or imagining getting what you want. So, while it is common to desiring agents to take pleasure in getting what they want, it is not essential. In fact, just as smoke is not essential to the nature of fire and is caused by fire - if getting what you want causes you to have pleasure, then pleasure cannot be at the heart of desire. It does seem accurate that we frequently obtain the feeling of gratification when our desires are satisfied. That is, if I want to drink a cup of coffee and I get it I will likely be gratified. The obtaining of the desired end causes me pleasure. Desires seem to cause pleasure states. Joel Feinberg says:

The very fact that he [Lincoln] did find satisfaction as a result of helping the pigs presupposes that he had a preexisting desire for something other than his own happiness . . . The object of Lincoln's desire was not pleasure; rather pleasure is the consequence of his preexisting desire for something else . . . But if pleasure and happiness presuppose . . . desires for something other than pleasure and happiness, then the existence of pleasure and happiness in the experience of some

people proves that those people have strong desires for something other than their own happiness—egoistic hedonism to the contrary.⁶⁰

If this is true, then it isn't the case that pleasure is at the essence of desire. Rather, it is merely caused by obtaining the desired state of affairs. Carolyn Morillo, however, claims that if Feinberg is correct then this cannot explain why people desire particular states of affairs rather than others. She claims "this causes a reward event, but the occurrence of such events plays no, or at least no central role in the production or sustaining of motivation. Such reward events are mere by-products of the essential "machinery" that explains the creature's actions."⁶¹ This reward event is defined as "pleasant feelings and gratification."⁶² Further she remarks that "the reward event be defined solely in terms of satisfaction"⁶³ It is important to note that for Morillo a motivating event is the same as a desire. I will be using the term "desire" rather than "motivation." On Morillo's theory a reward event is a natural kind. It is a particular neurological event. There is some empirical evidence for her claim. When rats had electric stimulation of their septal area and diencephalic regions, they were highly motivated to perform actions even at the expense of pain. These rats even preferred the stimulation over food – to the point of death.⁶⁴ Morillo holds that we have intrinsic desires. This use of "intrinsic desire" should be understood to be different from the typical use. These intrinsic desires (or motivations) are things such as

⁶⁰ Feinberg, Joel. "Psychological Egoism," in Feinberg, ed., *Reason and Responsibility* (Encinco, CA: Dickenson, 1978, 4th ed.). found in Morillo, 170.

⁶¹ Morillo, Carolyn R. "The Reward Event and Motivation." *The Journal of Philosophy* 87, no. 4 (April 1, 1990): 185.

⁶² *Ibid* 170.

⁶³ *Ibid* 184.

⁶⁴ *Ibid* 174.

hunger. Hunger has a natural object – the consumption of food. But one can also learn to develop desires. She claims, “learning takes place only if the reward event is triggered in the brain.”⁶⁵ Further she holds that higher level desires (or motivations), the learned desires, are dependent upon this intrinsic kind of learning and reward. They are causally dependent upon the type kind “reward event.”⁶⁶ It can be assumed then that “The reward-event theory anchors all positive motivation in the reward event.”⁶⁷ We desire these reward events because we find them satisfying or gratifying.

A reward event is both necessary and sufficient for desire. She claims, “a creature is motivated to act in a certain way if and only if there is some appropriately associated internal event, [a positive reward].”⁶⁸ Psychological states become desires when particular states of affairs become their objects. That is, I desire a cup of coffee when I am rewarded by the thought or seeming that I have the cup of coffee. The reward event, recall, is a gratifying or satisfying feeling. This implies that all desires amount to and are rooted in gratifying and satisfying feelings. She calls this “deep monism” because all desires reduce to this reward event. I desire P when I have a reward event in it seeming that P. There is only one object of motivation (or desire) for Morillo – the reward event (i.e., pleasure). We do not find P gratifying because we desire it. Rather, we desire P because we find it satisfying. These reward events are internal. Hunger, for example, is a desire which makes food rewarding. If we did not find food rewarding, then we would no longer be hungry.

⁶⁵ *Ibid* 176.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid* 177.

One issue with Morillo's account is that there is evidence of a decoupling of liking and wanting in both addicts and non-addicts. The liking system and the wanting system, neurologically, appear to function differently. Liking, Richard Holton, claims is "realized in a number of brain systems, including opiod, denzodiazepine and perhaps serotin systems."⁶⁹ Liking, across a wide range of species, is indicated by such things as facial cues such as smiles, lip protrusions and sucking. Wanting, on the other hand, is realized in the mesolimbic dopamine system. In normal agential creatures, wanting can be indicated by attempting to obtain the desired end.⁷⁰ Rats can have their wanting systems suppressed and still express signs of liking. An interesting feature that directly relates to Morillo's notion of desire as a reward event is that rats who have had the reward event in the past fail to want the sugar when their mesolimbic dopamine system is suppressed but they continue to like the sugar. So, the learning-reward event does not appear to play the motivational role that Morillo seems to think it does. Rats, in addition, can want something when their liking systems are suppressed.⁷¹ This indicates that one can be motivated to obtain a substance even when they do not find it pleasurable or gratifying. These results run contrary to Morillo's theory of motivation (i.e., desire).

Experiments conducted by Wyvell and Berridge provide further support for the difference between liking and wanting. In one experiment rats have their dopamine systems controlled. Those who have an increase in dopamine and those who do not, appear to like the sugar to the same degree. The rats with the increase of dopamine also seem to have the same expected reward (or pleasure) as those rats without the increase of dopamine. Both push the lever

⁶⁹ Holton, Richard. *Willing, Wanting, and Waiting*, 104.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 105.

the same amount of time to release the sugar. But when a noise rings, that the rats have learned to associate with the presence of sugar, the rats with the increase of dopamine are four times as likely to push a level. Once the noise ceases the level pushing goes back to normal.⁷² This seems to indicate that while liking and wanting can be related, wanting (I.e., desiring) is not related to liking in the way Strawson seems to think or the way Morillo argues. Since desire and enjoying or liking can be decoupled in this way – it seems cast serious doubt on the pleasure-based theories of desire.

2.3 -Learning Based Theories

The learning or reward theory of desire holds that other theories such as the pleasure-based theory and the motivational theory capture common features of desire, but they do not focus on the essence of a desire. There are motivational, emotional (pleasure and displeasure), and cognitive (attention fixing) effects of desire but someone who is tired, lacking lithium that is needed, or is overly caffeinated may want P but fail to manifest the correlated motivational, emotional, and cognitive effects typically related to desiring P.⁷³ The reason someone can want P and fail to have any of the motivational, emotional, or cognitive effects is because these are inessential causal consequences of having desires not the desire itself. The reward system seems to be a viable candidate for the source of desire. The reward center causes all these effects of desires. Desires, moreover, are a natural kind. Arpaly and Schroeder claim:

⁷² *Ibid.* 106.

⁷³ Arpaly, Nomy and Timothy Schroeder. “The Reward Theory or Desire in Moral Psychology.” In *Moral Psychology and Human Agency: Philosophical Essays in the Science of Ethics* (eds) Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 187.

The way in which the reward theory of desire entails the result that desire's most familiar motivational, emotional, and cognitive signs are the causal consequences of possessing intrinsic desires is through holding that the essence of desire is something unfamiliar, and through holding that this unfamiliar essence nonetheless counts as the essence of desire because desires form a natural kind. Just as H₂O is the unfamiliar essence of water, so (we will argue) states of the reward system are the unfamiliar essence of desire.⁷⁴

Furthermore, the punishment system seems to function in a similar way to the reward system. That is, it mirrors the reward system. This gives us good reason to think that it also can produce desires. These desires when constituted by the punishment system are aversions. So, to have an intrinsic aversion to P is to constitute P as a punishment and to have an intrinsic desire that P is to constitute P as a reward.⁷⁵ Arpaly and Schroeder formulate their theory in the following way:

Reward Theory of Desire: To have an intrinsic desire regarding it being the case that p is to constitute p as a reward or a punishment.⁷⁶

The world can be represented in such a way that it causes a signal in the brain that either elicits positive learning, neutral learning or negative learning. The disposition of the first mental state to produce the second to increase, is positive learning. If the signal does not affect the dispositions, this is neutral learning. The representation can cause the first mental state's disposition to cause the second to decrease (negative learning).⁷⁷ If Adam sees a red apple and it

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 187

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 188.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 188.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 190.

causes him to pick it up and eat it, and this causes a positive learning signal, then this will increase his disposition to eat red apples. If Adam eats the apple and a negative learning signal is produced, then this will cause him to be less disposed to eat red apples upon seeing them.

What constitutes a reward is a representation causing a stimulation of the reward center. What causes a punishment (negative learning) is the representation causing a stimulation of the punishment center. The terms “reward” and “punishment” have nothing to do with positive or negative feelings or pleasure or pain or ideas of goodness. These events are rewards only insofar as they cause the reward system to be stimulated. If Adam, for example, sees the red apple and his punishment center is stimulated then he will not eat the apple, or he will be less likely to eat the apple. The perception of the red apple causes another mental state. This mental state (in our scenario) elicits either a positive, a negative, or a neutral learning signal. This learning signal will impact Adam’s reaction. It will cause him to be more likely to be disposed to eat the apple (positive), throw the apple (negative), or not have an increase of either disposition (neutral). In the positive case, Adam’s brain reacts to the apple representation as a reward. Therefore, it causes him to treat the perception of the apple as a reward. He is more likely, then to be disposed to eat the apple. The reward event, by itself, is not enough for the positive learning signal. What is required for the learning signal are three things. Schroeder describes the three requirements as:

It must have an expectation regarding the net amount of reward to be found in the world, it must be evaluating the actual net amount of reward found in the world, and it must at each moment be taking the latter and subtracting the former from it. If the result of the calculation is positive, then a positive learning signal is released (and the more positive the result of the calculation, the stronger the positive learning signal). If the result of the calculation is neutral, then a neutral learning signal is released. And if the result is negative, then a negative learning

signal is produced. Thus, in reward learning: Amount of reward learning signal = actual net rewards minus expected net rewards.⁷⁸

The neurological structures that Arpaly and Schroeder have in mind are “the twin structures found immediately adjacent to one another deep in the brain: the ventral tegmental area, or VTA, and the pars compacta of the substantia nigra, or SNpc.⁷⁹” These are both output structures for the reward system. Their principal neurons extend to nearly every neurological structure. These other structures, in addition, have dopamine receptors which are the chemical that the VTA and SNpc release.⁸⁰ The pattern of release of dopamine by the VTA/SNpc, is what is needed to communicate information about reward, can function as a learning signal. When an individual unexpectedly represents a state of affairs that typically is considered rewarding the VTA/SNpc fire briefly above their baseline. When an expected reward has a cue – for example, a light flashing before feeding time – then at the cue the VTA/SNpc will fire above baseline. But they will not fire above baseline when the expected reward is obtained. So, the VTA/SNpc fire above baseline when the unexpected reward is obtained or when one gets information about an expected reward coming; and when an expected reward fails to materialize, the VTA/SNpc activity drops off. Arpaly and Schroeder claim:

Hence, VTA/SNpc neurons fire in a pattern that carries information about the difference, at time t , between the rewards received and expected at t versus those rewards the organism was predicting (at $t-1$) it would receive or expect at t . Such a signal has been shown to be exactly the

⁷⁸ Arpaly, Nomy and Timothy Schroeder. “The Reward Theory or Desire in Moral Psychology.” In *Moral Psychology and Human Agency: Philosophical Essays in the Science of Ethics* (eds) Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 194.

⁷⁹ Arpaly, Nomy and Timothy Schroeder. *Three Faces of Desire*, 49.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

sort of signal required for reward-based reinforcement learning (Houk, Adams, and Barto 1995; Montague, Dayan, and Sejnowski 1996; Schultz, Dayan, and Montague 1997). That is, such a signal is exactly what is most computationally useful if a system is going to modify itself adaptively on the basis of rewards received⁸¹

In addition, the VTA/SNpc can change the neural connection strength in the way required for the computational theory of reward-based learning. When rats had their VTA/SNpc stimulated right after a tone was heard more of the primary auditory cortex was dedicated to processing this same frequency. In addition, the higher auditory processing was also reorganized when the VTA/SNpc was stimulated after hearing the tone. When the tone was heard, and the dopamine receptors were blocked no change in in the auditory cortex was seen.⁸² The release of dopamine by the VTA/SNpc can reorganize neural structures and the psychological features implemented by them.⁸³ This seems to indicate that the release of dopamine by the VTA/SNpc corresponds to the reward-based learning signal.

Behavioral habit learning depends upon dopamine reaching areas such as the dorsal striatum likely from the VTA/SNpc. If this is correct, then the reward signal can shape unthinking behavioral tendencies.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Knowlton, Mangles, and Squire (1996) conducted an experiment in which people without the ability to form new declarative memories did well in predictive guessing when their VTA/SNpc was stimulated. But people who have a SNpc that was unable to produce dopamine were nearly random in their attempt to predict events

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 50

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.* 50-51.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 51-52.

in the same study. This indicates that the VTA/SNpc is highly related to learning and memory formation. The VTA/SNpc reinforces representations and helps keep track of known and expected rewards. The results of the reward are expressed by the CTA/SNpc. This system contributes to contingency based learning. It is also a biological cause of emotions (rewards make people happy), behaviors related to rewards, decision making, and voluntary movement.⁸⁵

While Dopamine is thought to carry the reward signal, serotonin is thought to carry the neural punishment signal.⁸⁶ Schroeder claims “The dorsal raphe nucleus (DRN) contains almost all of the cells in the brain that release serotonin. The DRN gathers signals from the hypothalamus and orbitofrontal cortex. These are structures that give the VTA/SNpc its information as well.”⁸⁷ The DRN spreads serotonin to the cortical and subcortical regions where there are many serotonin receptors.

Moving from rewards to desires. It seems that when we get a reward this is not the cause of a desire being satisfied.⁸⁸ Desire seems to be intimately related to the learning system. Desiring that P involves representing that P in such a way that it produces the learning signals. This would indicate that the desire theory of reward is the same as the learning theory of reward. Both “. . . hold that for P to be a reward for an organism is for the organism to tend to produce a characteristic learning signal upon representing that P.”⁸⁹ Schroeder holds the best-known features of desire can be accounted for by reference to the brain’s reward system. When you

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 53.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 54.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 54.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 69.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 70.

think of desire – many think of wanting to get or do something. This is related to motivation. Motivation, it is claimed, stems from the brain’s reward system. In addition, when I want P there is some sense of being pleased at the thought of P obtaining. This is related to the pleasurable aspect of desire. Pleasure is an activity of the reward system.⁹⁰

Schroeder defines his reward theory of desire in the following way:

Reward Theory of Desire (RTD): To have an intrinsic (positive) desire that P is to use the capacity to perceptually or cognitively represent that P to constitute P as a reward. To be averse to it being the case that P is to use the capacity to perceptually or cognitively represent that P to constitute P as a punishment.⁹¹

Schroeder claims that the reward theory of desire can distinguish between what he calls “positive desires” and “negative aversions.” He says, if you are averse to someone being late it is different from positively wanting him to be on time. If you want Adam to be on time – you will behave differently than if you were merely averse to him being late. If you want Adam to be on time, you are happy when he is. You are rewarded. But when you are merely averse to him being late, you will not be delighted when he is on time, you will be relieved. He claims, “aversion sets one up for anxiety or relief; positive desire makes possible joy or disappointment.”⁹²

Furthermore, a desire exists only if there is a mental representation. This representation can be either cognitive or perceptual. But a token of the perceptual experience (e.g., seeing pie)

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 130-131.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 131.

⁹² *Ibid.* 132.

or of a cognitive representation (e.g., thinking of your children) does not need to be occurrent for there to be a desire. What is required is that if a token representation (e.g., seeing pie) occurs, then they will contribute to the production of the reward signal.⁹³ The link between reward signals is not one of an occurrent token representation and the issuing of a reward signal. Rather, it is a link between the representational capacities and the reward signals.⁹⁴ If an individual is constructed such that when they represent *P*, *P* would contribute to the production of the reward signal then this person can be said to desire *P*. That is, if your brain is disposed to release a reward signal when representing *P*, then you desire *P*. But we need to think of reward as a kind of learning since the reward signal causes a mathematically describable form of learning. Punishment signals cause an opposing form of learning such that if an event causes the reward signal it is represented as a reward. If the event produces a punishment signal, it is an event that is represented as a punishment.⁹⁵ In light of this content Schroeder adjusts his schematization of desire in the following way says:

RTD*: To have an intrinsic (positive) desire that *P* is to embed the capacity to perceptually or cognitively represent that *P* in a system, the biological function of which is to constitute *P* as a reward. To be averse to it being the case that *P* is to embed the capacity to perceptually or cognitively represent that *P* in a system, the biological function of which is to constitute *P* as a punishment.⁹⁶

⁹³ *Ibid.* 134.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 134.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 134-35.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 136.

Just so long as there is a stable connection between a representational capacity and the release of a reward signal then there is a desire. If Schroeder is correct, then the desire remains even after I satisfy my desire. The reason is that while I may not be motivated to obtain P after obtaining P and I no longer take pleasure in it seeming that P after I obtain P, these states are not essential to desire. The faces of desire (motivation, pleasure, reward) are all explainable by the reward system. So, while you may not want to obtain P after you obtain P, you do want P after you have P. Going back to my *Water Lilies* example. If I want this painting on my wall, it is not as if this desire dies once I have it on my wall. Just because you no longer have the goal to P it doesn't following you do not have the desire for P. Goals are not the same as desires, but they are a sign of a desire. The same is true of pleasure. You can fail to take pleasure in the painting on your wall but still want it there. What is required for a desire that P is what unifies the faces of desire. Each "face of desire" as Schroeder reminds us, finds its origin in the reward system. Each can be explained by the output of this system and its relation to the other neurological structures. Therefore, the requirement for the desire that P, is that P causes a release of a reward signal. Desires are more structural than episodic for the reward theory. The claim is that "to have an intrinsic (positive) desire that P is to embed the capacity to perceptually or cognitively represent that P in a system, the biological function of which is to constitute P as a reward."⁹⁷

The reward theory shares a problem with many physicalist models of mind. When you attempt to reduce a mental state to a physical state the mental aspect of the mental state disappears. There are no psycho-physical bridge laws connecting the mental and the physical. There is no obvious way to reduce the mental to the physical. There is a clear explanatory gap as well as a knowledge gap. When an individual attempts to describe a mental event, such as pain,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 136.

in purely scientific terms, the mental features of the explanation vanish. Frank Jackson's Mary, for example, knows all the physical facts about color and color vision, but she does not know what it is like to see red. She could explain all the physical facts she knew about color (e.g., reflectance distributions, micro-physical features of surfaces, light sources, background alter effects), but you would not know she was talking about color. With neurological discussions of mental states, we have the same issue. We could be told what happens neurologically when I have a desire but when this is happening, it is not clear that we are talking about desire any longer. Neurological discussions of mental events tell us nothing about the mental events themselves. While it is interesting to note the relation between desire and the reward system, it does not seem to give us a theory of desire itself. At best it is a theory about the neurological structure of desire. This issue is not solved by appealing to multiple realizability either. If when we talk about the causal interactions that realize the mental state, it is unclear we are still talking about mental states at all. The conversation centers around a discussion of stimuli, internal states interacting, and a behavioral output. It doesn't seem as if ramified? descriptions of any mental state can offer any sort of insight into the nature of the mental state without assuming the mental state in its description. With Schroder's theory, there is talk of emotions, motivation, and pleasure but the claim that desire is a natural neurological kind does not explain the motivation, pleasure, or emotions related to desire. It may be the case the reward system causes the desire. But talk about the reward system does not shed any light into the nature of psychological⁹⁸ occurrent or standing desires.

⁹⁸ The term "psychological" here can be thought of as our folk psychological concepts of our mind. This includes explaining behavior and cognitive states by referring to beliefs, desires, intentions, etc., without reducing these mental states to a syntactical, conceptual, or functional role. Fodor's LOT I believe get us close to a formal semantic that tends to save folk psychology. See his, 2008. LOT 2: the language of thought revisited. Oxford: Clarendon Press. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10254522>. and his 1987, *Psychosemantics*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Another limitation with the reward theory is aimed at the claim that there is nothing intrinsically rewarding. It seems when you look across cultures there are many shared stimuli that produce a reward learning signal or a punishment signal. For example, being physically harmed is taken to cause the punishment signal and not the reward signal.⁹⁹ A kind remark tends to produce the reward signal. This provides a defeater to the belief that nothing in particular is rewarding. The claim sits uncomfortably with the fact that for most of us anger is not a reward, but kindness is a reward. We do not reward our children by yelling at them. We reward our children by praising them or giving them a treat. If nothing intrinsically gives rise to the reward signal, it is mysterious that across so many cultures the same events can cause the reward signal to fire for so many people. This common connection between reward signals and their causes, seems to give evidence to support the claim that our reward center is attuned to notice events that we hold to be (or see as) good for us in one way or another. If we are happy our lives tend to go better for us. If we are surrounded by people who love us, this is better than the opposite. There must be a reason we find one thing rewarding and another we represent as a punishment. It seems that a better explanation for why some things are rewarding and others are not, is that we are constructed to represent some things that are good for us as rewarding and some things that tend to be bad for us as a punishment.

2.4 - Evaluative Theories:

Evaluative theories hold that goodness is related to desire in an essential way. Desires are influenced by the guise of the good. If something is understood (by you) to be good or is seen as good, then you will want it. Something that is desired by a person is taken to be good by the

⁹⁹ Xing-Jie Chen, Lan Ba, Youngbin Kwak, Neurocognitive underpinnings of cross-cultural differences in risky decision making, *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, Volume 15, Issue 6, June 2020, Pages 671–680, <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsaa078>

person who wants it. It might be the case that there is nothing good about the object that is desired. But this is not a problem for this theory. Not all evaluative models hold to an infallibilist picture of the connection between goodness in the world and the representation of goodness. It may be that what is desired actually is good. Perhaps the object that is desired is neither good nor bad. It may be the case that one doesn't actually want the object. This state of affairs or property may be the object of an instrumental desire. Rather, it may be the case that desires pick out what is good regarding a state of affairs and its relation to others in the world. The evaluativist, regardless, must give an account of what is meant by "good." Otherwise, we are in no position to understand their theory. The general claim of evaluativism is that S wants P if S believes P is good or if S sees P as good.

There are a variety of evaluative theories of desire. There is an important distinction between doxastic evaluativism and perceptual evaluativism. We will start with doxastic evaluativism.

2.4.1 - Doxastic Evaluativism

Doxastic evaluativism is related to judgement internalism. Internalism is the theory that the judgement of S that P is good, or that one ought to do P, is enough to motivate S to obtain or do P.¹⁰⁰ This view of moral motivation, for our purposes, construes desire to be responsible for or identical to motivation. For example, if Tom believes that it would be good to call his mother, then he will also be motivated (want to) to call his mother. Thomas Nagel states: "motivation must be so tied to the truth, or meaning, of ethical statements that when in a particular case someone is (or perhaps merely believes that he is) morally required to do something, it follows

¹⁰⁰ Smith has a good account of judgement internalism. Smith, M. (1995). *The Moral Problem*. Oxford, Blackwell. 60-72.

that he has a motivation for doing it”¹⁰¹ In the *Meno*, Socrates famously argued that no one knowingly wants to do what they know is bad.¹⁰² And Socrates claims, in the *Protagoras*, that no one will choose what they know is worse or bad.¹⁰³ It seems difficult to see how this could be true, however. My motivation seems to work against my beliefs at times. More recently, however, Douglas Campbell has argued for an attitudinal monism. Campbell’s claim is that all attitudes can be reduced to belief. Desire then is a special kind of belief with motivational force, on this position. But desire is nothing other than a belief. So, for S to desire P is for S to believe P is good. Or to put it in Campbell’s terms, for S to desire P, is for S to have a D-belief.¹⁰⁴

The central claim of doxastic evaluativism is that believing that P is good is both necessary and sufficient for a desiring P. That is, if S believes that P is good, then S wants P. And if S wants P, then S believes that P is good. Doxastic evaluativism, however, has some fatal complications. One problem is that it appears to face obvious counter examples. If the claim that “if I believe that P is good, then I will want P” is true, then my desires and my evaluative judgments should not be separable. But they are. I can believe that it is good to give money to a particular relief agency but have absolutely no desire to do so. Believing that P is good is insufficient for a desire for P. The theory also maintains that wanting P is a necessary condition for believing that P is good. This also seems false. I can want P and believe that P is not good. For example, I can want to sit and watch TV all day, but I know that watching TV all day is bad

¹⁰¹ Thomas, Nagel. *The Possibility of Altruism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979. 7.

¹⁰² Plato, *Meno*, (78a-b)

¹⁰³ Plato, *Protagoras*, (358c-d)

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, Douglas. “Doxastic Desire and Attitudinal Monism.” *Synthesis* (2018) 195. 1144

for me.¹⁰⁵ Further, I can want to eat ice-cream late at night but believe fully that this is bad. Moreover, someone can also want to do something wrong, like punch his neighbor, but believe it is wrong to do so. It seems then that believing that P is good is an insufficient condition for wanting P; and it also seems that wanting P is not a necessary condition for believing that P is good, it seems then that believing that P is good is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for desiring P. This is a problem for doxastic evaluativism because its true is contingent on the truth of these claims

(1) If I desire that P, then I believe that P is good

(2) If I believe that P is good, then I desire that P

However, (1) is false because I can want things that I believe are bad. So, the necessary condition can be false, and the sufficient condition remains true. Further, (2) is also false. I can believe that P is good and not want P. That is, the stated necessary condition is not a true requirement for the truth of the sufficient condition.

If believing that P is good is insufficient for wanting P, then believing that P is good cannot be the same as wanting P. For x and y to be the same they cannot be even possibly independent. It is not the case that evaluative beliefs and desires just happen to be independent. If they are logically independent, then they are actually and necessarily independent. Since the belief that P is good and the desire for P are independent, they are not the same thing, necessarily.

Another issue is that beliefs and desires seem to function differently in our psychology. Beliefs are an important element in enabling me to rationally navigate the world. A belief's role

¹⁰⁵ As stated, this is an agent relative claim. I take it, however, if it is bad for me, it can be accurately judged as bad by me.

is to represent the world accurately. Beliefs are conceptual and propositional. Beliefs can be used as reasons for a conclusion. Desires are different. A desire is not the kind of state that enables one to rationally navigate the world. If someone follows his beliefs about how to get out of a room, he will be able to exit the room in a reasonable way (other things being equal). But if one follows his desires to leave the room, there is no saying what he will do to leave. Perhaps, the agent wants to leave out the window. Maybe he wants to dig a hole and tunnel out of the room. Desires are not the kinds of states that one should follow if one wants to rationally navigate the world. Beliefs, on the other hand, are those sorts of states. A belief can be changed by other beliefs. One can provide another person or herself a set of defeaters for a belief. Desires, however, are often belief resistant. I can want P but have all sorts of reasons not to want P. I can want P and believe P is bad, for example. Furthermore, beliefs are often desire resistant.¹⁰⁶ I may want ice-cream to be healthy for me, but this doesn't change my beliefs about it. Desires do not appear to guide an agent to a rational way to navigate the world and desires do not interact with beliefs the way that beliefs interact with other beliefs.

Dennis Stampe argues that beliefs are used as reasons. They are about the nature of the world and if they count as good reasons then they represent the world the way it is so that we may work in the world. Beliefs represent facts. Desires tend to represent something that is not yet a fact. Stampe claims:

If desires do not represent states of affairs that obtain in fact, what they present to us are not reasons for us to act. In view of something that is not a fact—for example, one's having the hat one wants practical reasoning may aim at a conclusion that would make it a fact. It may conclude

¹⁰⁶ I am indebted to Graham Oddie for this and many other insights, and any errors or omissions are solely my own.

in some intention or action intended to bring it about that one has it in fact. That is the kind of reasoning that is practical, the peculiar way it is directed upon fact.¹⁰⁷

Beliefs, if acting as normative reasons, represent facts. That is, they represent states of affairs in the world. Because of this they can act as reasons. The special nature of beliefs is to act as normative reasons is due to the object of the belief. A belief is about an object that exists¹⁰⁸ if it is to serve as a reason. It seems possible to suggest that one may have a false belief. That is, one may believe that the Easter Bunny delivers candy Easter morning. This could serve as a reason for the individual to perform certain actions. This is to be concerned with motivating reasons rather than normative reasons which count in favor of your doing or believing x. So, the accurate representation of an object or state of affairs that exists, is necessary condition for a belief to serve as a reason. Desires are not like beliefs in this way. Desires tend to be about states of affairs that do not yet exist. If a belief is a reason, then it accurately represents a state of affairs. If it is true that desires do not accurately represent states of affairs in the world, then (if beliefs are reason) desires cannot be beliefs. Since desires cannot be used in reasoning the way beliefs are used in reasoning, then beliefs cannot be desires.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, beliefs seem to fare poorly when it comes to reasons for acting. A belief may be something like “that is bad” or “this is not a cake” and so on and so forth. You may even have the belief that you like coffee and the belief that that is a coffee is for me, but with these kinds of beliefs, you cannot give a reason for taking that cup of coffee. The two statements say nothing about the reasons you have for drinking that coffee now. It could be true that I have the belief that I like coffee and the belief

¹⁰⁷ Stampe, Dennis. *The Authority of Desire*, 340

¹⁰⁸ Or plays a role in a fiction or a possible world.

¹⁰⁹ Stampe. 342.

that that is a coffee for me but the truth of these alone is not enough to be an explanatory reason for the action. One needs more. One needs a desire. A desire is a reason for action. It makes the action reasonable. Stampe says:

. . . even if one knows no reason to want the thing, and thinks there is none, the fact that one wants it may still be a reason to try to get it. Even if there is a good reason not to want it, the fact that one does want it may nevertheless itself be a reason to try to get it. It is not the rationality of desire that confers rationality upon action: it is the desire itself, whether it be rational or not. It is not that desire is necessarily at war with belief but that a desire is a reason in itself, and in its own right, the contrary dictates of belief notwithstanding.¹¹⁰

Desires have authority as reasons for actions. Say two people both were playing Monopoly and neither person believes that there is any point to playing monopoly. But say person A differs from person B in that person A wants to play monopoly and person B does not. Given this information there is no explanation for B's playing the game. But A's desire is enough to play the role as reason to act, even though he didn't believe that there was any other reason to play. A belief, however, cannot play the role of a reason if the actor believed the game wasn't worth playing.

Doxastic evaluativism, furthermore, seems to limit the kinds of things that have desires. If a desire just is a belief that x is good, then having the concept GOOD is required for a desire. However, as we discussed previously, it doesn't seem as if non-human animals have the concept

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 343

of goodness, or beliefs to the effect such-and such is good, but they certainly seem to have desires. Chickens, for example, want corn and worms, but it is highly doubtful that chickens have any sort of concept of good or embrace the belief that worms are good to eat. Infants, further, have desires but do not seem to have the concept of goodness or beliefs about what is good. Doxastic evaluativism seems to entail the following conditional statement:

1. If S wants P, then S believes that P is good.

However, the antecedent can be true while the consequent false.

2. If S believes P is good, then S possesses the concept of GOOD
3. S does not possess the concept of GOOD.

What follows from this is a contradiction: From 1 and 2 we get:

4. S does not want P (1-2, MT)

But the doxastic evaluativist (DE) holds that S does want P (when S is either an infant or a non-human animal). Therefore, we get:

5. S wants P

When we put 4 and 5 together there is a clear contradiction

6. S wants P and S doesn't want P (4, 5)

It seems that desires cannot merely be evaluative beliefs.¹¹¹

2.4.2 - Perceptual Evaluativism

Dennis Stampe holds that the difference between beliefs and desires are the role they play in determining the rationality of action. Stampe claims that the propositional content of both desire and belief is the same (e.g., "that I have a new car"), but the way the content is represented

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 344.

differs with comparing belief and desire. Beliefs represent their states of affairs as obtained. Desires, on the other hand, represent the states of affairs as being good if they were to obtain.¹¹² The mere belief that P gives no reason to obtain P. It just represents P as obtaining. The desire, however, does give a reason for action. The reason is that the desire represents the obtaining of P as good.¹¹³ The desire is not caused merely by a belief that P. I can believe that this is a computer but not want the computer. I can also believe that this is a good computer but not want the computer. The belief that “I have P” does not capture the essence of the meaning of the phrase “I want P.” The desire is *ideally* caused by something’s being good and the state of affairs wanted appearing good to the subject.¹¹⁴ That is, desires, for Stampe, are value seemings. Of course, a belief can represent a state of affairs as good too. It may be the case that S believes that P is good but does not want P (as in my computer example). But to carry to this further, in this case, the computer does not *seem* good to S. S can then believe or know that the computer is good, but the computer can fail to seem good to S.¹¹⁵ The object of a desire *seems* good to S or strikes S as good. This differs from beliefs.

Stampe holds that there is a difference between S *holding* that P is good and P *seeming* good to S. The analogy Stampe uses to make sense of the difference is perception. Stampe claims, “desire is a kind of perception. One who wants it to be the case that p perceives something that makes it seem to that person as if it would be good were it to be the case that p

¹¹² Stampe, 355.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 356.

and seem so in a way that is characteristic of perception.”¹¹⁶ A desire acts as a kind of sensitivity. The sensitivity involved in desire is produced by a mental mechanism being ideally caused by the “apparent goodness of a state of affairs.”¹¹⁷

A desire being a kind of perception acts to justify beliefs. We often form beliefs from our perceptions. The perceptions themselves are not true or false and are not something I could have external reasons for. If the apple seems good to me, the “seeming good,” being a perception itself, is not something I could have reasons for or against.¹¹⁸ It nevertheless constitutes a reason for action. The reason for action here is a fact. Namely, the fact that “it seems_d as if that (as it may be) nonactual thing would be good.”¹¹⁹ Desires, Stampe contends, like perceptions, indicate something. Sight indicates, for example, that there is a desk in front of me. My perception of a desk is reason for me to think that there is a desk there. The perception of the desk is a normative reason for the belief that there is a desk. Desires indicate that something would be good. Some desires may be perceptions of needs. Stampe argues that if one is in a state, call it state Z, where Z is an internal state of the subject. Suppose Z is the need of water. The causal sequence leading to the desire for water would amount to the Z state causing bodily sensations indicative of the need of water, which in turn, cause the desire for water. It certainly would be good for S to get water if S were in Z. This desire, within Stampe’s theory, could amount to a perception of the state of depletion.¹²⁰ Desires then can function as an indication that a need. Further, it seems

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 359.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 360.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 363.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 364

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 374.

clear that if I need P, P would be good for me. That is, if P is a genuine need and not merely a presumptive need.

Perceptual evaluativism holds that for S to desire P is for S to see P as good. Perceptual models are an improvement over doxastic models because they do not hold that a necessary or sufficient condition for desire is an evaluative belief or judgement. The perceptual evaluativist maintains that belief about goodness and desire are independent. A desire, on this model, can be construed as a value seeming. Graham Oddie argues for this position. These value seemings, he claims, have epistemic priority over the evaluative judgement.¹²¹ Value seemings must be prior to beliefs about values. For example, it seems as if pleasure is better than pain. This seeming could be identified as an intuition. However, according to Oddie a value seeming cannot be an intuition. An intuition is a kind of belief and rational belief is based on appearances. Rational beliefs about value must be based on value appearances.

Pain's seeming to be worse than pleasure gives a defeasible reason for the belief that pain is worse than pleasure. I can believe that x is good but not see it as good. In this case, the evaluative judgment is not based on a clear value seeming. Sometimes evaluative judgments are formed rationally. That is, through a series of critical thought processes. Eventually, the judgment will rest on something seeming good or bad. Evaluative judgments are justified and developed because of a value seeming. Value seemings, therefore, cannot be solely based on evaluative judgments because reasonable judgments rely on some value seemings. Value

It could also amount to a perception of the sensation's indicative of the need or water which causes the perception of the need for water.

¹²¹ Oddie, Graham. "Value Perception Properties and Primarily Bearers of Value." in Bergqvist, A. & Cowan, R. (2018). *Evaluative perception*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 242.

seemings, further, cannot be merely doxastic since the cognition about the values often rests on the states of affairs seeming to be valuable.

One may wonder, if a desire is just a value seeming, then why is it that two normally functioning people can fail to want the same thing? Like any kind of perception, a desire depends on your perspective.¹²² The closer you are (within reason) to something the better you see it; the more important someone is to you the more you care about that person. The more you care about someone, the more you want good things for them. Two people can have well-functioning cognitive systems and different desires, just as two people can have well-functioning visual systems and see objects differently, if they are in different spatial positions. We stand in different social, cultural, and caring relations than others do. Therefore, we may perceive something to be valuable while another person may not. Seeing P as valuable (or desiring P) as opposed to believing P is valuable, allows the perceptual theory to account for moral motivation. That is, someone will *necessarily* want to pursue something if they see it as good. While I can believe that P is good but not want to pursue it, if I see P as good, and seeing P as good is desiring P, then I am going to be drawn to P.

The “seeing” discussed here amounts to something akin to Dretske’s non-epistemic¹²³ seeing. Dretske claims, “[...] there is a way of seeing such that for any proposition, P, the statement 'S sees D' does not logically entail the statement 'S believes P'.¹²⁴” It may be possible that for any perception to operate one needs some set of beliefs. That is, some mental doxastic framework may be required for recognizing perceptible objects. However, it doesn’t follow that

¹²² *Ibid.* 247.

¹²³ Non-doxastic is a more fitting term, in my opinion.

¹²⁴ Dretske, Fred. *Seeing and Knowing*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 6.

for S to perceive P, S must have at least one belief about P. It seems true that for S to perceive *that P*, S must have a concept about P. In order to see that P, one must be able recognize that P. This suggests that S has a concept of P. Otherwise S would not be able to identify that P.

Seeing as, though, doesn't appear to require beliefs or concepts about the perceptual object. S may not have concepts about goodness or about what S is experiencing. In a desirous experience, S represents P as good in a way much differently than if, say, S came to believe that P is good by deducing from some theory of goodness learned as a child. Furthermore, it seems that desires are not fundamentally propositional.¹²⁵ If I want a water, then it is not the case that I merely desire that I *have* a water. I want to drink water. Further, according to Oddie, it may be that the object of desire is a property rather than a state of affairs.¹²⁶ If A desires to win the gold and B desires to win the gold, they want the same thing, but they do not want the same state of affairs. If A wins, B will be disappointed and vice versa. A's desires to have the property of winning the gold – the same is true of B.

There is a significant amount of debate about whether or not evaluative properties can be represented in perceptual experience. On the one hand, it seems they cannot. Our perceptions of evaluative properties may end up being evaluative judgements. It could be said that what we perceive are not the high-level properties of gracefulness or kindness or goodness, but rather our perceptual system picks out the low-level properties such as lines, and motion, and shape. Since value and beauty are high-level properties, our perceptual system does not represent these states. Therefore, evaluative perception, the idea that our perceptual system can represent these high-level evaluative properties, is false. This, however, seems to assume that evaluative perception is

¹²⁵ As Oddie suggests, there are propositional desires – however, if properties are true objects of desire the propositions become a subset of the class of properties.

¹²⁶ Oddie, Graham. "Value Perception Properties and Primarily Bearers of Value," 251.

nearly identical to visual perception. It seems as there are many forms of perception that are not visual there is normative reason to grant that our evaluative experiences are doxastic.

Furthermore, the more one knows, the better one is at picking out these high-level properties. This contrast between the novice and the expert may indicate that evaluative perception (EP) is really a matter of evaluative judgment. It could be claimed one is not really seeing evaluative properties. One is making evaluative judgments about organizations of low-level properties. While this may be a worry about evaluative perception it is not an unsurmountable problem. One arguing for evaluative perception need not claim that we come to knowledge about value from perception alone; nor does one need to claim that knowledge about value does not involve reason and perceptions. One simply needs to hold that perceptual input is required for evaluative knowledge.¹²⁷ It could be replied that one may arrive at evaluative knowledge by being taught about right and wrong and good and bad without the aid of evaluative perception. This, however, seems dubious.¹²⁸

If our evaluative knowledge comes from judgement alone, then it becomes unclear how we can genuinely know what goodness is. Imagine that we gain all of our evaluative knowledge from reason alone. It could be the case that you hold both that “pleasure is good” and that “good is good.” The first identity claim, “pleasure is good,” is questionable. That is, as GE Moore pointed out, pleasure being good is an open question.¹²⁹ Moore, discussing health, claims, “It may be true, indeed, that by ‘healthy’ we do commonly imply ‘good’; but that only shews that

¹²⁷ I am indebted to Graham Oddie for this point.

¹²⁸ Cf. Bloom, Paul, *Just babies: The Origins of Good and Evil*, Ch. 1.

¹²⁹ G. E Moore, *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922. Ch 2

when we so use the word, we do not mean the same thing by it as the thing which is meant in medical science.¹³⁰ The identity claim, "pleasure (or health) is good," is not the same in meaning as the claim that "good is good." "We can always be in doubt about "pleasure is good" but not about "good is good." So, pleasure cannot be good.

A reply¹³¹ may be that as informative posterior analytic truths teach us, we can have different concepts about a referent of a rigid designator.¹³² The word "pleasure" does not mean the same thing as the word "good;" nor does the concept PLEASURE¹³³ have the same extension as the concept GOOD. Nevertheless, the object may be the same. Just as H₂O is identical to water without the concepts (WATER and H₂O) being identical so too natural properties may be good despite our concepts of them differing. It does seem as if GOOD is significantly different than WATER. One difference is that H₂O has a structure and a function and so the reduction from water to H₂O is easier to comprehend. The structure of water explains water's behavior. GOOD is not functional in this way. It does not seem reducible in the way water is. The following claim is informative: "If all x's are water, then all x's are H₂O." The claim, if all x's are good, then all x's are good" is not. Goodness, it can be claimed, does not appear to be

¹³⁰ Moore, 44.

¹³¹ Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Ch. 6.

¹³² A rigid designator refers to the same object in all possible worlds in which that object exists. See: LaPorte, Joseph, "Rigid Designators", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/rigid-designators/>>.

¹³³ Following the literature on concepts in philosophy of mind when word is in all caps, it denotes a concept rather than that thing. For example, "water" refers to H₂O and "WATER" refers to our concept of water.

analytically reducible to anything else. It very well may be true that pleasure is identical to goodness.¹³⁴ But PLEASURE is not functionally reducible to GOODNESS.

If we form our evaluative knowledge from judgement alone it seems we would be a position to make significant moral mistakes. We would be missing essential information about the evaluative nature of the world. Just as someone who has never seen the color yellow could know (as Mary did) all the facts about yellow and still be missing essential information about yellow. Further, imagine Tom. Tom has lived his entire life in a sensory deprivation tank. Kept alive by advanced technology. Bob works with Tom. But Bob is outside Tom's tank. Bob teaches Tom about morality. He does this by sending propositional information directly to Tom's frontal lobe while restricting information flow to his other three lobes to only include information necessary to sustain life. Tom learns facts about right and wrong. He learns things like intentionally telling false information in order to deceive wrong. He is taught that life is good. He is taught moral philosophy (with the exception of moral psychology). Now imagine that Tom's deprivation slowly reduces, and the other areas of his brain begin receiving and processing information. He is able to have emotions and experience more of his mental life. One day Bob allows Tom access to a window into the lab. The next morning, upon glancing out the window, he sees Bob's lab partner, Craig, violently attack Bob. I propose at that moment Tom learns something new. That is, previously, he had only evaluative judgements. Now, it seems, Tom has experienced badness. It is not that he was doxastically outraged. Tom was too stunned, and it happened too quickly for him to have time to form intelligible judgements. Rather, Tom sees Craig's action as bad.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ I am not supporting hedonism. This is hypothetical.

¹³⁵ Many psychologists hold that evaluation is perceptual. See for example, Bloom, Paul. 2013. *Just babies: the origins of good and evil.*; Wundt, W. (1907). *Outlines of Psychology*. (C.H. Judd, Trans.). Engelmann. LeDoux

Immediately after the attack, imagine, Craig flees the building. With all the commotion Linda (another researcher) enters to see Bob lying on the floor. She begins helping him. She revives him, talks to him, calls the police, and bandages his wounds. I propose upon seeing this, Tom, again, learns something new. This time, Tom experiences goodness.¹³⁶ That is, he sees Linda's act as good. Until this point Tom only had a very limited notion of "good" and "bad." It is akin to what Mary knew about the color red prior to seeing red. While Tom knew about things called "good" and "bad" he did not have an internalized referent. In many ways, his judgments were meaningless. It was not a judgement *of* anything. He had no conscious encounter with good or bad until he experienced it. At the moment of evaluative perception, Tom had a referent to identify as good and as bad. Prior to that right and wrong and good and bad were merely words with various relations to other words. It seems then that evaluative perception is, at least from time to time, required for evaluative judgements to occur.

The difference then between the novice and the expert is learning. The more one knows the more aptly she can perceive. It is certainly possible that knowing something allows you to see it in some ways. One may see a pine tree, but without the concept, she does not see that it is a pine tree. It is possible that one can perceptually represent rich properties regardless (e.g., being a pine tree or being elegant) with and without the assistance of concepts. Dustin Stokes gives the example of the duck/rabbit and the Miller-Lyer illusion (the illusion where the two lines appear different in length, but they are identical in length). Stokes claims that one is not seeing low level

J. (2012). "Rethinking the emotional brain." *Neuron*, 73(4), 653–676. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2012.02.004>; Bolles RC, Fanselow MS. A perceptual-defensive-recuperative model of fear and pain. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

¹³⁶ In Bloom's study on moral sense, he discovered that pre-linguistic children reacted a harmed individual spending time with someone who harms them in the same way they do to physical objects passing through a solid object. For this reason and many others, Bloom holds that a moral sense is not only innate but also perpetual. Bloom, Paul. 2013. *Just babies: the origins of good and evil*.

properties in this context, she is seeing the high-level properties. If an objector claims that the low-level properties are the only properties being perceived she faces a trilemma:

1. One can claim that there is no phenomenal difference between seeing the illusion as a duck or as a rabbit – but this seems clearly false.

2. One can agree that there is a phenomenal difference but claim it supervenes on doxastic differences. This seems wrong since you *can* believe that the lines are the same length in the Müller-Lyer illusion and still see them as different lengths. Stokes also claims that there is not anything that it is like to have a belief. If this is true, it is unclear how phenomenal differences can supervene on beliefs. Bridging the gap between non-phenomenal activity and phenomenal activity appears to be a big task and defense of this would be notoriously complicated.¹³⁷ Furthermore, one may see something as being one way and judge it to be a different way. Phenomenology can differ from the judgment. For example, a white globe illuminated by a red light might appear red. One can judge it to be white though it looks red. *Seeing as* seems to be a sensory perceptual phenomenon since it can come apart from judgment.

3. It may be that when one sees a duck-rabbit, he sees the low-level properties (shape etc.) but then makes the judgement that *this is a duck*. The higher-level property of being a duck is represented here though a belief rather than a perception. Stokes argues that what we are observing in these kinds of cases is not merely the low-level properties. It is an organization of the low-level properties. We are, according to Stokes, observing a duck gestalt. If this is correct, this seems to indicate that our perceptual system has the capacity – prior to the duck judgement—to see something *as* a duck. If one is willing to grant that we can perceive

¹³⁷ Levine, J. “Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap.” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 64. 354-361, 1983; Jackson, F. “Epiphenomenal Qualia.” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 32. 127-132, 1982.

something like duck-gestalt, this amounts to granting the perception of the high-level properties. Higher level properties are not limited to physical events such as color vision or duck-gestalts. These high-level properties include evaluative properties as well.

Desire, according to Stampe, is a state in which it seems to one as if it would be good were a certain state of affairs to obtain. Desires, for Stampe, are a form of evaluative perception. Desire, Stampe holds, is a state in which the thing wanted is represented as such that it would be good were that state of affairs to obtain.¹³⁸ When it comes to theories of desire, this seems to provide an improvement from, at least, the motivational theory with regard supplying a reason for someone to desire P. If S is merely disposed to bring about P this gives no explanation for the desire. There may be no good reason to desire P. One can have disposition x and have absolutely no reason for possessing x. It seems, however, that we often have a reason for wanting the things we want. Given Stampe's statements above it seems that if S sees P as good, thereby desiring it, there is a good reason for S to bring about P. The evaluative perceptual model then appears able to make sense of our intuition that we have reasons for wanting what we want. Desires often provide defeasible evidence for a value judgement. Since desires are value perceptions, according to Stampe, the desire not only typically gives rise to the value judgement, but it also provides the grounds for the value judgement. It is on the basis of the value perception that S has the value judgement P.

Perceptions, often, must occur prior to beliefs about the world. One can have a perception without having a belief about it. I can see a plate *as* broken without seeing *that* it is broken. Howard Margolas and Jonathan Haidt have both argued that seeing-that is different from

¹³⁸ Stampe, Dennis. "The Authority of Desire." *Philosophical Review* 96 (July): 335-81, 1987. Cited in Oddie, Graham. *Desire and the Good: In Search of the Right Fit in The Nature of Desire*. Eds Fredrico Laura and Julien Deonna. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 33.

doxastic representation.¹³⁹ When Margolas and Haidt speak about “seeing-that” they appear to have in mind what I am referring to as “seeing as.” Regardless, Margolas, Haidt, and others argue that much of our affective psychology is lower-level; that is, most of our affect is perceptual. Oddie connects this to perceptions of value. He claims, “By analogy the appearance of S as good would also have to be a non-belief entailing representation of the goodness of S, if it is to serve as evidence for the non-inferentially justified belief that S is good. A state can appear good to one without that entailing that one believes or judges that it is good.¹⁴⁰ One may accept the presentation of the object in the mode of interest as good, but this acceptance doesn’t entail that this person needs to grasp the concept of goodness.¹⁴¹ It does seem as if desires function much like perceptions do. Desires, like perceptions, are belief resistant. Consider, again, the Muller-Lyer illusion.¹⁴² Here we all know that the lines are the same length, but we cannot help but see them as different lengths. From personal experience, I know that it may be that I see a container of orange juice as half-full, but know it is completely full. Desires are like this. I can know something is bad, but still want it. I can know that it will not give me pleasure or that it will harm me or that I will regret it later, and I can still want it. When, however, we talk about desires as something seeming good, this is to claim that desires imply some sort of evaluative perception.

¹³⁹Cf. Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*. (Harlow, England: Penguin Books, 2013). Ch. 2.

¹⁴⁰ Oddie, Graham. “Desire and the Good: In Search of the Right Fit,” 36

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 52

¹⁴² In the psychological literature for evaluative perception, the Müller-Lyer illusion is often referenced.

Robert Audi holds that there is an analogy between visual perception and a type of evaluative perception (i.e., moral perception).¹⁴³ Moral properties, according to Audi, are narrowly observational. They are seen through non-moral states of affairs. In addition, moral properties themselves rely on other properties. Some action is wrong not because of the action itself, but because of something else. For example, a distribution is unjust when amounts of more goods are distributed to one group over the other when each group is considered to have equal needs for, and claims on, those goods. If it is true that moral properties are (consequential) based on non-moral properties, then it seems reasonable to suppose that perception of moral properties also relies on them.¹⁴⁴

When we see a violent act, we see it as wrong. This *seeing-as* is not inferential (no premises are involved) but seeing the behavior and seeing it as wrong are connected because the causing of pain or destruction is what makes the violence wrong. Rightness and wrongness are connected to the perception of the non-moral properties upon which the moral perception is grounded.¹⁴⁵ Moral perception, Audi holds, depends on one's moral sensibility. This sensibility can be fitting or not. Seeing something *as* unjust or wrong does not imply that the perception is conceptual.¹⁴⁶ Seeing *that* it is wrong would indicate conception.¹⁴⁷ But seeing *as* doesn't. It is

¹⁴³ Audi, Robert. "Moral Perception Defended." In Bergqvist and Cowan (eds.) *Evaluative Perception*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). 50

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 59-60.

¹⁴⁵ This fits nearly with the Moral Foundations theory that particular values are innate and products of activation of system 1. cf., Joseph, C. M., Graham, J., & Haidt, J. (2009). The end of equipotentiality: A moral foundations approach to ideology-attitude links and cognitive complexity. *Psychological Inquiry*, 20(2-3), 172–176.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 66.

¹⁴⁷ Again, I want to note that when Margolis and Haidt etc., discuss "seeing-that" they often appear to conflate it with what I am calling "seeing as."

possible for someone to see something as wrong and not have a concept for what makes it wrong.¹⁴⁸ It may be that seeing something as wrong involves taking the state of affairs to have a property in a way that presents it as wrong. So, seeing a violent action as wrong may not involve the concept that action A is wrong.¹⁴⁹ From the perception, you may form the judgment that A is wrong. Audi also thinks that you can see something as wrong prior to having a proposition related to the perception (as in the discriminatory delivery of injections to children). One sees some state of affairs A as wrong, but what makes A wrong, in his view, are a set of non-moral properties. So, one sees the wrongness through the set of non-moral properties.¹⁵⁰

Moral concepts and moral understanding may help a subject become a better moral perceiver.¹⁵¹ But moral concepts and moral understanding are not necessary conditions for seeing something as wrong.¹⁵² People with little cognitive ability can see something as wrong. A child, Audi claims can cry from both hurting himself and from being treated cruelly by his nanny.¹⁵³ But the cruelty from the nanny would be seen as wrong by him and, as Audi suggests, a necessary condition for improving a skill (beliefs in this context) need not be present in each case of that skill's manifestation. While beliefs about actions and theories about morality may

¹⁴⁸ This appears to be typical. Haidt etc., have studied moral explanations in relation to moral judgments. Haidt et al, found that people tend to make moral judgements first (automatically and perceptually) and then go on to make ad hoc rationalizations of these judgements. He has convincing cases in chapter 2 of his *Righteous Mind*.

¹⁴⁹ It may merely activate an emotional module. After this, one makes moral justifications.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 60-66.

¹⁵¹ There a lot written about this topic. I found this article specifically insightful. The authors take what they know about a moral context and it enables them to make more accurate moral predictions. Lin, Ying & Hoover, Joe & Portillo-Wightman, G J & Park, Christina & Dehghani, Morteza & Ji, Heng. (2018). *Acquiring Background Knowledge to Improve Moral Value Prediction*. 552-559.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 67.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 79.

improve your ability or impede your ability to see something as wrong, they are not required for seeing something as wrong.¹⁵⁴

Perceptual beliefs are not based on other beliefs. The justification of perceptual beliefs does not rest on beliefs.¹⁵⁵ It must rest on the aptness of the perception itself. One can have an experience of something without experiencing that it is something in particular. I can perceive this computer without *seeing that* it is a computer. Moral seeings (or seemings) can occur without the propositional attitudes.¹⁵⁶ Perceptions can dispose you to believe something, but that doesn't indicate that perceptions are doxastic. This also doesn't imply that evaluative perception cannot be penetrated by concepts. Concepts and perceptions tend to work together. However, perceptions and concepts can also operate independently.

Cognitive penetration can improve one's moral perception as mastering a skill can improve other actions. This penetration (via learning or intuition or emotion) can improve one's knowing-how to see something as wrong or right. But knowing-how is not merely doxastic. Knowledge can focus our attention, which affects how much we see.¹⁵⁷ It also may habituate a particular module to activate or not activate in face of a particular stimuli. For example, one can learn to not be afraid of spiders. This would be to decouple the fear response with the external trigger (spiders). Learning to identify particular instruments or movements, moreover, can enable a listener to perceive more nuance than a novice. Audi prefers to refer to this as cognitively empowering a subject rather than being penetrated conceptually. If I know A is wrong, I can

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 69.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 71.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 73.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 75.

attend to instances of A in other events better than I could if I didn't know A is wrong. This suggests that perception happens *before* conception. Without concepts we can see the plate *as* broken, but we cannot see *that* the plate is broken.¹⁵⁸ We form perceptual beliefs about the plate from seeing it as broken. These perceptual beliefs are conceptual, but the perceptual event of seeing the plate as broken does not have to be.

Some hold that there is a phenomenological¹⁵⁹ difference between your perceptual experiences before developing a recognitional capacity and after.¹⁶⁰ After you have the capacity, you can perceive particular observational¹⁶¹ properties.¹⁶² Before this, you were not able to. Heather Logue gives the example of going to the ballet. Before learning what a graceful pirouette is you would not see the dancer as performing one. But when you learn what a graceful pirouette is, you can then experience the dance in a much richer way. The perception is much more nuanced, you can see more. If prior to learning about ballet you do not see the pirouette as graceful (since you do not know about pirouettes) and after learning about ballet you can see the pirouette as graceful, then this seems good evidence for the claim that you are seeing an observational property of the pirouette that you were unable to see before.¹⁶³ This may be due to the fact that either (1) you do not have the capacity to recognize the observational properties, (2)

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁵⁹ Heather Louge prefers “observational”, see her: “Can we experience aesthetic properties?” in *Evaluative Perception*. Eds. Anna Bergqvist and Robert Cowan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 42-57.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Louge appears to hold that observational properties are identical to, supervene, or are coextensive with low-level properties, 49-52.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 45-47.

this observational property was not present previously, (3) your perceptual system wasn't functioning properly, or (4) you were in unideal perceptual circumstances. This seems to underline what Audi is expressing when he talked about cognitively empowering.¹⁶⁴ The more one knows the more of the existing properties one can see. For Audi, moral properties, are perceptual through concrete states of affairs. For Logue evaluative (in this case aesthetic) properties are observational through low-level properties.¹⁶⁵

Prior to knowing or having concepts about graceful dance moves, or injustice, you may see these states of affairs as pretty or wrong. You would not, however, see the richer property: that is the gracefulness of the pirouette or the injustice of the discrimination. It might be claimed that the emotion that comes along with knowing more about the grounding properties (that which makes the pirouette graceful and the action unjust) would elicit a value judgement. This might account for the difference in phenomenology. But it could equally be argued that what causes the emotion is the seeing the pirouette as graceful and the discrimination as unjust (I.e., the value seeming).

We may be able to account for value seemings as desires which could be pre-cognitive. As in Audi's case and in Logue's example, the more we know the better position we are in to see something as good or bad – or as graceful or as unjust. Cognitive penetration, in agreeing with Audi, is not inharmonious with evaluative perception. Rather, it seems as if cognitive penetration amounts to cognitive empowerment.¹⁶⁶ It gives you the know-how to see evaluative properties more aptly.

¹⁶⁴ Audi, Robert. "Moral Perception Defended," 58-79.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.* 51

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 74-75.

Furthermore, it appears that certain affective states occur too quickly to be cognitive processes. Zajonc's experiments in the 1980's yields clear evidence that affective states can be had without advanced doxastic states. An affective state can be elicited in as little as 1ms while a doxastic state requires 8ms. Zajonc et al., demonstrated that certain affective states occur before the cognitive state occurs.¹⁶⁷ Kemps and Vandierendonck present evidence that some affective states require cognitive processing and cannot occur prior to the 8ms mark.¹⁶⁸ While this may seem to be evidence against the perceptual model, it is not. The evidence that Kemps and Vandierendonck present only relates to sophisticated emotions such as disgust or grief. I take it that most emotions are doxastic¹⁶⁹ but some of the simple emotions (like most desires) are basic insofar as they represent approbation or disapprobation. A desire is very simple. It is experienced as a pull that captures your attention and motivation. Kemp's and Vandierendonck's objection is sufficient to demonstrate that not all emotions are pre-cognitive. However, it is insufficient to demonstrate that all affective states are cognitive. Because Zajonc et al have demonstrated that one can elicit an affective state prior to cognition, some affective states are more akin to perceptual states than doxastic states.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Zajonc, R. B. Feeling and thinking: Preferences need no inferences. *American Psychologist*, (1980) 35(2), 151–175. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.35.2.151>, see also Zajonc, R. B. On the primacy of affect. *American Psychologist*, (1984). 39(2), 117–123. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.39.2.117>

¹⁶⁸ Kemps, E. B. F., Erauw, K., & Vandierendonck, A. The affective primacy hypothesis: Affective or cognitive processing of optimally and suboptimally presented primes? *Psychologica Belgica*, (1996), 36(4), 209–219.

¹⁶⁹ I hold to a form of cognitivism with regard to emotions that implies that all emotions are value judgements related to one's well-being.

¹⁷⁰ Zajonc, R. B. (1980). Feeling and thinking: Preferences need no inferences. *American Psychologist*, 35(2), 151–175. There is also a host of other experiments that support the hypothesis that evaluation occurs automatically and doesn't require beliefs or other thought, though evaluation may (1) be innate and (2) be caused or constituted by beliefs. I mention these experiments throughout this project. A fair amount of the content I obtained through Daniel Kahneman, Paul Bloom and Jonathan Haidt's work. Their work also shaped the direction of my own research into this topic. See references throughout.

Desires, according to Oddie, are value seemings. That is, like Stampe, Oddie holds that desires are a form of evaluative perception. An important aspect of human desire is motivation. Oddie appears to hold that value seemings can motivate. It is unlikely that one could be acquainted with goodness, claims Oddie, and have an aversion to it or be indifferent to it. The perception of goodness, according to Oddie, can explain the motivation to bring the good state about.¹⁷¹ These two conclusions (1) that value data comes from non-belief entailing representations, and (2) that value appearances are desiring-entailing, are satisfied by his account of desire.

Another reason why models like Oddie's are superior to the doxastic model is that it is clear that beliefs and desires come apart. One may believe that P is good, but not experience P as good. Further, one may desire P, yet believe that P is bad. So, S may experience P as good, but believe P to be bad. Oddie gives the example of Satan, in *Paradise Lost*. Here Satan desires what is evil. The character says: "evil be my good."¹⁷² Oddie thinks this may be close to contradictory.¹⁷³ This seems unclear to me. It may be that Satan desires good things, but in the wrong way. Satan desires power, which is a good. However, he desires all the power which is itself a good but is not good *for him* to possess. The problem may be one of either an imbalance¹⁷⁴ of desires or a problem of rationality, not a problem with desiring the bad.

This may, however, be what Oddie meant. If a desire is a value seeming then one would not be able to want bad things. The subject, it seems, may be confusing his instrumental for his

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 37.

¹⁷² Oddie, Graham. *Value, Reality, and Desire*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005). 65.

¹⁷³ Oddie, 66.

¹⁷⁴ That is a dysfunctional distribution of goods or value seemings.

intrinsic desire. His instrumental desire is for evil to be his good.¹⁷⁵ I suggest the character's intrinsic desires are for power and freedom. EVIL stands for power and freedom. These are goods. When Satan, however, claims to want evil to be his good, the claim is nearly contradictory because (1) desires are value seemings, and (2) the content of the desire itself appears inconsistent. Evil is not good and good is not evil. Oddie, further, argues that one may believe that an action is best, while not desiring to take it; there is, however, some tension there. This tension can be explained, some claim, because desires represent their content as good.¹⁷⁶ One does not need a rich concept of good to *see* something as good. Oddie doesn't need to assume that the desire's object is on the surface¹⁷⁷ of the perception. It seems we frequently mistake our instrumental desires for our intrinsic desires. It may be that the subject desires a cup of coffee, but really, he wants the enjoyment that he would get from the caffeine.

St. Augustine's desire to steal pears also appears to serve as a counter example to the guise of the good.¹⁷⁸ If a desire is seeing something as good, then one cannot intrinsically want bad.¹⁷⁹ Augustine appears to offer a counter example. In *The Confessions II*, Augustine describes wanting to steal pears only because it was wrong. He describes not wanting the pears themselves. His desire was not for anything good about the pears.¹⁸⁰ He says he enjoyed the sin (the act of

¹⁷⁵ Whatever that amounts to or whatever form this takes.

¹⁷⁶ Stampe, D. "Defining desire," in J. Marks (ed.), *The Ways of Desire*. (Chicago: Precedent 1989); Oddie, G. *Value, Reality, and Desire*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁷⁷ By this I mean the object of the instrumental desire.

¹⁷⁸ Augustine and Hampl, *The Confessions*, II, 4,9 ff.

¹⁷⁹ I am indebted to Gideon Manning for pressing me on this point.

¹⁸⁰ Augustine and Hampl, *The Confessions*, II, 6, 17.

theft) and not the pears. While he ate some, it tasted pleasurable only because it was stolen.¹⁸¹ Augustine, in the same book, claims many things that give us pleasure have an allure of goodness. We often love not the wrong thing but what of is *in* the wrong thing. The theft, however, he says “had no shadow of beauty.”¹⁸² It “even lacked counterfeit beauty: pride.”¹⁸³ Later, however, after trying to find the good in which he was delighting (in the theft), he stumbles upon an intrinsic good, friendship. The theft, he says, “gave us a thrill and we laughed to think we were outwitting people who had no idea what we were doing. . . . Why could I have not enjoyed this same pleasure from doing it alone? Perhaps because it is not easy to enjoy a joke by oneself¹⁸⁴” He goes on to say he would never have done this alone. He seems to imply the only reason he wanted to steal was to participate in friendship. Friendship, Augustine holds, is the highest good.¹⁸⁵ Augustine identified several intrinsic goods that are objects of intrinsic desire (thrill, community, etc). But it seems most fitting to say friendship was the good in which he was delighting. Augustine writes, “Let the others only say, ‘come one, let’s go and do it!’ and I am ashamed to hold back from the shameless act.”¹⁸⁶ The loyalty foundation is central in our sense of well-being.¹⁸⁷ I suggest his loyalty or in-group foundation¹⁸⁸ was activated by participating in the groups’ act of the theft. This is similar to the feeling of being part of

¹⁸¹ The content I am pulling from is Confessions II 4,9 -9,17.

¹⁸² Augustine and Hampl, *The Confessions*, II, 6, 12.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* II, 6, 12.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* II, 9, 17.

¹⁸⁵ See *The Confessions* book IV.

¹⁸⁶ Augustine and Hampl, *The Confessions*, II, 9, 17.

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. First edition (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), pt. III, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy1211/2011032036-s.html>.

¹⁸⁸ These foundations will be discussed later in this chapter.

something larger when one is at their team's game, or at dance clubs, or music festivals, or at religious worship services. This foundation activates our hivishness.¹⁸⁹

Döring and Eker present an objection to the perceptual model.¹⁹⁰ Döring and Eker are responding to the idea that if P is seen in a favorable light, then it seems good. They posit Pollyanna who is (unfairly) sentenced to six years in prison. She is an optimist. So, her attention is drawn to see the positive aspects of being in prison. They claim that in this case Pollyanna sees being in prison in a favorable light but does not desire to be there.¹⁹¹ This, however, seems too quick. Pollyanna does not see being in prison as good. She sees the good things about it. She wants those things, given her condition. Furthermore, seeing P in a favorable light does not seem to have the same extension as seeing P as good. I can see being in prison in a favorable light, but this indicates I am just looking for positive aspects of it.

A more serious objection made against the perceptual model is that it cannot make sense of standing desires. To desire P is to see P as good which entails a conscious perceptual state. This makes sense of occurrent desires but not standing desires. It might be that having a standing desire for P amounts to being disposed to seeing P as good (that is being disposed to have an occurrent desire for P). But being disposed to see P as good is not the same as seeing P as good.¹⁹² This objection will be addressed later.

¹⁸⁹ Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, pt. III.

¹⁹⁰ Sabine A. Döring and Bahadır Eker, "Desires without Guises: Why We Need Not Value What We Want," 79-117.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 92-93.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* 96-99.

The next objection I will consider is the so called “death of desire principle.” This principle has it that if I desire P and obtain P (or believe I have obtained P) then my desire for P dies. I may desire to continue to have P in the future, but I do not desire to have P now. Federico Lauria¹⁹³ claims that the death of desire principle is a problem for the perceptual model. It seems one would have to either give up the death of desire principle of the perceptual model. Given the perceptual model, one cannot see P as good and believe P obtains. But this seems to happen frequently. For example, if I desire to have some pizza and I am eating pizza, I can still see eating pizza as good but fail to have the desire to eat pizza. I can desire to meet my friend and upon seeing him my desire dies but I still see meeting my friend as good. Because I can see P as good and believe p obtains, then it appears as if the perceptual theory is false. That is, I see P as good but do not want P. The simple perceptual model, apparently, fails to account for both standing desires and the death of desires.

In reply to the objection that a perceptual model cannot account for standing desires, Graham Oddie¹⁹⁴ suggests that as it is possible to have unconscious perceptions, it is also possible to have unconscious perceptions of value. Standing values may just be unconscious perceptions. He also states that standing desires may be dispositions to desire. This disposition will be manifested in particular conditions. If I am in a coma, then it seems reasonable to claim that I am still disposed to desire particular things. If I am asleep, I also am disposed to desire certain things. And while I am not attending to P, I may have a standing desire for P just so long

¹⁹³ Lauria, Federico. “The ‘Guise of the Ought-To-Be’: A Deontic View of the Intentionality of Desire”. in *The Nature of Desire*, eds. Julien Deonna and Federico Lauria (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 137-16

¹⁹⁴ Oddie, Graham. “Desire and the Good: In Search of the Right Fit,” 29-56.

as I am disposed to see P as good whenever I attend to P or imagine P. It seems these replies offer an explanation that sufficiently address the problem with standing desires.

Further Oddie claims that there are thin desires that remain after the prospective desires dies. A thin desire for S is the preference for S over not-S. A prospective desire is a desire connected with beliefs about one's ability to bring about the desired state of affairs.¹⁹⁵ So, if I take it that if I do A I will get S, and then in doing A I come to believe that S, my prospective desire for S dies. But I still prefer S to not-S, so my thin desire still remains. There is a desire that is a consequent of a satisfied desire, namely a thin desire. This objection also conflates goals with desires. I have addressed this above in more detail. However, Oddie suggests that goals and desires come apart. A goal is a state that one is aiming at and doesn't have to be a state of mind. For example, it can be a goal of someone to run a 5-minute mile. Running a 5-minute mile is not a state of mind. However, desires do have to be a state of mind. Someone may have a goal as the object of desire. Since desires and goals do come apart, they cannot be the same thing.¹⁹⁶

The perceptual evaluative models of desire can handle the objections to it. Further, one could claim that they do a good job in explaining both the reason for the desire (I desire P because I value P) and the motivational aspect of desires. I perform actions I believe conducive to acquiring P because I see P as good. However, it should be added that there still is a *gap* between the action or the motivation for action and seeing P as good (in an agent neutral manner). I can see that P is good but not be moved to do anything about P. Now, it does seem true that I can desire P and not do anything to try to obtain P. But the motivational aspect of desire is an incredibly common and important feature of desire. Someone does not want P if they

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 30-ff.

¹⁹⁶ Graham Oddie, in comments on previous draft, 2021.

see P as uninteresting to them or as bad for them. This is to be distinguished from *believing* that P is bad for them. There are many cases of someone wanting P and believing that P is bad for them. Furthermore, an agent-neutral position can only offer general reasons for action or for wanting P. What is needed to connect motivation and reasonableness with desire is an agent-relative account of desire. It seems only if the reason can be relativized to the subject, will the subject have reason to act. Let's turn to that next.

CHAPTER THREE: AGENT RELATIVITY OF DESIRE

3.1 – Agent Relativity and Vulnerability

When S desires P it seems that it is because S finds P appealing.¹⁹⁷ Because desires are for things that seem good to or for the subject, it seems as if desire is self-regarding.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, there is something in the act of desiring that appears connected to self-interest in a way that other kinds of perception are not. Like emotions, desire seems to be self-regarding.¹⁹⁹ That is, if I want P – I want P for me. The problem with this is that there appear to be cases in which S can be said to desire P and P has no impact on S. For example, S may desire that a turtle be rescued that S sees on TV. But if the turtle is saved, it will in no way, appear to, impact S's well-being. However, it could be claimed that wanting the turtle to be saved is related to having compassion for the turtle. I take it that if I have compassion for the turtle, then I am allowing the turtle into my "circles of concern." Compassion has three cognitive elements: the judgment of the size of the disvalue (a seriously bad event has befallen someone); the judgment of the non-desert (this person did not deserve to suffer); and the eudemonistic judgement (this person or

¹⁹⁷ Even in the most horrendous cases (e.g., desiring to murder) the agent is desiring to do these activities or is doing these activities because he sees them as good for him. Murders, I presume, feel powerful or derive pleasure from the wicked act. They see the feeling of power and the pleasurable experience as good for them. I will defend the claim that power and pleasure are goods. This is not to say I think that any means to power and pleasure is permissible. Murder is a horrendously evil action. I will defend the sub-point that many moral failures come from an incongruity of what I am calling "root desires" (similar to but different from what Arpaly calls intrinsic desires) and what I am calling "motivational desires" (instrumental desires).

¹⁹⁸ The phrases "Good for" and "good to" or "good simpliciter" are different in meaning. The phrase "good for" is agent relative while the phrase "good simpliciter" is agent neutral. It certainly seems as if S can see P as good without seeing P as good for S. So, the phrase "good simpliciter" does not entail agent relativity. I will, however, argue that all desires are agent relative and so all desires are self-regarding.

¹⁹⁹ I take it that all emotions require vulnerability in that of another. If one isn't vulnerable, then nothing can impact them. If one doesn't value P then she isn't vulnerable to P. If she values her life and someone puts it in danger, something she values is in danger. This kind of vulnerability, I hold, is a necessary condition for all affect.

creature is a significant element in my scheme of goals and projects, an end whose good is to be promoted). The, commonly held, Aristotelian judgment of similar possibilities is an epistemological aid in forming eudemonistic judgement -- not necessary, but usually very important.²⁰⁰ I think Martha Nussbaum may be right when she says:

for compassion to be present the person must consider the suffering of another as a significant part of his or her own scheme of goals and ends. That is, she must take the person's ill as affecting her own flourishing. In this way, she is making herself vulnerable in the person of another. It is that eudemonistic judgment, not the judgement of similar possibilities, that seems to be a necessary constituent of compassion.²⁰¹

The attachment to the concerns of the suffering person (or turtle in this case) is itself a form of self-regarding vulnerability. It isn't that we could be in the same position as the sufferer that is a necessary part of compassion, rather it is a psychological mechanism that allows us to see our vulnerabilities. Vulnerability is a relational state. It is a relation between a subject (S) and the subject's representation of another (O): either in O's entirety or in O's parts. This representation as it pertains to O, is S's sense of O's well-being²⁰² (either in part or in whole: SOW). This SOW is such that S's sense of well-being (SSW) is partly constituted by SOW. If S is vulnerable in O, then any sense of reduction O's well-being (reduction of SOW) constitutes a reduction in SSW. The part whole relation of "sense of well-being" is worth noting. S can be vulnerable in parts of O. This is by S sensing aspects (or parts) of another (O) as particularly interconnected with SSW. S then would be vulnerable in S's sense of the security and or quality of those parts of O's well-being (SOW-P). The same goes for SOW in its entirety (SOW-E). That is, any reduction in O's

²⁰⁰ Nussbaum, Martha. *Upheavals of Thought*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2001). 315-320.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* 319.

²⁰² Or well-being*

overall well-being (as perceived by S), will constitute a reduction in SSW. In this case, (SSW) C (SOW-E). Here the “C” represents the relation vulnerability. Vulnerability is one directional. The statement, [(SSW) C (SOW-E)], implies that SSW is constituted by S’s sense of aspects of O’s well-being. For S to be vulnerable in O doesn’t imply that O is vulnerable in S. This vulnerability allows us to have sympathy and care for the sufferer. The person who lacks compassion cannot place the suffering into his circles of concern. He does not care for the one suffering. Because of this, he has no compassion for them. If he does care for them (*insofar as* he thinks “it would be terrible to suffer like that!”), then he has pulled them into his circles of concern and has become vulnerable in this attitude. Therefore, he cares to some extent. Compassion may be had to the degree one cares for or loves others.

Desire is similar. To desire that the turtle be saved is, or is similar to, S caring for the turtle. The desire is self-regarding because S sees (or experiences) the safety of this turtle as connected to S’s own well-being (even if in a very small way).²⁰³ If S is caring and has compassion for the turtle, S can then have clear self-regarding desires related to the turtle. If S has a self-regarding desire for P, then S will be motivated to obtain P or bring P about. If S sees the turtle’s well-being as wrapped up in S’s own well-being, then that would tend to motivate S to act to bring this about. This, however, is an agent-relative account of desire. It is not clear that if S sees a turtle’s safety as good (in an agent-neutral sense), that S would be motivated to do anything about it. The agent-neutral account of desire (Oddie and Stampe’s) does not explain the very common motivational feature of desire. Take these examples:

(1) The case of the selective giving. Imagine Tom gets two letters in the mail. (a) The first letter is asking for money for elephant conservation. Tom likes animals. And Tom believes

²⁰³ [(SSW) C₁ (SOW)] the subscript “1” is intended to represent degrees of vulnerability.

that this is an effective aid agency. (b) The second letter Tom receives is from OXFAM. In this letter they send along with it a photo of starving children. Tom sees both causes as good. But Tom has a personal connection to human children and not to elephants. In case (a) Tom sees giving money to the animal aid agency as good. In case (b) Tom sees donating the money to OXFAM as good for himself. Tom, I claim, will be motivated to donate in case (b) but not in case (a). The difference is that Tom has an agent-neutral perception in case (a) but in case (b) he has an agent relative perception. That is Tom is more vulnerable in humans than he is elephants.²⁰⁴

(2) The phone calling case. Imagine that you fully believed that calling a stranger would make that person happy. Imagine that you see it as good to make someone happy. That appears good to you. Now imagine that you know that calling your friend Matt would make Matt happy. In the first case, you may see calling a stranger as good but not at all be motivated to do it. You may not even want to do it. If you, however, see calling your friend as good, then I suggest you will be motivated to do it (other things being equal). The reason is that in the first case you would be promoting an agent neutral good but in the second case, it is an agent relative good. Cases 1-2 indicate that an agent neutral account of desire may give one general reasons to act. They do not give *you* motivating reasons to act. On the other hand, the agent relative position gives *you* motivating reasons to act. The agent relative account, therefore, is better positioned to explain the behavior of desire than the agent neutral account. One of the reasons is that in an agent relative account you have subjective reasons to act. In an agent neutral account, you do not. Thomas Nagel states:

²⁰⁴ (SSW c SHW) > (SSW c SEW)]

Formally, a subjective reason is one whose defining predicate R contains a free occurrence of the variable p. (The free-agent variable will, of course, be free only within R; it will be bound by the universal quantification over persons which governs the entire formula.) All universal reasons and principles expressible in terms of the basic formula either contain a free-agent variable or they do not. The former are subjective; the latter will be called objective.²⁰⁵

If S has an agent relative reason, then S has a reason-based motivation to (for example) act in a specific instance. An agent neutral reason gives no person a reason for *him* specifically to act. It gives anyone the same reason to act. Agent relative reasons may be specific to individuals but, it is claimed, they can be shared with other agents. Derrick Parfit claims:

Nagel's subjective reasons are reasons only for the agent. I call these agent-relative... When I call some reason agent-relative, I am not claiming that this reason cannot be a reason for other agents. All that I am claiming is that it may not be.²⁰⁶

This, however, does not seem completely right. If S has agent relative reason x to do y, it could take the form: "It would be good for S to do y." There is a sense in which this reason is the same for any agent: "y is good to do." It could be stated as: The predicate "good for" can be true of any subject, but without a specific stated subject the reason is no longer relative to any agent. When the subjects (i.e., S or P) are added to the sentence the reasons are no longer the same. The

²⁰⁵ Nagel, Thomas. *The Possibility of Altruism*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1970), 91.

²⁰⁶ Parfit, Derrick. *Reasons and Persons*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1984), 152-153.

first reason to do y is (1): “doing y is good for S.” When we take P, and apply the reason to P, we get a different reason (2): “y is good for P.” Since P and S are not identical (1) and (2) have different subjects and are therefore, different reasons.²⁰⁷ When P holds “doing y would be good for me so I should do y” he is not holding “doing y would be good for S so I should do y.” It seems that an agent relative reason for S cannot be the same reason for P. As an illustration we could offer the agent relative reason: (3) for all x, if x is a person and x believes eating B is good for x, then x will likely eat B.

I take it, even though, (3) contains the “good for” modifier, it is agent neutral. (3) is applicable to everyone but may not be a motivating to anyone. When S takes on the attitude of (3) in such a way that S replaces x, then S has an agent relative reason to E. Prior to this, perhaps S believed E was good for x but in a way that didn’t connect specifically to S. That is, S had an agent neutral reason to hold an agent relative reason. S holds (3). And if S holds (3), then S has a normative reason to E because S is an x. S has reason to hold that any person should E. But (3) gives S no direct reason for S in particular to E. Because of this, (3) will not motivate and it will fail to motivate until the agent represents himself as a member of x, replacing the universal quantifier with the existential.²⁰⁸ Otherwise, any x can B and not be motivated to E. Similarly, just because S sees something as good, it does not follow that S is motivated to do a specific good.

²⁰⁷ Of course, in many ways they are the same objective reason, X is good.

²⁰⁸ This then would activate the moral foundation of ingroup/loyalty. This activation is motivational. While, these moral foundations are unconscious but activate moral emotions and much of affect. While “moral foundations” is the correct term, I think it is a bit of a misnomer. These foundations seem not only to explain and unify moral behavior, but they also explain much about our sense of well-being. For an interesting discussion on the scope of the “moral foundations” see: Piazza J, Sousa P, Rottman J, Syropoulos S. “Which Appraisals Are Foundational to Moral Judgment? Harm, Injustice, and Beyond.” *Social Psychological and Personality Science*. 2019;10(7):903-913.

I may see going to war as good in general and not want to do it. It being good is a reason for anyone. It, however, is not a motivating reason for me. I may see saving a stray dog as good but have no motivating reason to do it. Now if you have an agent relative reason to do something, then it motivates you because it is specific to your subjective circumstances and psychological history. To see something as good, I suggest, is necessary for motivating desire but it is not sufficient for motivating desire. Just because something is seen as good, it doesn't follow from this that one will want to make it happen. This is important because most desires, for humans at least, include this motivational aspect. It is true that if you want to do something, then you see it as good. It is not true, however, that if you see something as good, then you will want to do it. Seeing something as good is a necessary condition for seeing something as good for your-wellbeing. When the reason or (in this case) perception is agent relative, then the agent has a reason for her. Otherwise, since the reason is not relativized to the agent the reason alone is not motivating.

Seeing that P is good for me provides a closer connection between the perception and the motivation. This kind of evaluative perception is agent relative, which resonates well with the idea that a desire, at least, includes a felt need.²⁰⁹ This felt need – that is the feeling that “the world must be like this” - seems to be essential to occurrent desires.²¹⁰ We may be able to account for value seemings as desires which would make some desires pre-doxastic. Beliefs do play an important role in desires. For example, the more we know, the better position we are to see something as good or bad – or as graceful or as unjust. Cognitive penetration, in agreeing

²⁰⁹ Fredrich, Daniel. “Desire Mental Force and Desirous Experience,” 67-68.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

with Audi, is not inharmonious with evaluative perception. Rather, it seems as if cognitive penetration amounts to cognitive empowerment. It empowers you to know-how to see evaluative properties more aptly.

3.2 -Desire and the Self

It may seem tangential to talk about the self in a project on desire. Even more, it may appear odd that I have devoted so much of this project to the self. As I hope to show, however, our concept of self is central to understanding the essence of desire. I hope to show that it is not the just the case that desires are self-regarding. Rather, because of the nature of the self, desires are necessarily²¹¹ self-regarding. We are all selves. You are you - and I am me. But what is this thing we call “the self”? And can it change over time? It seems when we reflect on ourselves – we are confronted with a transparent bundle of mental events. The self – to borrow another metaphor – is like an onion. The more we peel back the layers of this onion to find the “true self” the more we discover that the layers merely compose the self. It seems as if there is no true onion beyond these layers. In some senses this seems right. But in other ways, it seems wrong. I want to affirm, without arguing for it, that there is a self which persists through time. This I will call the “metaphysical self.” The metaphysical self is what persists through change. There is a sense in which you are the very same self now that you were when you were very young. Grant me, for the sake of discussion, that there is such a metaphysical self. I do not think that this metaphysical self plays any prominent role in our conscious daily lives. Further, I do not think that this metaphysical self is what we are talking about when we talk about ourselves. I find it favorable to conceive of the metaphysical self as perhaps something like a haecceity. That is the property

²¹¹ Nominally.

of being identical to yourself. This has some issues, I know – but let’s presume it for now. The notion of self that is under investigation when we wonder about “the self” or the “true self” is what I call the “psychological self.”

The psychological self involves a set of concepts and perceptions. The psychological self is where all the action occurs. It is the self we all know. It includes perceptions, beliefs, concept and the variety of the habituated²¹² active modules²¹³ of our social relations.²¹⁴ The psychological self is not persistent. Your unified concept of your mental states and social relations is your psychological self. However, the psychological self does not reduce to this set of interacting concepts. The psychological self involves your intuitions, perceptions, values, desires, beliefs, character traits, emotions, and self-concept. Your psychological self can change over time. Consider the law of identity:

If $x = y$, then everything true of x must be true of y and conversely.

For example: If at time t I believe that it is raining and at time t_1 , I no longer believe it is raining, then to a (while insignificant) degree, your psychological self has changed. There are some more significant changes too. Consider Meursault in Camus’ *The Stranger*. Meursault began emotionless. The opening lines of the book emphasize this bleakness: “Mom died today . . . or

²¹² I am referring the Fodor’s criteria of automaticity. (See. Fodor, J. (1983). *The Modularity of Mind: An Essay on Faculty Psychology*. MIT Press.)

²¹³ I am assuming a general Fodorian modularity of mind. A massive modularity seems plausible but not required for the point I am making. It’s major criticism (in my view) seems to be its inconsistency with evolutionary psychology. However, modules certainly can be evolved, and their triggers merely activated by stimuli that it wasn’t originally evolved to respond to. For example, computer problems or complex social interactions. These stimuli trigger a module’s switch because it sufficiently replicates the original manifestation condition. In addition, it appears that the objection from evolutionary psychology is unjustified (see Chiappe, D., Gardner, R. (2012). The modularity debate in evolutionary psychology. *Theory & Psychology*, 22, 669–682)

²¹⁴ Social relations activate our “group module.” This is an essential aspect of our sense of well-being. This paper discusses this topic directly and refers to research related to this topic. Marshall, Douglas. (2016). “The Moral Origins of God: Darwin, Durkheim, and the Homo Duplex Theory of Theogenesis.” *Frontiers in Sociology*. 1. 10.3389/fsoc.2016.00013.

was it yesterday?" He drinks coffee and eats and doesn't talk during his mother's wake. He kills someone but explains the incident in passive language. However, near the end of the book, Meursault recognizes his active role in the killing. He, at this point, starts to have an enriched emotional life. This is a significant change in the psychological self. Another remarkable case is that of Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. The story begins with an interesting example of what can be thought of as a disassociation with one's moral character. Consider:

One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin. He lay on his armour-like back, and if he lifted his head a little he could see his brown belly, slightly domed and divided by arches into stiff sections. The bedding was hardly able to cover it and seemed ready to slide off any moment. His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, waved about helplessly as he looked. "What's happened to me?" he thought. It wasn't a dream.²¹⁵

The key line is the last. "What's happened to me? he thought." Combine with the fact that Samsa has turned into a "horrible vermin." When one acts contrary to one's character, frequently one will say "I wasn't being myself." Or when someone persistently acts out of character it is typical that he will reflect on his life and see himself as a "horrible vermin," thinking to himself "what's happened to me?" The relation between Samsa and the psychological self is the very common phenomenon of character alteration. This can happen to such a degree that, upon reflection, the subject doesn't recognize himself. This indicates that while the person is, in one sense, the same

²¹⁵ Franz, Kafka. *Metamorphosis*. Page 1. Accessed: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5200/5200-h/5200-h.htm>

– in another sense he is not. The sense in which he is not the same is what matters for our subject. This individual has a different psychological self. That is, his character, values, emotions, and self-concept have changed. If you will grant me my interpretation of Samsa’s alteration, then that evening Samsa saw himself as one kind of thing and in the morning saw himself as another kind of thing. Later in the book you see Samsa getting used to his new legs, his new methods of eating (or not eating), his skin, his desires, etc. These have changed so much that, while initially, he doesn’t recognize himself, as time passes, he begins to accept his situation.

A question related to the self and desire is this: How is it that something or someone can affectively impact you? Why do we care if someone is rude or if something bad happened to something or someone else? It seems to me that the only way for something to impact an individual like this is for the events to be significant to the subject. This significance, in my view, is related to our concept of self and our attachments. The “psychological self” (the self that we all know) is not persistent, it is in flux.²¹⁶ There is also psychological evidence that there is no persistent psychological self. Essentialism with regard to the psychological self is difficult to justify. It seems as if there is good reason to think that many of our attributes and behaviors are inconsistent, unstable, and lack integration rather than being consistent, stable, and evaluatively integrated. This debate is called the globalism-situationism debate.

²¹⁶ It could be claimed that the metaphysical self is all that there is, and the psychological self is merely a set of properties that the metaphysical self has. In some ways I affirm this view. However, my point here is to focus on what people typically refer to as “the self.” In my opinion when people talk about their selves, they imagine their values, beliefs, attachments, desires, relations etc. They do not, in my mind, imagine an unchanging simple substance that gains and loses properties. I do not want to get into the metaphysics of self, so I will not be discussing it further. The sense of the self I am interested in discussing is that sense of the self which is psychologically related to desire and all affects. I take it this sense of self includes character as well.

Globalism has it that personal attributes are (1) consistent, (2) stable, and have (3) evaluative integration. For character and personality traits to be considered (1) consistent, they must reliably manifest themselves in behavior across diverse conditions that would typically elicit the trait. These conditions can vary significantly and may elicit the behavior in degrees. For example, if someone is honest, he will typically tell the truth in painful and pain-free situations. For a character trait to be (2) stable, is for it to dependably manifest itself repeatedly (in trait manifesting relevant conditions) in behavior over long periods of time.²¹⁷ For a personality or character trait to be considered to have (3) evaluative integration, is for its “evaluative valence”²¹⁸ to be statistically related to the manifestation of other trait(s) with comparable “evaluative valence.” For example, gratitude tends to rise and fall with peacefulness. When many diverse traits are integrated in this way a concrete personality is constituted. In our everyday attitudes we treat globalism as true. I see my son as honest and my friend as conservative. Frequently, people attribute character traits to themselves or to others to explain and predict behavior. The global character model has been a cornerstone of the idea of moral character from Aristotle through Korsgaard.

Situationism, on the other hand, amounts to the rejection of globalism.²¹⁹ It too has three central tenets. The first (1) is that behavioral variation (in a population) is much more dependent on situation than any one person’s disposition to behave in a certain way. When predicting an

²¹⁷ For example, Tom (an adult) has been a truth-teller in most circumstances for much of his life.

²¹⁸ Valence” in psychology typically refers to the nature of an emotion or state: an example of positive valence is “joy” while negative valence is “anger.” These states relate to and affect each other. “Evaluative,” as Doris uses it, seems to refer to the evaluation of traits on type indicator or personality tests, such as MMPI2 or the Myers-Briggs, 16PF, etc. “Evaluative valence” then is the evaluation of how traits or situations, in this context, elicit positively or negatively states of psychological affairs.

²¹⁹ See John Doris’s *Lack of Character* and Gilbert Harman’s “Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology.”

individual's behavior in a particular situation it is safer to suppose that he will adhere to his population's situation-relevant norm rather than any characterological disposition discovered in a personality (paper and pen) test. The second tenet (2) is that situation trumps character attribution. It has been found that many people tend to fail to act consistently (in a globalist sense) in differing situations with respect to standards associated with a trait they are thought to have. The third tenet (3) is that character is not evaluatively integrated. Given certain situations, some trait's evaluative valence is unrelated to an associated trait. Indeed, evaluatively inconsistent dispositions may reside in any one person.²²⁰ For example, one may be both a very grateful and an extremely aggressive person. Some situationists (e.g., Harman and Doris) allow for what they call temporally stable, local, and situation-specific traits. This accounts for the appearance of stable character traits. For example, someone may be reliably helpful at x , given condition c , and reliably unhelpful at y in condition j . Harman's and Doris's situationism is a rejection of globalism's first and third tenets with a modified acceptance of its second.²²¹ I now turn to three experiments²²² that have been used to support situationism.

An experiment is set up in a suburban shopping plaza. The major ingredients are a phone booth, random callers, and Alice the paper dropper. As a caller (the subject) exits the phone booth, Alice (a confederate)²²³ drops her folder and papers scatter across the caller's path. On some occasions a dime is placed in the change slot before the caller arrives; at other times it is

²²⁰ Doris, 24-25.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² Keep in mind there are scores of studies with similar results.

²²³ A confederate is someone who is "in" on the experiment. They are typically research assistants or researchers.

not. The experimenters found that “only 13 percent of dime finders failed to help, whereas 96 percent of non-finders were similarly passive.”²²⁴ It seems here that finding the dime directly influences the subjects’ behavior.

Columbia University undergraduates participated in a marketing research study. As the subjects arrive a young woman meets and provides them with some questionnaires. The examining room is divided in two by a curtain. Once the young woman hands the subjects the paperwork she withdraws behind the curtain. Subsequently, a terribly loud crash sounds followed by the cries of a woman in serious distress. The prerecorded noises were arresting and realistic. The results demonstrate that subjects’ responses changed depending on variations of the situation. When the subjects were alone 70% offered to help. Only 7% attempted to help when paired with an unresponsive confederate; and when two unacquainted subjects were paired only one of the pair in 40% of the groups offered to assist. The subjects, however, did not think they acted wrongly. They stated that would have helped if they thought there was real danger.²²⁵

The results of Stanley Milgram’s obedience experiments are often discussed within situationist literature. In these experiments,²²⁶ groups from the New Haven community were invited either into a Yale laboratory or a rundown office building away from the University. The subjects were called “teachers” and the confederates were called “students.” The students were to answer a set of questions that the teachers asked. If a student answered a question incorrectly, the teacher was to administer an electric shock to the student (which, of course, was staged). As the

²²⁴ Doris, 32.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

²²⁶ Milgram, Stanley. “Behavioral Study of Obedience.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (1963).

students continued to answer incorrectly, the teacher was instructed to increase the shock's voltage. Students would scream in pain, complain of heart trouble, and insist that they be freed from the room. As the shocks became more powerful the screaming and complaining became more hysterical until 330 volts were (purportedly) reached and the student was unresponsive. The experimenter would then prod the teacher to continue to ask questions - and state that "a non-answer is to be treated as a wrong answer." From 1960 to 1963, Milgram ran variations of this experiment with approximately 1,000 subjects from differing socioeconomic backgrounds. The results of some of these experiments are quite surprising.

In Milgram's first set of experiments, 65% of teachers administered the experiment's final 450-volt shock. The vast majority of the teachers were upset by their actions. At some point, every teacher stopped and quibbled with the experimenter; some offered to refund their pay for participating. Many subjects continued to shock the students at the gentle but firm assertion of the experimenter "you must continue;" simultaneously subjects would "sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips, groan, and dig their fingernails into their flesh."²²⁷ And yet many responded to every word of the experimenter.²²⁸ In one of the experiments only a single teacher persistently refused to administer shocks under the 300-volt level.²²⁹

The self is not a persistent, consistent, stable, integrated whole as the position of globalism ²³⁰would suggest. Our selves are changing all the time. There is a sense in which it is obvious that there is no persistent psychological self. But there is also a sense in which we see

²²⁷ Milgram, 375.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 377.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 371–378.

²³⁰ Or essentialism

that we are the same person that we have always been. The psychological self is a unified and systemized concept of our mental attributes/dispositions, which is not experienced independently of social relations.²³¹ The evidence from the situationism/globalism debate gives the position I will support more explanatory power. By this I mean that, given my explanation of the self and how the self relates to passions (or affect), one should rationally expect the results that the above experimenters got more than other results. Further, my explanation, I hold, makes the data more likely to occur than if other explanations of the self were true. The self should be expanded to include social relations. As social relations change so too does the psychological self. Moreover, we should expect divergent behavior as a person comes into contact with extreme or statistically unusual circumstances.

3.3 -The Possibility of Affect

This brings us back to our question. How is it possible for something or someone to affectively impact you? It appears that when I care for some object, things and events related to that object can impact me. Harry Frankfurt holds that caring is essential for making sense of our volitional lives and for making a life beautiful.²³² There is a sense in which this is true. I agree that without caring we could not have emotions. If I do not care about my house then if someone harms it, I will not be perturbed. If I do not (more precisely) value my house, then I do not care for it. If I do not value it, then I am unable to have any emotions about it – unless it impacts something I do value. When I value my home, I can have an emotion or desire about it. Prior to

²³¹ Social relations are important because through them we experience impact on our affective and non-affective states. It also seems difficult to imagine someone considering themselves independently of their social relations (daughter, friend, etc.).

²³² Frankfurt, H. "On Caring." In his *Necessity, Volition, and Love*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998) ,132, 174.

this, desires and emotions regarding my home would be impossible because it is impossible to have a passion about something without valuing something related to that object. Without caring or valuing we likewise could not enjoy life, including music and art. Life would indeed be flat.

The affective nature of our psychology enables us to evaluatively interact with the world. This affective nature of humanity is vital to our well-being. The power of music, for example, to make us more human, more vulnerable in another, more and less attached, is nothing short of one aspect of the of part of the color of life. Beauty stops you, claims you, and then sends you.²³³ Beauty changes you. It elicits emotions, exposes desires, and fosters attachments. Affect, or what the 17th and 18th century thinkers called "the passions"²³⁴ —emotion, desire, attachments—are the color of life. Without them, as Frankfurt suggests, life is gray and flat. We do not live in a flat, black and white world. We live in a world full of beauty and love. A world full of pain and sadness. But our world is beautiful - the color of life can hurt, but without it we are flat, impoverished versions of ourselves. It is incredible how the subtleties that form us into who we are can be captured in literature. Below is a quote from *A Room With A View* that illustrates the power of music.

It so happened that Lucy, who found daily life rather chaotic, entered a more solid world when she opened the piano. She was then no longer either deferential or patronizing; no longer either a rebel or a slave. The kingdom of music is not the kingdom of this world; it will accept those whom breeding and intellect and culture have alike rejected. The commonplace person begins to play, and shoots

²³³ Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Volume I: Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982).

²³⁴ The term "affect" also refers to these passions.

into the empyrean without effort, whilst we look up, marvelling how he has escaped us, and thinking how we could worship him and love him, would he but translate his visions into human words, and his experiences into human actions. Perhaps he cannot; certainly he does not, or does so very seldom. Lucy had done so never.²³⁵

Agnieszka Jaworska claims that when you care about something you give it importance which entails plans and policies concerning the object.²³⁶ Frankfurt and Jaworska are onto something, but they fall short of explaining how external objects and states of affairs can impact us, affectively. I think, however, that Monique Wonderly's work on attachment gets us closer to an answer. Wonderly states:

What I will call "security-based attachment" has been largely ignored by philosophers. In this form of attachment, the agent experiences a particular object as a *felt need*, such that her senses of well-being and general competence suffer without it. . . . this attitude is largely self-focused and marked by an integral connection between its object and the agent's felt security.²³⁷

For one to have a passion (desire, emotion, etc.), one must be attached to the object in a particular way. Imagine that there is a piece of paper on my desk. Say this piece of paper was

²³⁵ Forster, E. M. 1879-1970. *A Room With a View*. (New York: Penguin, 2000), 28.

²³⁶ Jaworska, "A. Caring and internality." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 74(3), (2007). 529–568. 561.

²³⁷ Wonderly, Monique. "On Being Attached," 224, emphasis added.

one of the few items given to me by my deceased mother. Now imagine that an acquaintance takes this piece of paper, puts his gum into it, and throws it away. This will likely anger me. But why? The reason is that I have imbued the paper with importance. I see it²³⁸ as good for me. That is, I see in some way connected to me and that my well-being is in some sense wrapped up in its well-being*²³⁹. This vulnerability in another is what is required for affect.²⁴⁰ Now, imagine a similar situation. Imagine that there is a piece of paper on my desk. Say this piece of paper's origin is unknown to me. Now imagine that an acquaintance takes this piece of paper, puts his gum into it, and throws it away. This will likely not make me angry because I have not imbued it with importance. I do not value it. My representation of its well-being* does not impact my well-being.

²³⁸ Or its continued existence

²³⁹ I am using “well-being*” because it may be odd to think of a piece of paper as having well-being. But I think sense can be made of this. A piece of paper has a function. This function is (largely) given to it by its user. If this piece of paper is important to me because its form reminds me of my dead mother, then the this is its function. Its function then is to remind me of my mother. It does this by preserving the general integrity of its current visible structure. The general integrity of its current visible structure, then is my referent of “well-being*” when it comes to the piece of paper. However, I will use “well-being*” to refer something like integrity or proper function. That is, it will refer to that set of properties which constitute proper function or integrity. That is, well-being* refers to properties sufficiently analogous to those of well-being.

²⁴⁰ Recall the definition of Vulnerability. It is a relation between a subject (S) and the subject's representation of another (O): either in O's entirety or in O's parts. This representation as it pertains to O, is S's sense of O's well-being (either in part or in whole: SOW). This SOW is such that S's sense of well-being (SSW) is partly constituted by SOW. If S is vulnerable in O, then any sense of reduction O's well-being (reduction of SOW) constitutes a reduction in SSW. The part whole relation of “sense of well-being” is worth noting. S can be vulnerable in parts of O. This is by S sensing aspects (or parts) of another (O) as particularly interconnected with SSW. S then would be vulnerable in S's sense of the security and or quality of those parts of O's well-being (SOW-P). The same goes for SOW in its entirety (SOW-E). That is, any reduction in O's overall well-being (as perceived by S), will constitute a reduction in SSW. In this case, (SSW) C (SOW-E). Here the “C” represents the relation vulnerability. Vulnerability is one directional. The statement, [(SSW) C (SOW-E)], implies that SSW is constituted by S's sense of aspects of O's well-being. For S to be vulnerable in O doesn't imply that O is vulnerable in S. If x requires the vulnerability relation, then x is self-regarding.

When I have passions (or affect) regarding something or someone, I am attached to that person or thing. Attachment,²⁴¹ in my view, can be reduced to the vulnerability relation. That is, attachment amounts to one seeing his or her well-being as wrapped up in the well-being²⁴² of another. When we are aware of harm that befalls the object of attachment, we feel it. When we know of good that happens to the object of our attachment, we are happy about it. Attachment is the mind's great propensity to spread itself on to reality.²⁴³ That is, we have passions (or affect) about (or regarding) the "external" world *via* our psychological attachments. These attachments relate to our psychological self in an important way. When we lose something, we are attached to (as I mentioned above), it is painful. According to Jaworska we have:

Joy and satisfaction when the object of one's care is flourishing and frustration over its misfortunes; anger at agents who heedlessly cause such misfortunes; pride in the successes of the object of care and disappointment over its failures; the desire to help ensure those successes and to help avoid the failures ...²⁴⁴

In addition, Wonderly claims:

Even when one's attachment object is inimical to her well-being, there is a sense in which she just doesn't feel right without it. Experiencing someone or something as a felt need is a central feature of the form of attachment at issue in

²⁴¹ This is true across the styles of attachment.

²⁴² Or well-being*

²⁴³ Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. 1: The Text. Ed. by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007). (T 1.3.14.25; SBN 167)

²⁴⁴ Jaworska, A." Caring and internality," 560–561

this paper. This, however, is not the whole of it. In attachments of the relevant sort, one's felt need for an object involves a particular kind of desire and a particular kind of harm when that desire is left unsatisfied.²⁴⁵

We are distressed because when we experience our well-being as wrapped up in that of another and we lose the other, we lose part of ourselves. This is not a metaphysical claim. Rather, it is a psychological claim. As Marcus Aurelius says, "our life is what our thoughts make it."²⁴⁶ This doesn't mean that the nature of the universe depends on our thoughts. Rather, frequently our well-being depends on how we interpret and understand the world around us. So, the loss of an attachment figure feels as if part of the subject is missing even though part of the subject is not missing, metaphysically. We can adjust our evaluation and thoughts about life. That is, life is lived in the mind and the mind and reality do not always align. The passions (or affect) are not extra-mental. They must be dealt with psychologically. For a state of affairs to affect a subject, they must interact with the subject's psychology. The only way for humans to experience passions, I argue, is for them to have an attachment to the object or state of affairs.

When we are attached, we incorporate our representation of the attachment figure into our concept of self. It seems as if the self is extended to representations of the other and is in this way dependent on the reality of the other. This is similar to Heidegger's being-with-the-world. The "self," in the common usage, is not an isolated monad who happens to have social relations. The self incorporates representations of the other as constituents of itself.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Wonderly, Monique. *On Being Attached*. 228.

²⁴⁶ Aurelius, Marcus. *The Meditations*. Trans. Gregory Hays, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), 4.3.

²⁴⁷ For an insightful discussion about the social foundations of affect see: Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: a social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological Review*. 108, 814–834.

The only way for an individual to impact you affectively is to be mentally represented by you. When something can passionately impact us, that thing is represented as valuable for us. Further, if we are passionately impacted by it, then the representation must be self-regarding. That is, the representation of the other must contain a connection to the self's ends and schemes in life.²⁴⁸ If it doesn't, then it wouldn't impact our passions. Loss or failure to obtain the desired end creates pain and a sense of loss. Darwin claimed that we experience distress and sadness when we lose something important to us.²⁴⁹ These states are related to our behavior and emotions. We are frustrated and left feeling empty and confused when we lose something important. Neimeyer, Prigerson, and Davies claim that, grief “. . . prompts us to 'relearn the self and 'relearn the world' in the wake of loss.”²⁵⁰ The reason why bereavement or grief prompts us to relearn the self is because the attachment figure was represented as part of the self (you see your well-being as wrapped up in the object's well-being). When an individual loses his attachment figure, he actually feels as if part of him has been torn away. The bereaved must recontextualize the new facts about the world so that he can continue to flourish. That is, he must learn how to reorder his concept of self so that he can pursue his goals and aims in life, given the loss. Psychologically, the self actually has lost part of itself, and we feel the rending.²⁵¹

doi:10.1037/0033-295X.108.4.814, and DeWaal, F. (2006). *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

²⁴⁸ Affect requires the vulnerability relation.

²⁴⁹ Darwin, C. *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (3rd ed.). (New York: Philosophical Library, 1998.), Original work published 1872, 176.

²⁵⁰ Neimeyer, R. A., Prigerson, H. G., & Davies, B. Mourning and Meaning. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 46, (2002), 235-251. – 239.

²⁵¹ The group foundation appears to be absolutely central in one's sense of self and well-being. See Malka A, Osborne D, Soto CJ, Greaves LM, Sibley CG, Lelkes Y. “Binding Moral Foundations and the Narrowing of Ideological Conflict to the Traditional Morality Domain.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. 2016;42(9):1243-1257. doi:10.1177/0146167216653936

3.4 - Are Desires Self-Regarding?

Let's assume that we can have passions without any sort of attachment or extended self. How would this work? To me it is rather unclear. Passions are mental events and the events in the world are not. If we have an extended model of the self,²⁵² then it is clear how one can have passions about things in the world. The reason is that one perceives the world, forms a concept of various particulars, and then these representations interact with each other. To get a clear causal relation we need some kind of mind-to-mind interaction rather than a world to mind interaction. This the relation is less clear when we consider the nature of passions. We are personally invested in the objects of our passions. We value them. This valuing, and the states of affairs that issue from valuing, can be explained by taking the view of the self as attaching to objects in the world, and in so doing seeing one's well-being as wrapped up in that of the other. The mental event to mental event causal relation is clear. The behavior that arises from the passions is also made clear by taking the extended view of the self. However, it seems as if when we disregard the extended view and we consider the causal relation between the world and our passions, an old familiar problem arises. In philosophy of mind dualism faces a causal pairing problem. Gassendi states:

[M]ust not every union occur by means of close contact? . . . how can contact occur without a body? How can something corporeal take hold of something incorporeal so as to keep it joined to itself? . . . Pain involves being acted upon and cannot be understood as occurring except as a result of something pushing in and separating the components and thus interfering with their continuity. [Pain] is an unnatural state, but if something is by its nature homogeneous, simple,

²⁵² This view entails that part of our concept of self is our concept of others as they relate to the self.

indivisible and immutable, how can it get into an unnatural state or be acted upon unnaturally? . . . The general difficulty still remains of how the corporeal can communicate with the incorporeal.²⁵³

And, of course, we have the famous objections posed by Princess Elisabeth:

The question arises because it seems that how a thing moves depends solely on (i) how much it is pushed, (ii) the manner in which it is pushed, or (iii) the surface-texture and shape of the thing that pushes it. The first two of those require contact between the two things, and the third requires that the causally active thing be extended. Your notion of the soul entirely excludes extension, and it appears to me that an immaterial thing can't possibly touch anything else²⁵⁴

It is unclear how an immaterial substance can interact with a physical substance.

Jaegwon Kim argues that you cannot have a causal pairing between a body and an immaterial mind. He says, take two guns A and B; say that A kills Adam and B kills Bob. Why didn't A kill Bob and B kill Adam? The answer is A and B, like Bob and Adam, are located within a spatial framework by which they have definite spatial locations. A and B are oriented in such a way that A is aimed at Adam and not at Bob, and conversely for B. So, there is a causal chain from A to Adam and B to Bob that can be easily understood given the positions, orientations, and other physical descriptions of the entities involved. We know why A caused Adam's death: both Adam and A bear a physical relation that connects the two: *ARAdam*.

²⁵³ Descartes, René, John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol II. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). 239. Abbreviated as CSM II.

²⁵⁴ Bennett, Jonathan. "Elisabeth's 1643 letter to Descartes." Translated by Jonathan Bennett. Early Modern Texts. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/cartes1643_1.pdf

Kim argues that mental to physical causation is unintelligible because we cannot put the mind and the body into a causal pairing relation similar to the one Adam has with A. Imagine we have two minds A and B that engage in some event E. A and E, and some relation R cause some physical event P. But B and E do not cause P; perhaps B and E do not stand in relation R. For non-spatial relations like *closer than* or *oriented toward* are only analogously applicable. I can see my computer. So, attention is oriented toward the computer. I can also be thinking of Tom. My thought then would or oriented toward Tom. It makes sense, also, to state that I am closer to my daughter than my boss. This doesn't imply a physical proximity. Interpreting that way, in most cases, would be to miss the meaning. But revealing an informative pairing relation requires more than analogy. How the mental "orientation" plays a pairing role in mental causation needs to be able to connect the (say) perception to the object in the world. Or the belief to the object that caused it. If the mind is immaterial, it seems aboutness requires further explanation. We need to answer the question, how can an immaterial mind have intentional states about the physical world? So, what type of (pairing) relation makes A cause P and not B? Without any physical (spatial) relation no or little sense can be made of this pairing.²⁵⁵ That is, we need some kind of framework that provides a coordinate system that enables substances to

²⁵⁵ This is assuming that mind does not have a physical location as in E.J. Lowe.

have relation R. Without R we have the pairing problem. It is immateriality itself that renders minds incapable of having causal power²⁵⁶ or relations.²⁵⁷

The same causal gap is had when we try to imagine the causal interaction between the passions and the world. If we are not connected (in the way I am envisioning) to the objects of our passions, then the interaction between world and mind becomes what I see to be an unbridgeable gap. Let's consider Kim's causal pairing problem again. Take two objects A and B; say that A elicits a passion in Adam and B for Bob. Why didn't A cause a passion in Bob and B in Adam? The answer is A and B, like Bob and Adam, are located within a psychological framework by which they have definite psychological locations. A and B are oriented in such a way that A is important to Adam and not to Bob, and conversely for B. So, there is a causal chain from A to Adam and B to Bob that can be easily understood given the attachment to A and B. But it is not the case that A couldn't be an object of passion for Bob and B for Adam. There is nothing intrinsic about the objects or the individuals that makes it the case that A causes a passion in Adam and B in Bob. Rather, the relation is due to the attachment Adam has for A and Bob for B. The reason for the attachment can be explained by appealing to Adam or Bob's psychological history, orientations, beliefs, other passions, and properties of the entities involved as they are represented by Adam and Bob. The answer to the question – "Why do we care so much about some things and not others?" is intimately related to (and can be understood by) our

²⁵⁶²⁵⁶ It could be claimed that thoughts cause other thoughts. I find this to be a metaphor, however. When I have one thought (Pizza is good) and then I have another mental state (a desire for pizza), it is not that the thought caused the desire as the momentum of the bullet, its trajectory, Bob's location and mass caused Bob's being shot. Ideal causation (in Stampe's terms) is a decent way to think of what I have in mind. I do not think that meaning has causal power like my car does. Rather, mental events: remind, inspire, fixate, motivate, debilitate, etc. If thinking about A makes B sad, this is not, in my view, a causal "makes." Perhaps B misses A, and the thought of A reminds B of what he is doesn't currently have.

²⁵⁷ Kim, Jaegwon. *Physicalism or Something Near Enough*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005), 84-5.

attachments to the objects. We see our well-being wrapped up in that of another. Therefore, we value and have various passions regarding the other, because we are vulnerable to the other.²⁵⁸ Since the passions necessarily refer to the self, the passions (including desire) appear to be self-regarding mental events. These mental events are self-regarding because they include or entail or make reference to the self-most intimate aspects (well-being). If this is true, then the agent neutral account of desire appears incomplete because if self-reference is necessary for affect and desire is afflictive, then desire is self-regarding. If desire is self-regarding, then desires are agent relative not agent neutral.²⁵⁹

It seems obvious that attachments are self-regarding. They—by their very nature—entail the self. When a S attaches to P, S sees P as a valuable part of S's own life. Desires, like attachments, seem to be self-regarding. The clearest reason to me is that it is psychological necessary for the existence of the passions that the self finds the object of the passion significantly related to something the subject values. Valuing something requires the individual to have a positive evaluation of it and attach to it in such a way that the subject finds the object's well-being wrapped up in his or her well-being. This is good evidence for desires being self-regarding. But below I will defend this claim *via* analogy.

1. Desires are very similar to attachments
2. Attachments involve felt needs and so do desires
3. Attachments motivate and so do desires

²⁵⁸ I took this line from Martha Nussbaum in her book, *Upheavals of Thought*, see ch 1-3.

²⁵⁹ This implies that agent neutral value seemings are not desires. My view further implies that there cannot be any agent neutral value seemings at all. To value x, on my view, is to be attached to x. So, the degree to which S is attached to x is the degree to which S values x. This implies that all values are, or are in some way related to, an agent relative mental state.

4. Unreciprocated attachments cause pain and so do unsatisfied desires
5. Reciprocated attachments elicit positive affect and so do fulfilled desires
6. Attachments are self-regarding
7. Because attachment and desire share 2-5 in common it is likely that desires are self-regarding too

Attachments involve felt needs and so do desires

Psychologists express an attachment in terms of a felt need.²⁶⁰ That is, the feeling that you need something or someone in your life. The idea is that when you lack this object you feel lost or confused – unsure of how to proceed.²⁶¹ Your life appears upside down and the simplest things are complicated. Now this is an extreme expression of loss. It is an expression of grief.

Typically, when someone has an unreciprocated attachment or loses their attachment figure, the person just feels unsettled.²⁶² Something is just not right. The feeling is expressible by the words “the world needs to be like this.” For example, I need to be with my children. This is an expression of the feeling of attachment. If I lose my children, my world would be destroyed. This feeling gives evidence of the self-regarding nature of attachment. By “self-regarding” I mean that the mental event under question entails reference to the self and includes evaluative and -non-

²⁶⁰ See, Cawthorpe, D., West, M., & Wilkes, T. (2004). “Attachment and depression: the relationship between the felt security of attachment and clinical depression among hospitalized female adolescents.” *The Canadian Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Review/La Revue Canadienne de Psychiatrie de l'enfant et de l'adolescent*, 13(2), 31–35. Here the authors talk about a felt security. The content of which is the same as a felt need. IF you need something you would be in some way harmed without it. This event is referred to by both expressions “felt need” and “felt security.” See also, Wonderly, Monique. *On Being Attached*.

²⁶¹ Neimeyer, R. A., Prigerson, H. G., & Davies, B. (2002). “Mourning and Meaning.” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 46, 235-251. – 239, Weiss, R. S. (2008). The nature and causes of grief. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, H. Schut, & W. Stroebe (Eds.). *Handbook of bereavement research and practice: Advances in theory and intervention*, (pp. 29–44). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

evaluative beliefs and perceptions of mental states. Since attachments entail a feeling of security or need, it seems clear that attachments are self-regarding. Soares et al claim, “[g]enerally, needs are related to self-system processes which are reflected in individuals' beliefs. Beliefs related to the needs for competence are control beliefs (expectations about the extent to which one can obtain desired outcomes).”²⁶³

Desires are also seen as being felt needs.²⁶⁴ The idea here is that when one wants something she feels as if the world should be like that. It is not as if she expects the world actually is like that. But she feels as if the object of her desire needs to be actual or satisfied. This feeling is frequently expressed as a felt need. When I say “ugh, I wish I had a coke.” What I am trying to express is this *feeling* that the world needs to include the state of affairs of me drinking a coke. Friedrich states, “In desirous experience the desired end is given to the mind under a feeling tone of felt need; it is given to the mind as something that must be realized.”²⁶⁵ The use of the term “need” can be interpreted as coming in degrees. It is, the feeling of need, rather. Nevertheless, our feeling of need can be weak or strong. This is true with desires, and it is true of attachments. I can want something more or less just as I can be more or less attached to something or someone. A felt need is self-regarding. It is not as if you have a felt need on behalf of someone else. It is you who has the feeling of need. It is your need, your security, your distress and sadness, your frustration, and your satisfaction. Given that both desires and attachments essentially involve this felt need and a felt need is always self-regarding, it seems

²⁶³ Soares I, Lemos MS, Almeida C. “Attachment and Motivational Strategies in Adolescence: Exploring Links.” *Adolescence*. 2005 Spring; 40(157):129-54. PMID: 15861622. 130.

²⁶⁴ Friedrich, Daniel. “Desire Mental Force and Desirous Experience,” 67-68.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 68.

reasonable to hold, given this evidence, that desires are also self-regarding. It could be claimed that one could say, (a) “he needs to apologize, for her sake” or (b) “everyone needs to calm down, for everyone’s sake.”²⁶⁶ This is not obviously self-regarding as the felt need is for the other. Yet, I think that on the surface the relevant attitudes are self-regarding. For example, if I did not value the “her” or something related to the situation²⁶⁷ in (a), then I would not have the attitude, “he should apologize, for her sake.” I take it that if I did not value anything related to the reason he should apologize, I would not have any felt need for him to do so. When I value something related to a state of affairs, then I see my well-being wrapped up in its well-being or well-being*.²⁶⁸ For example, imagine you purchased a new car, and your friend backs it into a wall. The car doesn’t have well-being as we do. It is not living. However, there is a sense in which the car does have well-being (i.e., insofar as it is properly functioning). You would probably be upset at your friend or the circumstances. The reason is that the car plays an important role in your ends and schemes in life. It is tied to your well-being in a direct way. Namely, your pocketbook. Damage to your car will cost you time and money. This is taken as a loss rather than a gain. It will be negatively evaluated because the harm to your car is taken as a harm to the self.

Consider (b) “everyone needs to calm down, for everyone’s sake.” Here it seems as if the felt need is for everyone and not for me. Because of this, it is not self-regarding. However, I

²⁶⁶ I am indebted to Graham Oddie for pressing the need to say more about why I think desire is self-regarding.

²⁶⁷ For example, say I feel uncomfortable when there is tension. My desire, I claim, is for the dissipation of the tension.

²⁶⁸ “Well-being*” refers to a state of affairs sufficiently similar to “well-being” but more akin to say proper Function, or integrity.

think this is incorrect. First, it is not clear how we could care about everyone's welfare, without this caring being self-regarding. Imagine that everyone in the department is worked up about some change. And Tom forms attitude (b). Tom (1) is included in "everyone" so in that sense it is self-regarding; (2) if the conflict wasn't impacting Tom, imagine Tom wasn't negatively impacted at all by any of the conflict (say he has no interest in his colleagues and so doesn't mind their misfortune), Tom would not have a felt need to for everyone to calm down; (3) if Tom did value state of affairs being impacted by situation or people, then this attitude is self-regarding. When Mary complains about the conflict, he may become worried for her sake. He doesn't want her to leave her position, say. The reason, I presume, he doesn't want her to leave is because he values her work or friendship. He gets some positive affect from the relationship. Her discomfort or agitation may cause agitation in Tom. He then may form the thought, "everyone needs to calm down, for everyone's sake." This isn't for "everyone *else's* sake" alone. The others in this situation have an impact on Tom's affect. He will have a felt need for others because their actions are impacting him.

Attachments motivate and so do desires

Attachments are related to seeking out human needs, such as safety, love, closeness, etc. This seeking is motivational in nature. Shane et al claim, "each type of attachment underscores the basic human needs to seek closeness, safety, caring, understanding, and love and to avoid rejection, abandonment, anger, hurt, and pain."²⁶⁹ Attachments enable individuals to have particular goals. Attachment also fosters motivation by fixing our attention toward an object. In

²⁶⁹ Shane, Mary Gales, and Morton Shane. "The Attachment Motivational System as a Guide to an Effective Therapeutic Process." *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* (2001), 21 (5): 675–87. doi:10.1080/07351692109348967.,

doing this it motivates us to build and nurture our attachments.²⁷⁰ Having an avoidant or anxious attachment style can lead to low levels of self-esteem, which inhibits motivation. Those who are more secure in their attachments seem to be more prosocial and engage more freely than those who are not.²⁷¹ One reason is that people with low self-esteem seem to have more trouble goal setting, planning, and adapting to new situations. Poor attachments reduce one's self-esteem thus impacting their first order ability to plan, set goals, and adapt. Soares et al claim:

In the absence of goals and plans, behavior is automatic, without perceptible self-direction, thus hindering the internal regulation of behavior. Such motivational functioning is not goal oriented and may have negative implications for learning and development, as the subject behaves without any commitment to a personal project. Consequently, the internal regulation of behavior and the personification of motivation are negatively affected, which may interfere with the satisfaction of psychological needs by generating passivity and low goal-striving. In sum, goal setting guides behavior by focusing attention and effort in order to attain the specific goal, thereby diverting the subject away from irrelevant stimuli.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Soares I, Lemos MS, Almeida C. "Attachment and Motivational Strategies in Adolescence: Exploring links." *Adolescence*. (2005) Spring;40(157):129-54. PMID: 15861622. 131.

²⁷¹ Shahyad, Shima & Pakdaman, Shahla & Tavakoly, Mohamadreza & Asadi, Masoud & Siavoshi, Hatam & Miri, Mirnader & Alipour, Asghar. (2011). "The Relationship between attachment style and motive, content and number of using S.M.S." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 15. 887-890. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.03.205.

²⁷² Soares I, Lemos MS, Almeida C. "Attachment and Motivational Strategies in Adolescence: Exploring Links." *Adolescence*. (2005) Spring; 40(157):129-54. PMID: 15861622. 131

Attachments directly relate to goal setting, therefore attachments impact attention and behavior (even gift giving).²⁷³ The same can be said of desires. A desire can motivate an individual. If I want an explanation of why I got a coke out of the refrigerator, then saying that I wanted a coke and I believed there was one in the refrigerator is (more or less) a sufficient explanation. This is not to say that desires are always motivations. Desires themselves can fail to motivate. But desires can function as motivations. Action tends to require beliefs in addition to motivation. Unless we have the beliefs about the means of satisfying our desire, then often it is unclear how we can be motivated to realize our desire. When someone asks you why you are doing something, typically you can explain yourself by reference to a desire. You find yourself saying “I wanted to do it” or “I want to be this or that.” Desires cannot merely be motivations or dispositions to act because often in order to act you need both a desire and a set of fitting means-ends beliefs.²⁷⁴ Desires, just like attachments, are not motivations either but are both related to motivation in a close way. Furthermore, like attachments, desires fix attention. If I want something, then I’ll be disposed to pay attention to it and things related to it.

²⁷³ Hieu P. Nguyen, James M. “Munch, Romantic gift giving as chore or pleasure: The effects of attachment orientations on gift giving perceptions.” *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 64, Issue 2, 2011, Pages 113-118, ISSN 0148-2963, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2010.02.006>.

²⁷⁴ Graham Oddie rightly points out that not all desires require the collaboration of beliefs in order to motivate: *Suppose I want to think about the nature of desire. I am not sure I have to find some means to doing so I just do it. So, in certain cases it seems a desire can motivate without the collaboration with a belief about appropriate means.* I agree that desires can be motivations without the collaboration of beliefs. However, it seems as if thinking about something is a skill and often we have to learn how to perform a new skill. If I want to think about desire but have not really considered desire before, then I may need to start thinking about the phenomena surrounding the mental state. I agree that wanting to think about desire would motivate one to try to think about desire. But I do not think wanting to think about desire is sufficient to achieve the end (i.e., thinking about desire). Desires then can motivate in cases like thinking about desire. But it seems unless you have that skill (including a set of beliefs regarding the skill) you will not be thinking about desire, rather you will be thinking about things you hold to be related to desire in order to learn enough about the mental state to think about it directly. I don’t think much hinges on this for my position but also I want to clearly concede and agree that desires can motivate without belief involved (especially when there is no clear object of the desire). For example, thinking about desire.

T.M. Scanlon has presented an attention-based theory of desire. Scanlon holds that for S to desire P is for P to persistently occur to S in a favorable light and S's attention is directed toward features of the world that count in favor of P. Scanlon further thinks that reasons are considerations that count in favor of propositions. Therefore, S has a desire for P when S's attention is directed at reasons in favor of P being the case.²⁷⁵ A desire's effects are to direct attention toward reasons to fulfill the desire. While this theory captures the relationship between desire and attention, it seems that there are several problems. First, it makes more sense to say that I am attending to P because the reasons for it are attractive rather than saying that my desire for P is my attention consistently focused on considerations in favor of P. Second, it seems as though someone can desire P without doing anything to bring it about that P. For example, one can gather information about P or attend to conversations regarding P. Regardless, desire is directly related to motivation and attention. The same is true of attachment. This implies that both desire and attachment are capable of moving the agent to act. Motivation is also self-regarding. When I am motivated to act, this (1) makes reference to the self, and (2) it includes evaluative and, at times, non-evaluative beliefs and perceptions. Since desire and attachment are related to motivation, and motivation seems to be self-regarding, desire and attachment are likely self-regarding as well.

Unreciprocated attachments cause pain and so do unsatisfied desires

It seems clear that if you are attached to something but cannot have it you will experience discomfort, frustration, and distress. Chang et al suggest that:

²⁷⁵ Scanlon, T.M. *What We Owe to Each Other*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998),

. . . the association between adolescent suicide risk and attachment may be a function of communication patterns associated with insecure attachment styles, as adolescents with insecure attachment may anticipate and fear rejection, intrusiveness, and/or inconsistency when considering whether to go to parents with a problem or when distressed, including when they are experiencing suicidality and associated risk factors (e.g., bullying, depressive symptoms, traumatic experiences).²⁷⁶

These insecure attachment styles are formed in early childhood and are the result of how needs are met or not by the caregiver. If the caregiver is kind and provides the needs of the child, then it is likely that the child will have a secure attachment style. However, if the child's attachment is unreciprocated, then an insecure attachment style is formed which causes distress. Internal working models are formed in early childhood that function as prototypes for relationships throughout the child's life.²⁷⁷ When an attachment is established but the attachment figure doesn't reciprocate, then pain ensues regardless of the style of attachment. Attachments are formed to meet an individual's felt needs for connection and well-being. When a feeling of felt need is left unsatisfied, an individual will experience pain or discomfort. Furthermore, it seems as if an individual, when deprived of their attachment figure, experiences a host of painful emotions. Fear and sadness are common. A feeling of being lost and not knowing how to carry on. Many

²⁷⁶ Chang, Cindy J., Christine McCauley Ohannessian, E. Stephanie Krauthamer Ewing, Roger Kobak, Guy S. Diamond, and Joanna Herres. "Attachment and Parent-Adolescent Discrepancies in Reports of Family Functioning among Suicidal Adolescents." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* (2020), 29 (1): 227–36. doi:10.1007/s10826-019-01566-7.

²⁷⁷ Bowlby, J. *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment* (2nd ed.). (New York: Basic Books, 1982 (Original ed. 1969).

report a sense of feeling lost.²⁷⁸ Attachment engenders a sense of security, when this sense of security is lost, then feelings of fear ensue.²⁷⁹

When it comes to desires, not getting what we want can also be painful. We are all aware of what it feels like to want something and not get it. When I want to drink a nice cup of coffee and I do not get the coffee, I am disappointed. It seems (as we saw from the dime experiment) that surprise benefits can give rise to pro-social behavior. Gratitude and other positively valenced affect make a subject more likely to be pro-social because achieving positive affect makes you happier, and happier people are more pro-social. The opposite is true as well. When someone doesn't get a surprise benefit their behavior isn't as pro-social. Since they are not experiencing gratitude, they do not have the affect boost to increase their pro-social behavior. It is worse when a subject expects a positive outcome and does not get one. If S wants P and does not get P, then S will be hurt to the degree that S desires P. This is clear with love. We want to spend time with our loved ones. We want to be with our partners. Love, however, is risky. It is risky because unrequited love is very painful. One large aspect of passionate love is a strong desire to be in the presence of the other. When this end is not fulfilled it can hurt quite badly. Lucretius writes:

. . . and underneath are stings
Which goad a man to hurt the very thing,
Whate'er it be, from whence arise for him
Those germs of madness. But with gentle touch
Venus subdues the pangs in midst of love,

²⁷⁸ Wonderly, Monique. "On Being Attached," 237.

²⁷⁹ Bowlby, J. *Attachment and loss*: Vol. 1. Attachment (2nd ed.). (New York: Basic Books, 1998 (Original ed. 1969)).

And the admixture of a fondling joy
Doth curb the bites of passion. For they hope
That by the very body whence they caught
The heats of love their flames can be put out.
But Nature protests 'tis all quite otherwise;
For this same love it is the one sole thing
Of which, the more we have, the fiercer burns
The breast with fell desire. For food and drink
Are taken within our members; and, since they
Can stop up certain parts, thus, easily
Desire of water is glutted and of bread.
But, lo, from human face and lovely bloom
Naught penetrates our frame to be enjoyed
Save flimsy idol-images and vain-
A sorry hope which oft the winds disperse.
As when the thirsty man in slumber seeks
To drink, and water ne'er is granted him
Wherewith to quench the heat within his members,
But after idols of the liquids strives
And toils in vain, and thirsts even whilst he gulps
In middle of the torrent, thus in love
Venus deludes with idol-images
The lovers. Nor they cannot sate their lust

By merely gazing on the bodies, nor
They cannot with their palms and fingers rub
Aught from each tender limb, the while they stray
Uncertain over all the body.²⁸⁰

There is something about failing to satisfy a desire that frustrates and negatively affects us. Failing to get what you want can make you depressed. Laurie, in *Little Women*, loved Jo. Jo, however, didn't have romantic love for him. In conversation with Laurie, Amy March says: "Love Jo all your days, if you choose, but don't let it spoil you, for it is wicked to throw away so many good gifts because you can't have the one you want."²⁸¹ Not satisfying a strong desire can cause one to be shut down and avoid relationships. Virginia Wolf expresses the pain of unfulfilled desire in her book, *To The Light House*. She writes: ". . . to want and not to have, sent all up her body a hardness, a hollowness, a strain. And then to want and not to have- to want and want- how that wrung the heart, and wrung it again and again!"²⁸² We are all very familiar with this experience. The reason seems to be the vulnerability relation. That is, that when S desires P, S sees S's well-being as wrapped up in obtaining P. If S doesn't get P, then S will perceive a decrease in S's well-being. Attachments and desires are related to pain. Pain is essentially self-regarding. It is impossible to have pain without you yourself *being in* pain. Further, the reasons attachments and desires can be painful isn't because loss of an attachment figure and failing to

²⁸⁰ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*. Trans. William Ellery Leonard (The Internet Archive, 2009). Book IV. http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.4.iv.html

²⁸¹ Alcott, May Louisa. *Little Women*. (LiteraturePage.com and Michael Moncur, 2003). Part 2, ch 39. <http://www.literaturepage.com/read/littlewomen-457.html>

²⁸² Virginia Wolf. *To the Light House* (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 1994). 133.

fulfill a desire cause pain. They are painful because we have extended ourselves onto the world conceptually. Our representations of the other are constituents of our self. When an attachment figure is ambivalent or avoidant it hurts because without this individual one does not feel whole. Failing to fulfill your desires is painful because desires express themselves as felt needs. You feel like the world must be such and such a way. If one of my needs is not met, it is painful.

Reciprocated attachments elicit positive affect and so do fulfilled desires

Attachment is related to arousal. Depending on the style of attachment, arousal in varying degrees, will arise from social interactions. Overall, it appears that when an individual experiences reciprocation of attachment congenial behaviors, then a heightened sense of arousal is discovered.²⁸³ However, it is not enough to have reciprocation of attachment congenial behaviors. One needs consistent reciprocation of attachment congenial behaviors. When someone is raised with reciprocation of attachment congenial behaviors, then (according to Ainsworth²⁸⁴) she should develop what Ainsworth called a “secure” attachment. This secure attachment can be characterized as a feeling of closeness, safety, trust, and love. Individuals with secure attachments tend to have much higher ratings of overall subjective well-being, career exploration, and social efficacy.²⁸⁵ Those with insecure attachment styles rate significantly

²⁸³ Prinsen J, Deschepper A, Maes E, Alaerts K. “Attachment styles have a modulatory impact on psychophysiological arousal evoked by reciprocated and unreciprocated gaze.” *Biol Psychol.* 2019 Nov 148:107773. doi: 10.1016/j.biopsycho.2019.107773. Epub 2019 Sep 18. PMID: 31541686.

²⁸⁴ Ainsworth MD, Bell SM. Attachment, exploration, and separation: Illustrated by the behavior of one-year-olds in a strange situation. *Child Development.* 1970;41(1):49-67. doi:10.2307/1127388

²⁸⁵ Ozturk A, Mutlu T. “The relationship between attachment style, subjective well-being, happiness and social anxiety among university students.” *Procedia Soc Behav Sci.* 2010; 9:1772–6. (PDF) “Mediating Role of Resilience in Relationship Between Attachment Style Dimensions and Quality of Life in High School Students.” Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305382047_Mediating_Role_of_Resilience_in_Relationship_Between_Attachment_Style_Dimensions_and_Quality_of_Life_in_High_School_Students [accessed Mar 30 2021].

lower.²⁸⁶ Attachment styles create a working model of relationships and social interaction. They can provide a safe haven from which children can explore and return. An individual with a secure attachment can feel safe to explore not only her environment but can feel safe to return to her attachment figure. An individual with, say, an anxious attachment will not feel safe returning to her attachment figure because she is unsure if she will be received positively or negatively. People with insecure attachments tend to have significantly more negative beliefs about themselves, others in their lives, and experience more negative affect than individuals with secure attachments.²⁸⁷

Often upon satisfaction of desire, happiness ensues. The thesis that satisfaction of desire causes positive affect is so commonsensical that many think happiness is the same as the satisfaction of desires. Steven Luper states, “happiness has two components. The first is the satisfaction of desires. The second is the appreciation of that satisfaction.”²⁸⁸ Chris Heathwood claims, “S is, at t, occurrently happy that p to degree d just in case, at t, S occurrently desires that p to degree d and occurrently believes that p.”²⁸⁹ As you recall, Carylton Morillo and Galen Strawson argue that to desire P is for one to either be disposed to take pleasure in it seeming that P or to have an internal state which realizes gratification in the idea of obtaining P or in obtaining P. According to the pleasure-based theory the essence of desire is wanting or liking. It is required for S to desire P that S likes P. Strawson also claims that being a desire is to be disposed to feel

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Dush, K.M.C. & Amato, R.P. “Consequences of Relationship Status and Quality for Subjective Well-Being.” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, (2005), 22(5), 607–627.

²⁸⁸ Luper, Steven. *Invulnerability: On Securing Happiness*. (Open Court, 1996), 37

²⁸⁹ Heathwood, Chris. "Happiness and Desire Satisfaction." in *Nous* (forthcoming), 8.

satisfied or pleased or happy at the idea of the fulfillment of the desire or the satisfaction of the desire.²⁹⁰ That is, essential to wanting may be connected with “dispositions to be pleased or satisfied in certain circumstances²⁹¹” Joel Feinberg makes a clearer causal claim:

The very fact that he [Lincoln] did find satisfaction as a result of helping the pigs presupposes that he had a preexisting desire for something other than his own happiness . . . The object of Lincoln's desire was not pleasure; rather pleasure is the consequence of his preexisting desire for something else . . . But if pleasure and happiness presuppose [my emphasis] desires for something other than pleasure and happiness, then the existence of pleasure and happiness in the experience of some people proves that those people have strong desires for something other than their own happiness—egoistic hedonism to the contrary.²⁹²

The notion that fulfilling a desire causes or is happiness is common. When I want something and get it, I am often happy about getting it. Of course, there are instances of getting what you want and it causing you pain. In these cases, however, I claim that there is a miscommunication between your intrinsic and instrumental desires. It may be that you wanted to eat a piece of cake. But upon eating it you discover that you are not satisfied. This miscommunication *may* be due to our beliefs about our own desires. Beliefs and desires are not the same thing. However, in the cake case, I claim, you thought you wanted cake but this object (i.e., the cake) was a mere means to achieving the intrinsic desire (which on my view can be any of the intrinsic goods). In some

²⁹⁰ Strawson, Galen. *Mental Reality*. Cambridge, MA, US: The MIT Press, 1994), 280-84.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* 266-7.

²⁹² Feinberg, Joel. “Psychological Egoism,” in Feinberg, ed. *Reason and Responsibility* (Encinco, CA: Dickenson, 1978, 4th ed.). found in Morillo, 170.

cases, false beliefs about the object will cause a miscommunication. Further, in the cake instance, my instrumental desire is the cake. Imagine, I eat the cake and am disappointed. This disappointment is caused by the lack of sweetness of the cake. It was sugar free. So, upon satisfying my instrumental desire, I am unsatisfied. I really did not want that cake. I wanted to pleasant, sweet sensation that tends to accompany it. Upon thwarting this desire, disappointment ensues.

Attachments are self-regarding

As we have seen from the discussion above, attachments are self-regarding. They are the affective closeness we have with another individual or object. It is a connection of myself to that of another. I see my security and well-being as wrapped up in another individual. This mental state is self-regarding since it entails and refers to the self. Monique Wonderly expresses the self-referencing nature of attachment:

In this form of attachment, the agent experiences a particular object as a felt need, such that her senses of well-being and general competence suffer without it. . . . this attitude is largely self-focused and marked by an integral connection between its object and the agent's felt security.²⁹³

Attachments are essentially self-focused and are therefore, self-regarding.

Because attachment and desire share 2-5 in common it is likely that desires are self-regarding too.

²⁹³ Wonderly, Monique. "On Being Attached," 224

As argued above, attachments are self-regarding. Desires are a lot like attachments in relevant ways. They both: involve felt needs, motivate, cause pain, and cause pleasure. Felt needs are essentially about the self. This seems clear enough since a “need” is one’s own need. If you have the feeling of a need, it is the feeling of you having the need. This is by its very nature self-regarding.²⁹⁴ This, I don’t think, is quite enough to establish the self-regarding nature of desire. Just because I have a felt desire, it doesn’t follow that I can’t have a felt desire on behalf of someone else. This would not be obviously self-regarding. I can have a desire or a felt need on behalf of someone else. For example, I can have the felt need that Timmy turns in his assignment because it would benefit him in the long run. I want Timmy to turn in his assignments. Timmy really has nothing directly to do with my well-being. If he fails, it won’t objectively impact my life. This all may be true, but the attitude remains self-regarding. It is self-regarding because the mechanism by which I can even have affect with regarding to Timmy in the first place, requires attachment; attachments are safety related and self-regarding. They are psychological glue, affectively connecting one individual to the other. If Timmy does not turn in his homework, I will be disappointed. It may be that Timmy (as my student) plays a role in my life as a teacher. As my student I take some responsibility for his success. His failure (in this case) is personal to me and that’s why I want him to turn in his assignments. It may pain me to think of my students not succeeding. I want them to succeed – for their own sake. This too is self-regarding. The reason I want them to succeed, is because I value my students. I see them as playing a role in my

²⁹⁴ I do not think this means that all desires are selfish. I take a selfish desire would favor the self in such a way as to disregard the well-being of those with whom one is attached. On this account, the agent would be irrationally selfish because his “self” is composed of his attachments. More interestingly, the self includes the other (when others are available) as a constituent of the self, when individuals have more attachments (i.e., the scope of the self is greater) they have incorporated the concept of the attachment figure(s) as part of themselves. Therefore, a desire is always self-regarding but not selfish because “the self” includes the other. The selfish subject is one with little attachments to other subjects.

life as their teacher. I see my well-being wrapped up in theirs insofar as I take pain in it seeming that they are doing poorly and pleasure in it seeming that they are doing well.²⁹⁵

Imagine that a stranger is breaking a local norm. Perhaps she is standing in the middle of the escalator ascending from the subway to a busy street. This would make some (me) cringe. I'd have a felt need on her behalf. I'd want her to move (if I wasn't in a hurry), for her sake. My desire here doesn't seem self-regarding. It is for her. Not for me. I am not breaking any local norms. But I think even though we can characterize this desire as on her behalf, it is not. If I found out about someone in a different city doing the same thing, I would not have a felt need for her to move. When I see the woman blocking foot traffic, it causes in me²⁹⁶ discomfort. People around me are becoming irritated at this woman. I would not want this if I were in her position. I assume others do not want to be doing rude things. So, if she is like me, she would be embarrassed if she knew what she was doing. I think the *for her sake* is an affective extension of the self to the other person. In this case, I want her to move because I do not want her to be embarrassed. I hate being embarrassed and I empathize. This causes me discomfort. I want her to move, I claim, (1) because I do not like being embarrassed and her standing there is inspiring me to empathize and feel embarrassment, (2) I do not like the feeling of irritated people around me and she is inspiring this emotion in others, so I want her to move – but she is a person too and does not seem to know what she is doing do not want her to feel the irritation, (3) it may be that I really do not want her to move for her sake at all. It is just when I reflect on the desire for her to

²⁹⁵ I don't want this to seem as if I am saying I (or anyone) would be disappointed if any of my students didn't turn in their assignments. This is not true. It is only some students. Those with whom I have interacted with more often and have invested time and energy into helping succeed. In these cases, they have entered my "circles of concern." And my affect will covary with the degree I perceive them to be fairing.

²⁹⁶ And I'd suggest others as well.

move, I narrate it in terms of “for her sake.” I think most of the cases of “for x’s sake” involve an affective extension of the self. If I feel some way in x’s position and I do not enjoy that feeling, I would assume x would not enjoy it either.

A felt need does seem to be essentially self-regarding. Above the reason given was that it is *my* need and so it is self-regarding. This is accurate to some degree. A need, however, implies a requirement. By “requirement” I mean a feeling that one’s world²⁹⁷ would be missing something or one’s world would be incomplete without that requirement. When S feels a need for P, S feels as if S’s experience of the world is missing a requirement. S’s felt needs are about S and for S. If S has a felt need for P, then S’s felt need is about S and P, and S bearing a certain relation to P. S’s felt need for P is about S. And so it is self-regarding. If S has a desire on behalf of someone else, it may take the form: S wants P for R. I did not want the escalator lady to be yelled at or to be the object of irritation, so I wanted her to move. On the surface the desire seems not to be *for me*. However, I think that it very well may not only be for me, but it is also *for me*. A convincing case can be made to support the conclusion that my desire for the movement of escalator lady was really a desire to feel relief from the social tension. If this is accurate then the desire was for her to move so that I could not feel uncomfortable.²⁹⁸ Felt needs are clearly self-regarding when they are our felt needs. Felt needs on behalf of someone else, I suggest, are indeed about the other but they are also for the self. They are self-regarding because (1) a felt

²⁹⁷ The phrase “one’s world” is intended to indicate one’s experience and interpretation of his or her existence and integration with the world and its population.

²⁹⁸ This is self-regarding not selfish. If I want escalator lady to move for her sake. Or homeless man to stop struggling with the police for his own sake, I really want them to stop. I feel terrible when I see someone being harmed because of a mental illness. I propose that this “feeling terrible” or “feeling embarrassed on behalf of” implies an affective connection. This sort of connection is a vulnerability in that of the other such that you feel poorly when the other is in an unfortunate position and well when he is presumably faring well. If I am vulnerable to S, then I am attached to S.

need is about our feelings of safety and comfort in the world, (2) even when the desire is on behalf of someone else, we can only have affect if we are invested in the situation or people, animals, or objects involved in the state of affairs; (3) to be invested in another's well-being²⁹⁹ entails a feeling of connection between one's well-being and the other's.³⁰⁰ If 1-3 are true, then all affect is self-regarding.

Motivation is also self-regarding. Say Alan is motivated to do Y, where Y is helping Bob. While it is true that Alan is motivated to Y because Bob needs or wants help, Alan is not *merely* motivated on behalf of Bob. It is Alan's motivation which clearly involves Alan's self. Pain and pleasure or positive affect are clearly self-regarding. But the way attachment and desire cause pain and pleasure is not the same as the way a drug can cause pleasure or pain. Attachments cause pain because someone with whom you have attached has (for example) separated from you. This removal of an attachment figure feels like part of the self is missing. Grief feels as if there really is part of the self-missing. It is unclear how to proceed and perform daily activities. It is not until the agent is able to integrate the loss as part of her ends and plans in life, can she or

²⁹⁹ I consider the desire for the elevator lady to move for her, is being invested in the elevator lady's well-being. Her being the object of distress would reduce her psychological well-being temporarily. If I am invested in her well-being and I have affect regarding her, then I see my well-being as connected to her well-being.

³⁰⁰ This seems clear to me. If I am uncomfortable by elevator lady's social taboo, then my current mental state is being affected. I am uncomfortable because of her. Why? Either my desire is on her behalf, or it is not. If it is on her behalf, then my feeling of discomfort will be a direct result of how I see her well-being impacting mine. If I was not invested in her at all, then I would have any affect with regard to her. Since I do, her activities are directly making me uncomfortable. This is a reduction in one's current psychological well-being. Therefore, if my desire is on her behalf, it also includes me and is self-regarding. If my desire is not on her behalf, then plausibly it would be a desire for her to move to reduce social tension. This desire is not on her behalf, but it is for me. I do not want to feel the social tension caused by elevator lady. It seems then that either my desire can be on her behalf or not. If it is or if it is not, my desire remains self-regarding. But not selfish. Just because my desires are entailed in the well-being of the subject, desires can still be considered pro-social and altruistic. My desire for the elevator lady to move can be considered pro-social. And if I want her to move on her behalf, it can be considered altruistic. The reason is that the desire (while it necessarily entails one's own well-being) is for her to not be the object of irritation. The precondition for affect is attachment. The feeling of one's well-being being affected by another. Attachment is about our own safety, motivation, discovery, and comfort. My desire then for the elevator lady is self-regarding but not selfish.

he move on from the grief. The loss of an attachment figure directly impacts one's ability to act and navigate life.³⁰¹ Desires affect us in a very similar way. If S wants P, then S sees P as good for herself. S sees P as a felt need. If S wants P, then S experiences P as a felt need. Felt needs clearly involve the self because it isn't just anyone's need, it is the self's need. It seems that because attachments and desires share so many self-regarding properties and attachments are clearly self-regarding that we can conclude that desires are likely self-regarding as well. We can put this argument into a simple modus ponens:

1. If attachments are self-regarding, then desires are self-regarding
2. Attachments are self-regarding
3. Therefore, desires are self-regarding

It is important to determine whether or not desires are self-regarding. The reason this is important is because it, in my view, adds a missing element to the evaluative perceptual theory of desire. That is, the agent neutral evaluative position (ANP) which so many hold seems to be incomplete. It is not enough for (ANP): S to desire P that S sees P as good. For S to desire P involves a self-referencing feature that the agent neutral views (ANP) miss. ANP is incomplete because if S sees P as good, it doesn't follow that S wants P or is motivated to P or takes pleasure in it seeming that P. It also seems that *all* affect requires attachment. If this is the case, then all desires are agent relative. Desires, it appears to me, are not agent neutral. They are essentially agent relative. We should then add an agent relative feature to our definition: (ARP): For S to desire P is for S to see P as good for S's well-being.

³⁰¹ Shear K, Monk T, Houck P, et al. "An Attachment-Based Model of Complicated Grief Including the Role of Avoidance." *Eur Arch Psychiatry Clin Neurosci*. 2007;257(8):453-461. doi:10.1007/s00406-007-0745-z

3.5 - Evaluative Perceptual Theory- Agent Relative

I agree with Stampe and Oddie that desires are evaluative perceptions. However, it seems as if their agent neutral account falls short of explaining the data of desire. Firstly, while Oddie implies that when someone sees P as good that person will be moved by the perception, I do not see how this can be accurate unless he concedes that desires are not agent neutral. Secondly, just because S sees P as good, it doesn't imply that S will be likely to preform action Y when S holds Y-ing will bring about P. Given an agent neutral account, S has reason to Y as much as anyone else. The reason is that P is good. However, not everyone is motivated to Y even when they consider or see P's goodness. The agent neutral account fails to explain why some have desires for P and others do not—which is a large motivation for Stampe and Oddie for holding this view. Oddie's view, however, may be compatible with mine. He does not claim, as Stampe does, that all value seemings are desires. Oddie's position is compatible with the view that all desires are agent relative but not all value seemings are. Therefore, agent relative value seemings are desires but one can have other affective value seemings that are not desires. Nevertheless, they both argue that seeing something as good gives you reason to do it.³⁰²

However, this only seems true if this “seeing” is agent relative. The agent neutral theory also fails to account for the nearly ubiquitous motivational aspect of desire. Thirdly, (to focus my main disagreement with Oddie) if desires are agent neutral then no one can have desires. As I argued above, a necessary condition for affect is some degree and form of attachment. This implies that all affect is necessarily self-regarding. When something is self-regarding it is agent relative. Desires are a kind of affect. Therefore, desires are self-regarding and agent relative.

³⁰² Graham Oddie clarified this point for me in comments on an earlier draft.

The proper analysis of desire is a good-based perceptual model. That is, a desire is a perception (or experience) of something as valuable. More, however, is required. For S to desire P is for S to see P as good for S's own well-being (eudemonistically). What I mean by "good for one's well-being" should be explored. My analysis of desire is eudemonistic. That is, I hold there are natural goods. These natural goods are good because having them increases one's (or a society's) material and/or psychological well-being. Some of these goods are pleasure, autonomy, life, and love. Having these properties increases one's psychological and material well-being. To say that these properties are *good for* someone indicates that when someone has one of them it promotes their flourishing. It makes their life richer. Moreover, these goods make us better at being human.³⁰³ It does not have to be the case that the subject thinks or believes that these properties or states of affairs are good (good simpliciter or good for x). Perhaps the subject believes of some of them that they are bad.

³⁰³ Natural goods are (I hold) species specific. Not all goods are human goods. The natural goods are acquired so one can flourish as a member of his kind. One can only be excellent insofar as his nature allows. If this is the case, however, one may wonder, does it follow that in relation to some other kind of thing a human or an animal is not virtuous? Someone could be persistently excellent at being for the good but not excellent in relation to something else. God is always better at being for the good than humans are. To be excellent at being for the good or to truly flourish is to be God. We can never be God so we may worry that we are never truly virtuous or excellent. Take another example, humans are more excellent than cats. Humans, it could be claimed, are truly greater than cats. If it is true that for something to be truly excellent it must be supremely excellent in all ways, then a cat can never truly flourish or be virtuous because it is not as excellent as a human and (more to the point) a cat can never be virtuous because it is not as excellent as God.

The claim that for one to be excellent she must be supremely excellent in all ways is wrong. Aristotle claimed that you can know that something is virtuous only if you know what it is for. For example, to judge that this is a good can opener you must know what a can opener is for. Can openers are for opening cans. Their function is to open cans. A can opener is only excellent if it has persistent excellence in opening cans. Given this analysis a can opener is excellent just in case it is excellent at being for the good as it relates to its nature. And this specific example can be generalized for all things (humans, cats, cars, etc.). A cat cannot be said to be flourishing simpliciter. It must be said to be flourishing as a cat. This is because the phrase "to flourish" or "to be virtuous" is in its essence contextual and relative to natures. Consider a human. As a human Bob would not be said to be lacking something if he could not (like a cat) climb up curtains or leap from the roof and attach to a tree by his nails. This is because it is not in Bob's nature to do these things. Bob can be virtuous if he has fullness in terms of his human capacities. To find what it is for a human to be virtuous (like the can opener) we must discover the human function.

If the subject sees P as good for his well-being, then S wants P. I think it would also be accurate to claim that if S wants P, then S sees P as good for S's well-being. For example, *seeing P as good for one's well-being* is a sufficient condition for desire. If I experience something as a felt need and part of my self-concept is attached to the object of desire, then if I see P as good for me, I will want P. Imagine that I see working out as good for me. It appears very good for me. I am not saying that I believe it is good for me; but let's assume that. Desires for P are not always accompanied by beliefs about P. The idea is that when you want something, the benefits the object can offer you have captured your attention. That is, they have sunk in. You might have to fight against many desires because we want things that we believe to be bad. Our desires, however, are not as sophisticated as our beliefs, just as our perceptions are not as sophisticated as our perceptual beliefs. Our perceptions explain our perceptual beliefs and our desires explain (among other things) many of our beliefs about value. Seeing P as good for S, may realize the belief in S that P is good.

It is also the case that seeing P as good for S is a necessary condition for desire. If S wants P, then S sees P as good for S. Imagine that you turn your attention to poison. Supposing you are not gravely depressed, you will not want the poison. The reason is that you do not see it as good for yourself. Moreover, imagine I see a glass of water. Now also suppose I am not thirsty. I do not see the water as good for me, so I do not want it. Perhaps, you believe that kale is good for you, but you do not see it as good for you. In this case it is clear you will not want it. If some object does not seem good for you, then you will have neutral attitudes³⁰⁴ toward the object or negative valenced affect regarding it. If S has neutral attitudes toward P or negative valenced affect regarding P, then S will tend does not want P. Seeing P as good for the self is a

³⁰⁴ Of course, you may believe that x is good but not want x.

requirement for it being an object of desire for S. Seeing P as good for the self then is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for desire.

Desires then seem to be perceptions. They are belief resistant and behave much more like perceptions than other mental states. Affective states can occur too quickly to be doxastic processes. Zajonc's argued that affective states can occur without advanced doxastic states. An affective state can be elicited in as little as 1ms while a doxastic state requires 8ms. Zajonc et al demonstrated that certain affective states occur long before the cognitive state occurs.³⁰⁵ Desires also involve attachment as (among other things) a precondition for affect. This entails that desires are agent relative.

Beyond this, desires appear to suggest that, at the very least, a form of immanent realism when it comes to axiological properties. That is, some things are good and others are bad. These axiological properties do not exist externally to persons. Those state of affairs and properties which promote well-being are those we call "good." All persons have the capacity to develop these goods. The general principles that, in my view, realize well-being are innate. As Paul Bloom argues in his book, *Just Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil*, it appears we have an innate moral sense.³⁰⁶ Acquiring the goods in a well-ordered manner is what makes one's life go well. Since there is a matter of fact about what properties or states make someone's life go well,³⁰⁷ those properties or states of affairs are what I am calling "goods." These goods are

³⁰⁵ Zajonc, R. B. "Feeling and thinking: Preferences need no inferences." *American Psychologist*, 1980, 35(2), 151–175. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.35.2.151>, see also Zajonc, R. B. (1984). "On the primacy of affect." *American Psychologist*, 39(2), 117–123. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.39.2.117>.

³⁰⁶ Bloom, Paul. 2013. *Just babies: the origins of good and evil*. Bloom discusses this innate moral sense throughout his book. His preface and first chapter set up his argument and give experimental evidence that preverbal infants have a sense of right and wrong.

³⁰⁷ I am not suggesting it is the same amount of a particular state of affairs that is the same for everyone. Rather, leaning with the Rozin, Haidt, and Shweder's work in cultural psychology, there is good reason to claim that there are a set of innate capacities which enable animals with them to live well. See chapter one on Shweder and

properties or states of affairs that any sufficiently developed subject of experience can (given their psychological capacities) enjoy. In this sense the goods are mind independent. While goods such as “pleasure and pain” are mind dependent on someone (someone must experience pain or pleasure), they are not dependent on everyone. Pain is bad, but that fact is not dependent on any particular person’s mind. Life is good, but not all living things have minds. In this sense it is both mind dependent and mind independent.

Axiological properties play a role in our daily life and discourse. We can have legitimate conversations about value and goods. We use the words “good” and “bad” frequently and other speakers of our language generally understand what is meant. I do not want to make the claim that moral realism is required for desire. However, it seems as if without some form of moral realism, the evaluative theory of desire loses some of its explanatory power. If “bad” say refers to whatever we disapprove of, and “good” refers whatever we approve of, it seems as if this would reduce the evaluative theory to the motivational theory.³⁰⁸ Desire would reduce to being disposed to obtain that state of affairs the subject is conditioned to seeing as playing the role of the “good” or “good for”. If the motivational theory fails to include affect, then these terms

Rozin in Jonathan Haidt’s 2012. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Vintage. Shweder’s main claims are found in, “The ‘Big Three’ of Morality” (Autonomy, Community, and Divinity), found in Brandt, Allan M, and Paul Rozin. 1997. *Morality and Health*. New York, NY: Routledge.

³⁰⁸ My view is that desires are an operation of system 2, given the dual processing system of the mind (see. Epstein, S. (1994). “Integration of the cognitive and the psychodynamic unconscious.” *Am. Psychol.* 49, 709–724). This implies that desires are immediate and automatic mental process. Neurological evidence processes of system 2 that tend to include self-reference. In my terms – they are self-regarding (cf. Mitchell, J. P., Macrae, C. N., and Banaji, M. R. (2006). “Dissociable medial prefrontal contributions to judgments of similar and dissimilar others.” *Neuron* 50, 655–663. doi: 10.1016/j.neuron.2006.03.040. This doesn’t imply that all automatic processes are affective or self-regarding. It appears that activation of the posterior dorsal medial prefrontal cortex is involved in taking on another’s perspective. However, the posterior dorsal MPFC works in conjunction with the left dorsal medial prefrontal cortex. The left dorsal MPFC, (an automatic process involved in taking one’s own perspective) appears to always be involved with taking on another perspective. D’Argembeau A, Ruby P, Collette F, Degueldre C, Baeteeu E, Luxen A, Maquet P, Salmon E. Distinct regions of the medial prefrontal cortex are associated with self-referential processing and perspective taking. *J Cogn Neurosci.* 2007 Jun;19(6): 935-44. doi: 10.1162/jocn.2007.19.6.935. PMID: 17536964.

would have no reference to any ubiquitous state of affairs or properties. This, however, seems counter to fact.

Johnathan Haidt and Paul Bloom's work on moral foundations strongly indicates that across cultures humans hold the same set of basic values. Upon these values (e.g., Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, Sanctity/Degradation, and Liberty/Oppression)³⁰⁹ ethical codes are developed across cultures. These codes differ but the values or moral principles are apparently ubiquitous.³¹⁰ My explanation for this is that when we use evaluative language, we are referring to states of affairs or properties. These states of affairs or properties that we call "good" comprise the evaluative realm of our existence. When we look at how we use words such as "good," it seems to be that we are talking about that which promotes life. If the evaluative perceptual models are correct, then I think we can expect that some form of moral realism is true. This is compatible with universal subjectivism. Morality very well might be subjective. However, the subjective elements are only so because what we refer to as good is that which is good for a subject(s). Value, I hold, is not mind independent. It seems as if we call certain things "good" and others "bad." The referent of these terms is *de se*³¹¹ mind independent. Life, I hold, is the grounding good. The other goods that improve our well-being are modes or functions of life. For example, incorporating properties in her life such as

³⁰⁹ Iyer R, Koleva S, Graham J, Ditto P, Haidt J. "Understanding Libertarian Morality: The Psychological Dispositions of Self-Identified Libertarians." PLoS ONE 2012, 7(8): e42366. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0042366>, Haidt, Jonathan. (*The Righteous Mind*. Harlow, England: Penguin Books, 2013),. Ch. 1, 6-7; see also Bloom, Paul. *Just Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil*. Ch. 4.

³¹⁰ Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, Ch. 1, 6-7.

³¹¹ By "de se" I mean with regard to oneself. So, value is *de se* mind-independent, but it is not mind independent simpliciter. The reason is that minds are that which values. But my mind doesn't need to believe that pain is bad for it to be bad.

pleasure, happiness, autonomy, self-improvement are all ways an individual can improve her life. These natural goods are properties and states of affairs that intrinsically improve the life of subject. Because of this, my position suggests that moral realism true.

Intrinsic goods are all based on life promotion. Life is a necessary condition for value. What makes something good then is its promotion of the well-being of the individual or group. Humans seem to have natural capacities that make them humans rather than say - ducks. Goodness then is indexed to the *telos* of the species it is referring to. In humans, it is good to flourish as a member of her species. If one does not, then she undeveloped example of a human. Intrinsic goods are those properties or states of affairs that comprise well-being. The grounding good is *life*. Some of the constitutes of life include Consciousness, autonomy, and happiness,³¹² among others. Life, as we know, involves pain and misery. These are not goods. Well-being amounts to degrees of well-ordered exemplification of properties fitting to the kind of thing the subject is. To have a well-ordered set of properties that are proper to one's kind, is to fully live.³¹³ When one is miserable, I hold, he is experiencing an absence of some good(s) (say loyalty) where it should be (within a particular role e.g., as a friend) according to the design plan of the subjects involved. The idea is that humans have the axiological foundation of in group loyalty which when activated promotes well-being for that subject. The goods (when it comes to

³¹² I consider happiness to be different from well-being. One can be immensely happy because of a neurological condition yet fail to flourish because he is plagued with pain and an incredibly short memory—so does not recall his state.

³¹³ This is an ancient use of the term. I am thinking of Plato and Augustine. Augustine held that goodness is being itself. Plato also did. I hold that life is goodness itself. Just as Augustine held that to exemplify a set of well-ordered properties according to one's kind is to fully exist, I hold that to exemplify properties according to one's kind is to fully live. That is, the best relative balance of natural goods for S, is equivalent to.

humans) are those values or states of affairs which promote the flourishing of individuals and groups.³¹⁴

These goods can be acquired individually, but when one fails to find a balance of goods in one's life, one will not be living as well as one could have been. The heroin addict is favoring pleasure over other intrinsically valuable things such as autonomy, an upward life trajectory, community, and virtue. Nietzsche's reversed cripple colorfully illustrates the idea of having too much of one good over the others. He says, these are people who "ha[ve] too little of everything and too much of one thing."³¹⁵ Zarathustra describes these people as having one large eye or a huge nose with a shrunken body. When one person devotes, for example, his entire life to one thing *at the expense* of all other aspects of being human, he becomes a reversed cripple. When we continuously chase one intrinsically valuable thing at the expense of the others, we fail to flourish as humans. We should pursue a variety of goods in our lives. A balance of these goods seems more conducive to living a good life than focusing on just one kind of good – like an addict does. Desires are value seemings, I argue, and therefore for one to desire suggest that there are goods in the world. This has the consequence that if axiological nihilism is true, then desires are likely illusory. There is, I hold, more reason to think that desires are not illusory than to assume axiological nihilism is true. Metaphysical oddity, for example, is not enough to reject axiological properties. Even if axiological properties are not the types of things that can be investigated by science or quantified, it does not follow that they are illusory. The objection from metaphysical queerness, in my mind, begs the question.

³¹⁴ I hold that autonomy, pleasure, happiness, etc are modes of life. I do not take them to be distinct independent entities. This would imply value monism. I reduce all natural goods to modes of life.

³¹⁵ Nietzsche, Fredrick. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Chapter 42. "Redemption. Found." <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/n/nietzsche/friedrich/n67a/chapter42.html>

Furthermore, research presented by psychologists studying the foundations of morality also suggest that people tend to agree on a particular set of basic axiological principles.³¹⁶ It appears that rather than major disagreement over axiological principles, there is substantial cross-cultural agreement on a set.³¹⁷ Since there is substantial cross-cultural agreement and because evaluative terms play a significant role in our personal cognitive and social lives, it seems more reasonable to me that a soft universalism³¹⁸ is true than something along the lines of axiological nihilism. This “soft universalism” is compatible with a sort of subjectivism. The way humans use the term “good” refers to those states of affairs or properties which tend to improve our well-being. Well-being, however, is subjective; it depends on the experience of the subject. In this way, the axiological facts are subjective. This kind of subjectivism is universal. For a member S of species x to flourish,³¹⁹ S must possess a sufficient number, and variety of degrees of natural goods for any member of x, given S’s environment and S’s psychological history. While the degree³²⁰ of natural goods that constitute well-being varies between groups and members of a species (according to the history and environment of the subject), there is a matter of fact about which natural goods are conducive to promoting well-being (or are identical to promoting well-being) for a given species.

In this way, axiological realism appears true. If “good” refers to that which promotes the well-being of any member of species x, and there is a fact of the matter about what promotes the

³¹⁶ See Jonathan Haidt’s books: “The Happiness Hypothesis” and “The Righteous Mind.” Or Paul Bloom’s books, “Descartes’ Baby,” and “Just Babies.” See also: <https://moralfoundations.org/>

³¹⁷ See note above.

³¹⁸ That is the view that a set of identical axiological principles are held across all groups of the relevant class.

³¹⁹ Have a high degree of well-being.

³²⁰ And rules regarding the promotion of goods.

well-being of a member of species x, then the claim “y is good for S” can be true or false. This fact is like any other fact. These set of facts, however, happen to be evaluative; they relate to the wellbeing of our species our (or of some species³²¹). They are natural facts. Yet they are salient to us because they directly relate to our well-being.³²² The reality of these natural axiological facts is compatible with a variety of views about them, manifestations intended to promote them, and rules governing behavior regarding them. Imagine everyone sees pain as bad for themselves. This, I assume, tends to give rise to a subject holding the proposition that “pain is bad.” However, simply because S sees pain as bad for S, it does not follow that S will believe that pain is bad for someone else (R).³²³ To grasp this one must reason about concepts such as natural goods, one’s place in relation to them, to others, and have the ability to universalize one’s judgement. This, however, is not to think axiologically—it is a deontic matter. Since this is an issue regarding what is permissible, impermissible, or obligatory, it does not directly address what is intrinsically good and bad. Variation in attitudes about the value of states for others, and of ethical conduct, is compatible with a soft universalism since it appears cultures agree on a set of axiological principles.

What we find instrumentally valuable depends on our attitudes about the causal structure of the world. Given the metaphysical views and other customs of a culture, the rules about

³²¹ Or by way of analogy – an inanimate object’s well-being.

³²² The sense of well-being – in my view is highly related to our sense of security and safety. It seems reasonable to hold that our childhood attachments set the foundation for our affective lives. Cassidy J. “Emotion regulation: influences of attachment relationships.” *Monogr Soc Res Child Dev.* 1994;59(2-3):228-49. PMID: 7984163.

³²³ Nor does it necessitate that S sees pain as bad for R.

promotion of the natural goods can differ radically.³²⁴ One culture may presume that epilepsy indicates that a person (S) is possessed by an evil Spirit and unless they kill S the evil Spirit will torture S for eternity.³²⁵ Misery is bad³²⁶! In this instance, the family of S may kill S, but the motivation would be to promote S's eternal well-being. If a family member F did not kill S, it seems reasonable that others in S's community would see F as a proper object of blame and F may condemn F's own actions. These negative social sanctions would directly reduce F's well-being.³²⁷ This would be bad for him. If axiological suppositions can be true or false, then that seems to neatly tie together the axiological claims. What makes the suppositions true or false, accurately describing the features of the world that promote or fail to promote well-being of a particular kind? If there are a set of properties that promote the well-being of members of a

³²⁴ Perhaps a better example would be: imagine that in culture C, it is permissible to steal if you can get away with it. So, people steal. Imagine no one wants to be stolen from but most people do it. Now, imagine that the reason why theft is permitted is because resources are scarce, and it is generally understood that people tend to hoard if they are aware of the scarcity. The lack of a regulation against theft, then would be a means to promote well-being in general (though a poor one). Rules to promote a natural good do not need to be rational or effective.

³²⁵ Assume a conscious afterlife.

³²⁶ This is intended to be a universal truth. Tranquility, for example, seems to be a fitting opposite of misery. Being in a state of something like tranquility or perhaps contentment or joy are (I hold) natural goods. Most, I hold, can be reduced to a set of a few basic natural goods. Nevertheless, I do not think anyone can see their own current misery as good. One may certainly believe that his or her own misery is good. He or she may think that in undergoing this misery, he or she becomes more holy. Regardless of one's attitude about the misery, experiencing misery as good seems implausible. If one sees his current state of misery as good, then he just doesn't seem to be in a state of misery.

³²⁷ This would be to decrease the amount of satisfaction or peace he (S) has in S's life. That lack of integration is a reduction of the exemplification of the kind of thing to which S is member, necessarily. I take this to be what Augustine meant when he indicated that we become less real when we lose integration. I chose "life" rather than "existence" or "being" because I see the reduction to be simpler. Just as, for Augustine, to fail to exemplify a secondary quality fitting to your kind renders you less real, I hold that to fail to exemplify a "property" according to the kind of thing you are is a direct reduction of your well-being. This does make one (S) more dissimilar to the kind of thing S belongs. I do not take it that this renders S less real. But I do think it is a reduction of one's well-being. I understand it would be best if I articulated a model for the essential attributes of particular species. This, however, does not seem necessary to my agenda. I believe I can hold that well-being is species specific and that we do not know which natural goods, or their relations are essentially fitting to any particular kind. Regardless, I am not in a position to make many considered metaphysical claims about which properties are or are not essential to any particular kind.

specific species, then we should look for an axiological supposition that can make sense of the differences and display the similarities. If there are a set of properties that promote the well-being of members of a specific species and members of a given species have concrete differences which elicit great differences regarding mental states and behaviors, then we would expect to see differences between how one member should or should not promote one good or other. In the West, for example, we would not tend to consult a priest or witch doctor to treat epilepsy. Our beliefs about the causal structure of our world tend to lead westerns to medical intervention. Natural goods, however, are species specific and regardless of culture we should expect to see rules and actions etc., intended to promote the same set of goods. We are social creatures and cannot expect to see the same actions and attitudes and customs about human values. When we look at the intention of a particular rule, however, we can see some attempt at preventing bad or promoting good. A subject's history and environment are variables which alter the amount and combinations of a natural goods which would most successfully promote that subject's well-being as a member of his species.

We can desire objects and states of affairs; and we can be mistaken about the object of our desire. Sometimes I desire P but what I really want is something P will give me. That which P gives me (intrinsic desire) is something that is³²⁸ intrinsically valuable. These desires are called "intrinsic desires" (N-desires). The apparent object of desire, or that which I directly take myself to be desiring, is what is called the "instrumental desire" (M-desires).

³²⁸ I do not mean "I take it to be" I mean my desire for P, when P is a concrete object or state of affairs, is always instrumental. The intrinsic desire is that which you see yourself as getting from the instrumental desire. I suppose I could say "I hold as".

3.6 -Intrinsic Desires

An intrinsic desire is a desire for an intrinsic good. I am not claiming that an intrinsic desire is a desire for something that concretely presents itself as an intrinsic good (e.g., drinking a cup of coffee). These are what I am calling instrumental desires. An intrinsic desire is the perception of an intrinsic good³²⁹ which is to be found *in* obtaining some object or realizing some state of affairs. Intrinsically good things are those that make your life go well. They are good because of what they are, not just because of what they can do. So, the N-desire is for an intrinsic good (it is for participating in an intrinsic good). A simple example is pleasure. Imagine that I want a cup of coffee. So, I get one and drink it. But upon drinking it I find I am very dissatisfied. It turns out that the coffee was decaf! What I really wanted was not just a cup of coffee I wanted the pleasure³³⁰ that the caffeine would give me. The coffee is a mere means, a tool, or an instrument for giving me pleasure. But pleasure is what I am seeking. The N-desire is for buzz the caffeine would give me. This, of course, does not mean that there are no other desires related to this situation or desire - or that there aren't desires that conflict with this one. I will discuss these complications. This will also be addressed in the next section regarding instrumental desires (M-desire).

An intrinsic desire for *x*, moreover, is the perception of *x as good for me*. The object of the N-desire is always for something that is perceived as an intrinsically good state of affairs

³²⁹ I am not claiming that intrinsic desires are infallible. They are a mechanism which directs your attention and tends to focus your motivation on maintaining or entertaining or gaining some natural good. You can be wrong about needing more or less of a good (e.g., pleasure or autonomy), but your N-desire is similar to an alert system – it alters one to either some good because of a deficiency of that good or because of a habit of accumulating that good or because for one reason or another directed at promoting the well-being of the subject. Desires can be wrong in one sense – they can be too strong and for too few or too many things. Simply wanting freedom seems to me something that would cause misery not promote well-being. But N-desires always alter us to of accumulation of natural goods.

³³⁰ The intrinsic good.

(e.g., being in a loving relationship, or pleasure, or autonomy, etc.). Desires are not doxastic; but are affected by concepts. An animal, for example, desires satisfaction from hunger and therefore, desires corn. At the level of the N-desire, it is the desire for the removal of the pain of hunger. This is a perception of pain as bad (and thus pleasure as good), and this I presume for many animals is non-doxastic.

A desire is a perception that is intimately related to behavioral dispositions. We can derive a truth claim from the perception. The perception itself, however, is neither true nor false. When the non-human animal desires being full, she is not thinking “I would like to be full.” She has a disposition to eat corn and *sees* the corn as good for her. But to be disposed to make it more likely that-P, is not a desire for P. The “seeing the corn as good (for her)” is a desire for corn.

3.6 - Instrumental Desires:

An instrumental desire (M-desire) is a desire for a particular object or event. To say subject S desires object P is to say that S perceives P as good for S’s own wellbeing. The *intrinsic* desire- has the following structure: S desires P if and only if S sees P as intrinsically good for S. The object of the intrinsic desire is that property (or state of affairs) that is the kind of thing that tends to increase the wellbeing of the person desiring it. It is the desire for an intrinsic good. The object of the *instrumental* desire, however, may or may not tend to increase the wellbeing of the subject. It may be that the subject sees an object or event as good for his wellbeing, but this object is not good for his wellbeing. Intrinsic desires are (I claim) reliable. Intrinsic desires alert the subject to natural goods which are fitting to the kind of thing the subject is. These properties or states of affairs are that which promote well-being.

When our M-desire and our N-desire come apart we fail to obtain the object that will satisfy us. For example, the user of heroin desires to have the feeling of euphoria (N-desire). This feeling is not bad. Pleasure is an intrinsic good. The object, however, of his M-desire is the wrong object. He shouldn't use heroin because it leads to dissatisfaction, addiction, disorder, and death. It takes away what he is attempting to achieve (fullness of life). He needs to work through the pain in his life that is causing him to seek out this kind of numbing. The addict's N-desire is for the removal of pain or for pleasure. If he had a fitting set of M-desires, he would obtain the object of his N-desire. For example, if he sought effective therapy, a proper diet, and exercise, he may find the kind of comfort that he is seeking.

The agent relative model of desire can account for all the features of desire. An occurrent desire is a conscious state of desiring. When I desire something, I have a felt need—for example, a felt need to drink a cup of coffee. I am experiencing the state of wanting. If I want to drink a cup of coffee then I will (1) tend to be disposed to take actions I believe are conducive to actualize that state of affairs, (2) tend to take pleasure in its seeming that I have actualized the state of affairs, and (3) evaluate the actualization of this state of affairs as good for me. This theory explains (1) because if S sees P as good for himself, he will be attracted to it and want it for himself, thus being disposed to obtain it. It explains (2) as well since pleasure is an intrinsic good. Intrinsic desires reliably point at intrinsic goods. When I want sugar, I want the pleasure of the taste. When I want to travel, I want the freedom that comes with it. When I want to see my partner, I want the love I get from her. When I desire to see my friend, I am actually wanting the excitement of our interactions. All desires are pointed at (at the very least) appearances of intrinsic goods. If there are no intrinsic goods, however, it does not follow that the agent relative account is false. This is one reason I prefer to discussion use of the word “good” rather than

goodness itself. It seems that “good” is used to discuss a certain feature of our lives. If it turns out that there is nothing truly good or bad this does not impact the way we use the terms. If nihilism (for example) is true, discussions of axiology, I think would reduce to talk about behaviors and uses of terms and illusory concepts. We would have to reject my view that intrinsic desires are reliable, since there are no intrinsic goods. But I think the reliability of intrinsic desires could still hold. It may be that our N-desires are caused by needs of the agent. These needs we may call “good.” These needs may be general enough such that x set of needs are not always needed at a specific time because one has that need (say water). So, if S wants P and P is a general biological requirement, then we may call P “good”. And we would not be wrong. However, it seems that if the agent relative model is true or close to the truth, we would expect moral realism be true.

3.8 -Inference to the Best Explanation

At this point I would like to return to some of the other theories of desire. Below I will run each theory through a set of criteria that if met, should provide a good explanation. I argue that the agent relative evaluative theory is comparatively superior to all the other theories of desire. That is, it provides the best explanation for the data of desire. To argue for this, we need to evaluate the theory against the criteria for best explanation. Below are the criteria that I will be using to evaluate whether or not the agent relative theory is best.

- **Explanatory scope:** The best explanation will explain more data than do rival explanations.³³¹³³²
- **Explanatory power (a):** The best explanation will make data more probable than do rival explanations.³³³
- **Explanatory power (b):** The explanation includes more data than the rivals but with fewer explanatory tools (this is a combination of simplicity and explanatory scope).³³⁴
- **Simplicity:** The best explanation will use fewer explanatory tools.³³⁵
- **Plausibility:** The best explanation will be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths than rival explanation.³³⁶
- **Ad hoc:** The best explanation will involve fewer new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge than rivals.³³⁷

Before we consider which explanation is the best. We should list the data of desire that requires explanation. If S wants P then S will: (1) tend to be disposed to take actions S believes are conducive to actualizing that state of affairs (motivation); (2) tend to take pleasure in it seeming that S has actualized the state of affairs (pleasure); (3) tend to learn that particular states of

³³¹ Johnson, S., Johnston, A., Toig, A., & Keil, F. “Explanatory Scope Informs Causal Strength Inferences.” *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*. (2014), 36. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/91d5t02n>. The authors make a distinction between “manifest scope” and “latent scope.” The former has to do with covering all the known data. The latter has to do with covering possible and predicting future events related to the data. See page, 2454.

³³² Kuhn, Thomas. “Objectivity, Value Judgement and Theory Choice” in *The Essential Tension*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

³³³ Schupbach, Jonah N., and Jan Sprenger. "The Logic of Explanatory Power*." *Philosophy of Science* 78, no. 1 (2011): 105-27. Accessed September 4, 2021. doi:10.1086/658111.

³³⁴ Lewis, D. *Counterfactuals*. (Oxford, Blackwell 1973). 72-77. This is characterized as “strength,” however, for Lewis, strength explicitly implies what I am calling “scope.”

³³⁵ Kuhn, Thomas. “Objectivity, Value Judgement and Theory Choice.”

³³⁶ Harman, Gilbert. “The Inference to the Best Explanation,” *Philosophical Review* (1965), 74, no.1: 88–89.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

affairs are rewarding (reward); (4) evaluate the actualization of such states of affairs as good or good for S (evaluation); (5) for S to want P, P must be represented as desirable to S (desirable); (6) the desire for P gives S reasons to obtain or realize P (reason giving); (7) desires appear phenomenologically as a felt need (felt need); (8) when S desires P yet fails to obtain P, S experiences negative affect and conversely (affective).

3.8.1- The Motivational Theory

The first we will consider is the motivational theory of desire. This states that for S to desire P is for S to be disposed to take actions S believes are conducive to bringing about P. The second theory is the pleasure-based theory. On this position, S desires P if S takes pleasure in it seeming that P obtains or is realized. The third theory is the reward or learning theory of desire. The reward theory states for S to have an intrinsic (positive) desire that *P* is to embed the capacity to perceptually or cognitively represent that *P* in a system, the biological function of which is to constitute *P* as a reward. The fourth theory is the doxastic model of desire. This position states that for S to desire P is for S to believe P is good. The sixth and seventh theories are evaluative perceptual models. These come in two forms. The first is the agent neutral theory. This theory states that for S to desire P is for S to see P as good *simpliciter*. The second is the agent relative theory. This theory holds that for S to desire P is for S to see P as good for S.

To start, let's consider explanatory scope:

Explanatory scope: The best explanation will explain more data than the rival explanations.

Listing the data points again:

(1) motivation

(2) Pleasure

- (3) reward
- (4) evaluation
- (5) desirability
- (6) reason giving
- (7) felt need
- (8) affect

The motivational theory of desire does explain 1. However, it doesn't explain 2-8. If it is the case that for S to want P is for S to be disposed to take actions that will likely bring about P, then, by itself, it cannot explain pleasure or reward or evaluation, desirability, reason giving, felt need, or affect. Merely being disposed to bring about P entails nothing about affect. However, desire is ripe with affect. When I do not obtain my desired end, I am frustrated. When I do get it, I am typically pleased. Furthermore, a mere disposition does not give anyone a reason to act any more than a reflex does. A disposition to scratch your nose is not a reason to scratch your nose. A mere disposition to bring about P is not a reason to bring about P. Rather, it is simply the claim that you tend to do it under particular manifestation conditions. It does not offer any kind of satisfactory reason for someone having a particular desire. Further, the motivational theory cannot explain the evaluative aspect of desire. It seems, however, this guise of the good is essential to desire. When I want P, I evaluate it as good to a certain extent. It appears good to me; and I claim it appears good for me. Either way, the motivational theory cannot account for evaluation. A mere disposition has absolutely nothing to do with affect, emotion, value, felt need, reasons or pleasure. At this point, let's consider explanatory power.

Explanatory power (a): The best explanation will make data more probable than rival explanations.

Explanatory power (b): The explanation includes more data than the rivals but with fewer explanatory entities (this is a combination of simplicity and explanatory scope).

The motivational theory of desire has poor explanatory power b. The reason is that it has very poor scope. It cannot explain all the data points. Further, it fails to explain data points that other theories can explain. For example, data points 2-8. Furthermore, if the motivational theory is true, we need to ask ourselves, should I expect actual the data of desire? Explanatory power (a) is about rational expectation. If the motivational theory of desire is true, then should I rationally expect to see all the data 1-8? The answer is no. The theory does not make it the case that we should rationally expect data points 1-8. In fact, we should not expect many of these data points if the motivational theory is correct. There is no conceptual relation between a disposition to act and (1) Pleasure, (2) reward, (3) evaluation, (4) desirability, (5) reason giving, (6) felt need, nor (7) affect. Furthermore, there is no mathematical or scientific reason to connect a disposition to behave with the above data points. If we are taking the theory on its own terms without adding the data points into the explanation or adding to the explanation, then we have no explanation for the data points listed above.

Let's consider two other criteria:

Simplicity: The best explanation will use fewer explanatory tools.

Plausibility: The best explanation will be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths and its negation implied by fewer accepted truths than rival explanation.

With simplicity the motivational theory outshines every other theory. To want P is for S to be disposed to take actions S thinks will bring P about. This model has one explanatory tool when all the other theories include more. Is the theory plausible? It seems that given the accepted truths about desire, when we consider the motivational theory, we are left without an explanation

of many of the accepted truths. For example, why is it the case that when S fails to get P, S feels upset? A mere disposition to behave is not going to give adequate reasons for this state of affairs. The affective nature of desire does not entail the motivational theory and neither does the evaluative nature of desire. Because of this, the motivational theory is not implied by a greater variety of accepted truths than the other truths. The affective nature of desire seems, at best, incongruent with the motivational theory. It does seem as if we are pleased when we obtain our desired end. However, just because we are pleased when we get what we want it doesn't follow from this at all that a desire is identical to a mere disposition, unless we build in the capital of the pleasure or evaluative theories into the disposition. To do this, however, would be to no longer be considering the motivational theory.

Ad hoc: The best explanation will involve fewer new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge than rivals.

Predictability: If the theory predicts something other than that which it was intended to explain

The motivational theory does a very good job with less ad hoc. This theory adds in one but maybe not even one, new supposition. This supposition is the disposition to bring P about. If this theory is true, then it should predict the way desire operates in unrelated ways. Let's take the example of the disconnect between believing that P is good and wanting P. If the motivational theory is correct, then it seems to make sense of this problem. I may have a disposition to bring P about but at the same time think P is bad. But what about, say, people's purchases? It seems that the motivational theory doesn't explain this well. Why do I choose this product rather than another? It doesn't seem to be that I am merely disposed to choose one over the other. A mere disposition is too conceptually thin to explain the choice. It seems there is a level of deliberation involved. At this level we may be disposed to choose one thing over the other. However, this

disposition does not elaborate on the emotions and other kinds of affect that we associated with desire nor with choosing one option over the other. It could be claimed that the reason S chose A over B is because S was disposed to select A over B. But this seems to fly in the face of folk psychology. When I experience my own desires, I do not experience them as mere dispositions to behave. I experience them as felt needs and pulls toward something. The disposition is not the same as a felt need nor a pull toward something. Therefore, a disposition to behave is insufficient to explain desire.

3.8.2 - Pleasure-based theory

Now let's consider the pleasure-based theory. This theory is also understood to be the hedonistic theory of desire. This should be distinguished from the hedonism that is discussed in value theory. It is not to be understood to imply value monism. However, it should be understood to imply that S wants P because S takes pleasure in it seeming that P. Let's first consider the scope of the explanation.

Explanatory scope: The best explanation will explain more of data than the rival explanations.

Listing the data points again:

- (1) motivation
- (2) Pleasure
- (3) reward
- (4) evaluation
- (5) desirability
- (6) reason giving
- (7) felt need
- (8) affect

The hedonistic theory has fairly good scope. It can explain 1-3 and 5 and 8. However, it does not appear to explain 4, 6, or 7. It seems that while pleasure is a good, holding that P is pleasurable does not conceptually entail that P is good. It may be that the subject does not think that P is good but thinks that he gets pleasure from P. This kind of situation seems to be commonplace. Many people think that pleasure can be bad if it is obtained in wrong ways. For example, if I cause pain to someone else and derive pleasure from it, many will think that this is wrong. So, it appears that evaluation and pleasure can come apart. We can also find something pleasurable but fail to want it. I may find it pleasurable to drink alcohol but not want to drink. So, even though it appears that the hedonistic theory can explain motivation, I do not think, it will always explain it. We can be motivated by pleasure – however, frequently, we not motivated by pleasure. It seems there are many other motivations than pleasure and if we reduce motivation to desire and desire to x seeming to be pleasurable, then we are left with an incomplete explanation of motivation.

The hedonistic theory cannot account for the evaluative aspect of desire. It appears that when we want P, we see P as good in a certain way. We may not think P is good, but something about P appears good to us. Pleasure is only one kind of good. It is not general enough to explain all other desires. Imagine that if every time I get what I want, I experience pleasure, it still would not follow that seeing something as pleasurable, is enough to give you desire. A better and more fitting explanation for obtaining pleasure upon desire satisfaction, is that pleasure is a result of obtaining your desired end. Moreover, just because I get pleasure from P, it doesn't follow that this is reason enough to pursue P. Sometimes desires can act as reasons for obtaining P. However, if I want P because I see P as pleasurable, then I do not always have a reason for

pursuing it. I may see it as pleasurable but hold that it is wrong. This would give me competing reasons for acting. It is of course true that pleasure counts as a reason to want P. Seeing P as pleasurable, however, is too thin to capture all of the reasons for desire. Pleasure also, fails to give us an overriding reason to act.

Finally, the hedonistic theory cannot account for the desires being experienced as a felt need. If 'taking pleasure in it seeming that P' is identical to desire, then taking pleasure in it seeming that P should be enough, conceptually, to explain all the aspects of desire. However, the feeling we have that the world must be like x, is not captured by the concept that to desire P is to take pleasure in it seeming that P. Pleasures are a wonderful part of life. Pleasures seem to be a natural good. However, often times, we do not see pleasure as a need. We see it as a luxury. I don't think we can completely reduce pleasure to the absence of pain. It seems as if one can have a felt need related to the removal of pain. I think this is relatively commonplace. However, I can want P without holding that P will remove pain. I can, also, want P without holding that P will give me pleasure. Maybe it is the case, that I would like to take my children to a concert that they will enjoy. Imagine that I absolutely dislike their music, but I want to take them to see something they enjoy. I do not expect to obtain pleasure from taking my kids to the concert, but I do want to take them to it. It could be claimed that I would get pleasure from seeing my kids enjoy the concert. This seems correct, but I do not think this is the same desire. The desire to take my kids to concert x is not the same as seeing it as enjoyable to take the kids to the concert.

Explanatory power (a): The best explanation will make data more probable than rival explanations.

Explanatory power (b): The explanation includes more data than the rivals but with fewer explanatory tools (this is a combination of simplicity and explanatory scope).

Simplicity: The best explanation will use fewer explanatory tools.

Plausibility: The best explanation will be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths than rival explanation.

Ad hoc: The best explanation will involve fewer **new** suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge than rivals.

The hedonistic theory fairs poorly on the above criteria as well. If the definition of a desire is taking pleasure in it seeming that P, then (1) every case of something seeming as if it will elicit pleasure would a desire; and (2) you could not have a desire for P without taking pleasure in it seeming that P. One and two, however, are false. It is common for an addict to want P (where P is taking a drug) and not take pleasure in it seeming that P (where “it seeming that P” is equivalent to the actualization or imagining of the actualization of P).³³⁸ This indicates that the hedonistic theory has poor explanatory power (a). The theory does not make the data of desire more probable than its rivals.

Because the hedonistic theory has such poor scope (and is relatively complex), it has poor explanatory power (b). It is at first glance, a fairly simple theory. However, it adds “seemings” and “pleasure.” It is not entirely clear what is meant by “seeming that P.” I assuming it means (as stated above) something like the imaging of the actualization of P or the actualization of P. This is speculation, however, and I would like a more detailed account of the “seeming.” Identifying desire with “taking pleasure in its seeming that P” requires the addition of pleasure. This is a new supposition. This complicates the theory. While I do not think an account of the nature of pleasure is required, I do think that an explanation of what is meant by “pleasure”, how pleasure functions within the cognitive framework of the subject, and what counts as pleasure insofar as it

³³⁸ Berridge, K. C., & Robinson, T. E. Liking, Wanting, and the Incentive-Sensitization Theory of Addiction. *The American Psychologist*, (2016), 71(8), 670–679. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000059>

equates to desire. The hedonistic theory is more ad hoc than the motivational theory and is much more complicated. It does have a touch of plausibility, however. Pleasure and desire are closely aligned. But this alignment is causal one rather than one of equality.

The hedonistic theory then has poor scope, it is also more complicated than the motivational theory. It does seem to have more plausibility than the motivational theory. Pleasure and desire are closely connected whereas action and desire are not as closely connected. We typically feel pleased when we obtain our desired end. However, there are far too many instances of action without desire and desire without action for desire to be identical with a disposition to act. The hedonic theory seems more plausible than the motivational theory. But with, in my view, dismal scope the hedonistic theory represents a poor explanation of desire.

3.8.3 - The Learning/Reward Theory:

The learning theory of desire was made popular by Timothy Schroder and Nomy Arpaly. They hold that desires are natural kinds just as water and iron are natural kinds. These natural kinds are capacities “to perceptually or cognitively represent that *P* in a system, the biological function of which is to constitute *P* as a reward.”³³⁹ The neurological structures that Arpaly and Schroeder have in mind are “the twin structures found immediately adjacent to one another deep in the brain: the ventral tegmental area, or VTA, and the pars compacta of the substantia nigra, or SNpc.”³⁴⁰ These are both output structures for the reward system. Their principal neurons extend

³³⁹ *Ibid.* 136.

³⁴⁰ Arpaly, Nomy and Timothy Schroeder. *Three Faces of Desire.* 49.

to nearly every neurological structure. These other structures, in addition, have dopamine receptors which are the chemical that the VTA and SNpc release.³⁴¹

The pattern of release of dopamine by the VTA/SNpc (which is what is needed to communicate information about reward) can function as a learning signal. When an individual unexpectedly represents a state of affairs that typically is considered rewarding, the VTA/SNpc fire briefly above their baseline. When an expected reward has a cue – for example a light flashing before feeding time – then at the cue the VTA/SNpc will fire above baseline. But they will not fire above baseline when the expected reward is obtained. So, the VTA/SNpc fire above baseline when the unexpected reward is obtained or when one gets information about an expected reward coming; and when an expected reward fails to materialize, the VTA/SNpc activity drops off. The release of dopamine by the VTA/SNpc can reorganize neural structures and the psychological features implemented by them.³⁴² This seems to indicate that the release of dopamine by the VTA/SNpc corresponds to the reward-based learning signal. Behavioral habit learning depends upon dopamine reaching areas such as the dorsal striatum likely from the VTA/SNpc. If this is correct, then the reward signal can shape unthinking behavioral tendencies.³⁴³ Getting a reward, further, “just is an event that satisfies a desire.”³⁴⁴

Desire seems to be intimately related to the learning system. Desiring that P involves representing that P in such a way that it produces the learning signals. This would indicate that the desire theory of reward is the same as the learning theory of reward. Both “. . . hold that for

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Ibid.* 50-51.

³⁴³ *Ibid.* 51-52.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 69.

P to be a reward for an organism is for the organism to tend to produce a characteristic learning signal upon representing that P.”³⁴⁵ Schroeder holds the best-known features of desire can be accounted for by reference to the brain’s reward system. When you think of desire – many think of wanting to get or do something. This is related to motivation. Motivation, it is claimed, stems from the brain’s reward system. In addition, when I want P there is some sense of being pleased at the thought of P obtaining. This is related to the pleasurable aspect of desire. Pleasure is an activity of the reward system.³⁴⁶

Schroeder defines his reward theory of desire in the following way:

Reward Theory of Desire (RTD): To have an intrinsic (positive) desire that P is to use the capacity to perceptually or cognitively represent that P to constitute P as a reward. To be averse to it being the case that P is to use the capacity to perceptually or cognitively represent that P to constitute P as a punishment.³⁴⁷

Below are the data points requiring explanation. Let’s compare RTD with the other explanations considered:

- (1) Motivation
- (2) Pleasure
- (3) Reward
- (4) Evaluation
- (5) Desirability
- (6) Reason giving

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 70.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 130-131.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 131.

(7) felt need

(8) affect

- **Explanatory scope:** The best explanation will explain a more data than the rival explanations.
- **Explanatory power (a):** The best explanation will make data more probable than rival explanations.
- **Explanatory power (b):** The explanation includes more data than the rivals but with fewer explanatory tools (this is a combination of simplicity and explanatory scope).
- **Simplicity:** The best explanation will use fewer explanatory tools.

Using scope through simplicity it seems as if the learning theory does not fare well. First, the learning theory seems to cover 3 but if “reward” is synonymous with “gratification” or “pleasure,” then (as it will become clear), the learning theory doesn’t explain 3. Second, it does not explain 1, 2, 4-8. While it may be accurate that a particular neurological structure is active or causes motivation, having that area stimulated is insufficient for motivation to occur. It doesn’t seem informative to explain the psychological phenomena of desire in neurological terms. Given that the VTA/SNpc is related to dopamine distribution, it does explain the causal relation of feeling good with fulfilled desire. But it does not explain why we have more or less dopamine released upon interactions with x as opposed to y. Why are somethings represented as a reward and others are not? Morello claims that psychological states become desires when particular states of affairs become their objects. I desire a cup of coffee when I am rewarded by the thought or the seeming that I have the cup of coffee. The reward event, according to Morello, is a gratifying or satisfying feeling. This implies that all desires amount to and are rooted in gratifying and satisfying feelings. She calls this “deep monism” because all desires reduce to this reward event. I desire P when I have a reward event in it seeming that P. There is only one object

of motivation (or desire) for Morillo—the reward event (i.e., pleasure). While there is a lot of talk about reward, gratification, liking, and pleasure in relation to desire, there is also an observed decoupling of liking and wanting in both addicts and non-addicts. The liking system and the wanting system, neurologically, are different. Liking, Richard Holton, claims is “realized in a number of brain systems, including opiod, denzodiazepine and perhaps serotin systems.”³⁴⁸ An indication of liking are facial cues such as smiles, lip protrusions and sucking. Wanting, on the other hand, is realized in the mesolimbic dopamine system. In normal agential creatures, wanting can be indicated by attempting to obtain the desired end.³⁴⁹ Rats can have their wanting systems suppressed and still express signs of liking. Further, rats who have had a particular reward event in the past can fail to want (say) the sugar when their mesolimbic dopamine system is suppressed. These rats, however, continue to like the sugar. The learning-reward event doesn’t appear to play the motivational role that Morillo and Schroeder seems to think it does. Rats, in addition, can want something when their liking systems are suppressed.³⁵⁰ This indicates that one can be motivated to obtain a substance even when they do not find it pleasurable or gratifying. These results run contrary to Morillo’s of motivation (i.e., desire) and the connection between pleasure and wanting. The learning/reward, in my view, fails to explain why I would find one thing rewarding and not another thing. It further, does not take into account the standard distinction between wanting and liking. When we consider:

(4) Evaluation

(5) Desirability

³⁴⁸ Holton, Richard. *Willing, Wanting, and Waiting*, 104.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 105.

(6) Reason giving

(7) felt need

(8) affect

The learning theory has poor scope as well. There is no mention of the learning center evaluatively representing something. Since, I take it, that evaluation in is required for all affect and desire is affective, desire requires valuation. Because the learning theory states that nothing is intrinsically rewarding, they theory cannot explain desirability. If I want P, then I (more or less) represent P as a reward. This says nothing about the object of desire. To account for this, a RTD theorist could claim that an object is desirable when it is represented as a reward. So, x is desirable when x is represented as a reward and S wants P when S represents P as a reward. This is entirely one direction. There is no explanation of why I want X and not Y. The theory as it stands says nothing about a felt need as it relates to wanting. And further, it is unable to give reasons for action. The learning theory equates desire with a neurological activity. Neurological activities are causal. Causes are not the same as reasons. A reason can serve as a cause. But a cause cannot serve as a reason. There is no semantic content to an event cause but there is semantic content to a reason.

The learning theory seems to have poor scope. It cannot explain 1-8 (except maybe 3). Because it has such poor scope, it has poor explanatory power (b). It seems the pleasure-based theory has much greater power than the learning theory. Further, the learning theory is not simple. The neural connections and relations are vast and complicated. Since explanatory power (b) is the combination of scope and simplicity, and the learning theory fares poorly on both scope and simplicity, the learning theory has poor explanatory power (b). It also has poor explanatory power (a). If the learning theory is true, I do not think that most rational people would expect to

see 1-8. What reason would they have for rationally expecting 1-8, given the truth of RTD?

There is a case to be made for 3 (because it involved reward and learning). However, one, I don't think, would not expect the host of psychological events we see to occur if the learning theory were true.

- **Plausibility:** The best explanation will be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths than rival explanation.
- **Less ad hoc:** The best explanation will involve fewer new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge than rivals.

Let's evaluate the learning/reward theory given these set of criteria. Is it plausible? It seems that this theory is not plausible. The reason is that it doesn't seem as if most people are monists when it comes to the mind. Paul Bloom has done some interesting research on this topic and has concluded that most people are dualists, and the vast majority of all people are born dualists.³⁵¹

While monism may be true it is not implied by a greater variety of accepted truths. The pleasure-based theory is much more plausible. When I talk about the brain it is far from clear I am talking about psychology or the mind. It is as if I have changed the subject from reasons to causes.

When I hit my foot on a table, I feel pain. But this pain is not about the table. Desires and other mental events are about things. "I want P" typically presumes the possibility that P – where "that P" is intentional.

The learning theory is also fairly ad hoc. It adds in many new suppositions. It adds several neural structures that must work together to realize a desire. It adds in the relation between dopamine, motivation, wanting, and liking. While motivation is causal – a reward event

³⁵¹ Bloom, Paul. *Descartes' Baby: How the Science of Child Development Explains What Makes us Human*. New York: Basic Books, 2004. And Bloom, Paul. *How Pleasure Works: The New Science of Why We Like What We Like*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

is identical to wanting (and in Morello also identical to liking). The other theories do not add as many explanatory entities as the learning theory. With its poor scope, power, plausibility, and its ad hoc complexity, the learning theory is a poor contender for a theory of desire.

3.8.4 - The Evaluative Theories:

All the evaluative theories hold that for S to desire P, value must be placed on the object of desire. This valuing can be doxastic (for S to desire P is for S to believe P is good), perceptual agent-neutral (for S to desire P is for S to see P as good), and perceptual agent-relative (for S to desire P is for S to see P as good for S). Let's first turn to the doxastic theory.

3.8.4.1 - Doxastic Evaluativism

Recall the data points:

- (1) Motivation
- (2) Pleasure
- (3) Reward
- (4) Evaluation
- (5) Desirability
- (6) Reason giving
- (7) felt need
- (8) affect

The Doxastic theory has it that for S to desire P is for S to believe P is good. In my view, it cannot explain 1-3, 7 or 8. A belief seems insufficient to explain motivation. I can believe it is good to give to OXFAM but not be motivated to do it. The doxastic theory also fails to account for pleasure and reward. Just because you believe x to be good, achieving x does not by itself

produce pleasure. In addition, it is unclear how actualizing a desire, on this account, would provide a reward. What is rewarding about getting something or doing something you think is good?³⁵² What is it about this thought that makes it rewarding? The doxastic theory seems to fall short of any clear answer to these questions. Having a belief that x is good, is also insufficient to cause a felt need for it. Many probably believe it is good to donate half of their income to feed, clothe, and medicate abandoned and abused children in Botswana, but I doubt that most have a felt need to do so.³⁵³ If all those who had this thought also had a desire to aid, then most social problems would be solved.

Lastly, this theory has poor scope because it also fails to explain affect. Desires are very strong types of affect. I can have the belief that giving money to the homeless man who sweeps the sidewalk on 6th and Market is good but experience absolutely no affect in relation to this belief. The doxastic theory cannot explain 8, in addition to 1-3, 7. Because it has such poor scope, it also has poor explanatory power (b). If the doxastic theory is true, the data of desire seems more implausible than if other theories were true. Because of this, it has poor explanatory power (a). It is, however, a rather simple theory. It is simpler than the hedonistic theory (but has worse scope and power), less simple than the motivation theory (but has better scope and power). It is comparatively superior to the learning theory, but the doxastic theory is very implausible. Its negation is implied by accepted beliefs. It is a common phenomenon to believe x is good and not

³⁵² Goodness could be considered its own reward. This is true. I do not think that many people think this. On television I've heard people express sentiments such as: I'd rather be in hell with you guys than in heaven with the saints. This, in my view, is someone who (1) doesn't believe that goodness is a reward because he hasn't seen good things as good. He then sees them as bad because of his beliefs about saints or goodness. When one has seen goodness as good, then he can represent goodness as a reward in the relevant way. The relevant way would be for S to represent P as good for S. It would be, less partisanly, be to represent P as good in such a way that it stimulates S (when possible) motivational modules.

³⁵³ Radley, Alan, and Marie Kennedy. "Charitable Giving by Individuals: A Study of Attitudes and Practice." *Human Relations*. 48, no. 6 (June 1995): 685–709. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679504800605>.

desire to do x. Having a gym membership is a great example. I had a gym membership for years and believed that it would be very good to use my membership, but I had absolutely no desire to go. I bet the same is true of you. Therefore, one can believe x is good and not desire x. Since the doxastic theory claims that for S to desire P is for S to believe P is good and it is true that S can believe P to be good and not want P, the negation of the doxastic theory is implied by this accepted truth. I also think that this goes beyond plausibility. The issue here, I think, is external inconsistency. This theory is simply inconsistent with the facts that require explanation. Adding belief to the analysis of desire is ad hoc. However, it is not as ad hoc as the learning theory. It is more ad hoc than the pleasure theory and the motivation theory. At this point, I think it would be helpful to turn to the perceptual agent-neutral evaluation theory (“the agent neutral theory”).

3.8.4.2 - The Agent Neutral Theory

What is commonly referred to as the “perceptual evaluative” model (what I am calling the “agent neutral theory”) is an improvement on the doxastic theory. The agent neutral theory removes the doxastic requirement. In the place of a belief, this theory includes a perception or a seeming. For it Seeming to S that P does not entail that S believes P nor does believing P entail that it seems to S that P.³⁵⁴ Further, the seeming is more akin to what Kahneman refers to as operations of “system 1” in his book, “Thinking Fast and Slow.”³⁵⁵ That is, it is immediate, affecting, and unreflective.³⁵⁶ What I am calling “evaluative perceptions” are common within psychological discussions fitting neatly within system 1.³⁵⁷ System 2 takes longer to process the information

³⁵⁴ I am grateful to Graham Oddie for pointing this out.

³⁵⁵ Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

³⁵⁶ This dual process model is useful in a variety of explanations regarding mental events and behavior.

³⁵⁷ See Bloom, Paul. 2013. *Just babies: the origins of good and evil.*; Wundt, W. (1907). *Outlines of Psychology*. (C.H. Judd, Trans.). Engelmann. LeDoux J. (2012). “Rethinking the emotional brain.” *Neuron*,

delivered to it by system 1. Doxasticism sits neatly in system 2 while the perceptual theories (e.g., agent neutral and relative theories) fit squarely within system 1. In Kahneman's view system 1 and 2 can be in conflict just as desires run contrary to beliefs and beliefs to desires.

An important property when trying to distinguish a seeming from an intuition or a belief, is *belief resistance*. Desires are belief resistant. Frequently, regardless of how much information I am given about an object of desire (within reason, of course)³⁵⁸, it isn't until I experience affect in relation to the information that my desire will change. This is similar to perception.

Perceptions are also belief resistant. Reflecting on the Muller-Lyer illusion, for example, I can believe the lines are the same length and be unable to see them as the same length. The work of Bloom, Wundt, LeDoux, Margolas, Haidt and many others clearly indicate that evaluation initially happens within system 1 and is often perceptual in nature rather than doxastic.³⁵⁹ The agent neutral model is an improvement from the doxastic theory because it allows for a conflict between beliefs and desires. I can believe that eating ice cream late at night is bad for me but want the heck out of it. On both perceptual evaluative models, the desires are seemings and, to an extent, operate independently of beliefs. The belief must be so overwhelmingly impacting that it

73(4), 653–676. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2012.02.004>; Bolles RC, Fanselow MS. "A perceptual-defensive-recuperative model of fear and pain. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*."

³⁵⁸ There is information that can be given to a subject that will change the way she sees the object. For example, say S wants an apple that is sitting before S. Then someone comes along and tells S that that particular "apple" is not a fruit. It is fecal matter shaped and painted to appear as an apple. This information will change S's perspective of the apple. But in general, regardless how much, for example, I know the ice cream in the freezer is bad for me, I want the heck out of it. And to a nicotine addict, she fully believes she should quit. She knows it is bad for her. She has a plethora of information about the consequences of smoking, but she still wants to smoke. Desires, like perceptions, are belief resistant.

³⁵⁹ Haidt has an insightful discussion regarding Wundt's distinction between seeing that and seeing why. Seeing-that appears amounts to (in my view) what I mean by seeing-as. That is, it does not entail nor is it causally conditioned on beliefs. Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. *The righteous mind: why good people are divided by politics and religion*. New York: Pantheon Books. See footnote above for other citations regarding evaluative perception.

alters the way I see the object. Until this occurs, I can have beliefs and desires that are inconsistent.

For the perceptual evaluative model that I am calling “the agent neutral account,” a desire is analyzed as “For S to desire P, is for S to see P as good.”

Consider this definition in relation to the data points:

- (1) Motivation
- (2) Pleasure
- (3) Reward
- (4) Evaluation
- (5) Desirability
- (6) Reason giving
- (7) Felt need
- (8) Affect

In my view, the agent neutral theory can only account for 2, 4, and to an extent 3. When someone performs an action, he or she thinks is good or sees as good, this person tends to feel pleasure.³⁶⁰ When the agent feels pleasure from doing action A, she will be rewarded and have a reward response (motivational) to the thought of the activity. This theory clearly explains 4 and, if true, explains 2 and 3. Desirability, however, is more questionable. If S sees P as good, it doesn't follow that P is good or that S should want P. If P is desirable, then (on this model) P is good. Seeing P as good seems to be necessary for a desire but insufficient. I may see pizza as

³⁶⁰ Rowland, L., & Curry, O. S. “A range of kindness activities boost happiness.” *The Journal of Social Psychology*, (2019), 159(3), 340–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2018.1469461>

good but not want pizza. I may not be hungry. I can be said to have a standing desire for pizza because I see pizza as good. I am currently not attending to seeing pizza as good. So, I may not want *that* pizza, but I generally still want to eat pizza. I don't think this will work as a reply, however. It is plausible that I see that pizza as good and fail to want that pizza. Imagine walking through the university food court. As you pass the pizza shop, you see a pizza that looks good. It seems good. In this situation, I hold, it is perfectly possible that you will not want that pizza. Another example is one I brought up earlier. We are all familiar with various aid agency commercials. On the commercials, say, Peter sees a child suffering from malnutrition and then sees the child healthy and happy. Totally engrossed in the commercial Peter has a range of feelings. At some point, however, he sees helping as good. Not only does Peter see helping in this case as good but he also senses he should help. However, Peter, like many of us, does not want to help. Peter sees helping as good but does not want to help. If S can see P as good but not want P, then seeing P as good is insufficient for wanting P. While it appears that the agent relative model explains 5, in my estimation, it does not.

An important advantage the agent neutral account has over, at least, the motivational theory is that it can give someone *reason* to have the desire and to act on the desire (6). If S sees P as good, then S has a reason to get P or for wanting P. The reason is that P is good. If P's goodness has been impressed on S, that is, if it seems good, then S wants P and has good reason for wanting P. While it appears that the agent neutral theory is able to account for 5, I doubt it can. I agree that if S sees P as good that S is rational (in many cases) for wanting P. In this way, S's evaluation of P can serve as a reason for wanting P. On the other hand, it cannot account for closely resembling objects of desires. If S sees P and Q as evaluatively equivalent, S certainly can want one option over the other. But why? Why would S want (say) P over Q? What is the

reason? It may be that the agent neutral theorist could say if the agent relative theory can explain desirability (which I claim it can), then so can the agent neutral theory. If an intrinsic desire on the agent neutral account actually selects genuine natural goods, then I hold it can explain 5.

Imagine, again, you open two letters from aid agencies. You read both letters and each are asking for donations that you hold would make a significant difference in many people's welfare. In this case, you see donating to be agent neutrally good to level 5 and donating to Q as 5. Now imagine that you prefer to donate to P over Q. In this case, you want P over Q. It may be that you see P as better than Q for other reasons. I agree this would explain the problem. In this example, however, you see P and Q as (agent neutrally) evaluatively equivalent. What, I think, needs to be added is a reason particular to the agent. That is, an agent relative evaluation is required. This alteration clarifies not only the reason for wanting P over Q, but it also explains wanting any object in general.

Furthermore, the agent neutral model cannot explain motivation (1). I include motivation here because it is a very common feature of desire. Any thorough account of desire (I hold) should be able to explain the very common features of desires in addition to the essential features. The agent neutral theory cannot connect the object of desire with motivation to acquire or realize, etc., the object. Seeing P as good only offers general reasons to want P or to get P. It cannot give a particular subject S, a reason to want P or get P. What is it about seeing P as good that motivates S to want P or to get P? There are many things that individuals see as good but fail to want or do anything about getting. What requires explanation and what would connect S with S's object of desire is a personal or agent relative reason or seeming. Because of these issues it appears that the agent neutral theory cannot explain 1 or 6.

Considering 7 and 8. Typically when S wants P S has affect in relation to P. If the agent neutral account can only explain general reasons and general goods, then it seems it cannot explain affect. The agent neutral theory is only able to explain general reasons and general goods.³⁶¹ In addition, for someone to have affect, he or she must, in some manner, be attached to the object or event. When the subject is attached the subject sees his or her well-being (to any degree) as wrapped up in the object's well-being. Without an attachment, we are left with a causal gap between affect and non-self-regarding³⁶² objects, properties, and states of affairs in the world. When it comes to felt-need, I would make a similar argument. A felt-need is affective. Because of this, it must be self-regarding. If a mental event is not self-regarding, then it cannot be affective.³⁶³ Because the agent neutral theory cannot explain affect, it cannot explain 7 or 8.

When we consider the criteria for best explanation (Explanatory scope, Explanatory power (a), Explanatory power (b), Simplicity, Plausibility, Less ad hoc), I think we find the agent neutral theory doesn't fare well. It has much better scope than the theories looked at previously. But it seems to be missing some of the data. In my estimation it cannot explain 1, 5-8. This means it can only explain 2-4. If we assume the truth of the agent neutral case, should we expect to see the data regarding desire that we do see? I think that if the agent neutral account is true, we should not rationally expect much of the data of desire. If 1-8 constitute data that any theory of desire ought to explain and the agent neutral theory cannot explain 1, 5-8 – the data points 1, 5-8

³⁶¹ See above and chapter two.

³⁶² By "self-regarding" I mean any mental event for which the concept of self is a constituent. Or any mental event that which entails the self.

³⁶³ I make this argument when I discuss the possibility of affect.

should not be rationally expected given the theory's truth. The agent neutral theory, therefore, has poor explanatory power (a).

When it comes to explanatory power (b), the agent neutral theory also falls short. Since it has poor scope and is not comparatively simple, it has less power (b) than other theories. The theory is not as simple as other theories as it adds (1) seemings and (2) evaluation, and (3) perhaps for some views, extramental value.³⁶⁴ The motivational theory only adds a disposition. The pleasure-based model only adds a seeming and pleasure. In my opinion, this theory is very accurate. However, because it cannot psychologically connect the subject with his or her object of desire, I think it fails to account for much of the data. I do think that it provides important insights into much of the data points that it cannot fully explain. The theory seems to get us close to understanding the phenomena of desire without fully accounting for desire. What the theory needs is an adjustment to the kind of valuing a subject is experiencing. Specifically, it needs to include agent relative valuing.

3.8.4.3 - The Agent Relative Theory

The agent relative theory is nearly identical to the agent neutral model. Desires, on this account, are value seeming. One important difference between these views is the kind of good required for a desire. The agent relative model, clearly, holds that for S to desire P, it is required that S have an agent relative value perception (S sees P as *good for S*). The agent neutral model holds that for S to desire P, it is required that S have an agent neutral value perception (S sees P as *good simpliciter*). It seems to me that the agent neutral model, while instructive and deeply

³⁶⁴ This is not a requirement for the theory. I think an agent relative theorist can be a non-cognitivist and remain consistent.

insightful, cannot explain many of the necessary *desiderata*.³⁶⁵ The agent relative theory analyzes desire as: S wants P if S sees P as good for S.³⁶⁶ Let's consider the data points:

- (1) Motivation
- (2) Pleasure
- (3) Reward
- (4) Evaluation
- (5) Desirability
- (6) Reason giving
- (7) Felt need
- (8) Affect

The agent relative theory explains a much wider range of data than rival explanations. It seems clear that when I want P, there is an evaluation (4). The agent relative evaluation provides a specific reason for the agent's related behaviors. That is, if S holds that P is good for S, then this is a sufficient reason for S to want P (6). The agent relative account, furthermore, accounts for (1) motivation. If S sees P as good for S, S will be drawn to P. It will fix attention on the object and will override any agent neutral evaluation to the contrary.³⁶⁷ The agent relative theory also explains pleasure (2). When we obtain or do something we see as good for ourselves, it

³⁶⁵ Pun intended.

³⁶⁶ Or for S's well-being. I put this version of the definition in the footnotes because while I take it that "good for S" and "good for S's well-being" mean exactly the same thing, the phrase "good for S's well-being" is conceptually more complicated. This conceptual complexity does not have to be known to the subject for the subject to experience seeing something as good for her well-being.

³⁶⁷ When one has an agent neutral evaluation this gives no specific person a reason to act in the evaluation's favor. However, when the evaluation is relative to the agent, it gives an immediate motivation to act.

tends to elicit pleasure.³⁶⁸ If I see that drinking coffee will make me awake (presuming this is good for me), I will take pleasure in feeling awake and probably from drinking the coffee. The agent relative model offers a clear explanation of why one feels pleasure upon getting what they want. The pleasure-based theory cannot account for the desire for states that do not bring pleasure. For example, one may want freedom but at the same time she may see that this will ultimately cause her pain. Furthermore, it seems as if the pleasure-based model is too blunt a theory to explain the nuances of desire. When I want P, it may be the case that P will give me pleasure. It, however, doesn't follow from this that desire is the same as taking pleasure in it seeming that P is the case. It might be that when I get any intrinsic good, I also obtain pleasure. If this is true, then a subject will want other goods besides pleasure, but the subject also experiences pleasure when she obtains other goods.

The learning-based theory cannot explain the felt need of new desires. It also does not explain the difference between liking and wanting. We can want something and not like it. This is a common experience with drug addicts. The agent relative theory, however, does account for a felt need (7). When S wants P, S feels as if S needs P. S may very well know that P is not needed. This, however, doesn't change S's felt need for P. If P appears good for S, S will feel as if S needs P. While the learning theory can account for reward, so can the agent relative theory. When a subject obtains a perceived good, he or she will be rewarded. When S is rewarded from obtaining P, S will learn *that* P is good and rewarding. Because of this S will learn how to obtain

³⁶⁸ Feinberg, J. "Psychological Egoism," in Feinberg, ed., *Reason and Responsibility* (Encinco, CA: Dickenson, 1978, 4th ed.).

the good and learn that S is rewarded upon obtaining P. The agent relative model, therefore, can explain reward (3).

The agent relative model can also account for the object's desirability (5). When S wants P, S sees P *as good for S*. The goods an agent relative model implies intrinsic natural goods. If P is good for S, P promotes S's well-being. The states of affairs and objects that promote S's well-being are instrumental goods. A subject perceives these states of affairs in the world and forms an instrumental desire for them. However, this instrumental desire cannot satisfy on its own. The reason why S wants P is because S sees P as intrinsically good for S (in an agent relative way). I may want coffee and upon drinking the coffee feel disappointment. This disappointment shows that I really didn't want coffee *per se*, I wanted the buzz the coffee would give me. This buzz is an instance of pleasure. In this situation I want coffee because I want pleasure and I see the coffee as a means to feeling pleasure. The coffee is not a natural good. Pleasure is the natural good. Coffee is merely a means to the pleasure.

Consider Tom. Tom wants to be a police officer. When Tom finally becomes a police officer, he is deeply disappointed. For example, Tom must run everything by his sergeant before he acts and this he finds irksome and infantilizing. Tom, I propose, didn't want to be a cop *per se*, what Tom really wanted was (let's suppose) power and autonomy. His disappointment (in this case) is elicited from a self-regarding intrinsic desire going unsatisfied. It is a perceived loss and decrease in potential (and perhaps anticipated) well-being. For Tom this amounts to his not obtaining a good that would make his life go better. This is an intrinsic good. It is a proper object of desire. Tom then sees his life as not going as well as it could have gone.

For a theory to account for desirability (5) it must be able to explain why some objects are proper objects of desire. The agent relative model can account for desirability because it states that desires are ultimately for intrinsic goods. An intrinsic good is (if anything is) a proper object of desire. These intrinsic goods are good because obtaining them promotes well-being. Desires are mechanism that tend to point us at instrumental goods. These instrumental goods apparently offer us properties that improve our well-being (intrinsic goodness). We want well-being. When we desire particulars, we are desiring them for the promotion of an intrinsic good. For example, wanting a raise at work may amount to wanting more freedom and security. Wanting new clothing may be a desire for acceptance and happiness. Freedom, security, acceptance, and happiness all contribute to well-being and are, when instantiated, instances of positive well-being. Since well-being is (at the least) an intrinsic good and, I claim, all desires are ultimately for well-being, we often are not wrong about what (at the intrinsic level) we want. The agent relative theory then has it that intrinsic desires are highly reliable (if not infallible)³⁶⁹ even though instrumental desires frequently go awry.

Lastly, the agent relative model can account for affect (8). As I argued above, all affect requires attachment.³⁷⁰ If S is attached to P, then S can experience affect with respect to P. If S is attached to P, then S has a clear self-regarding (agent relative) attitude regarding P. The agent relative model is the only theory that neatly connects the object of desire with affect in a way that makes sense of the relation between desire, the self, and affect. Because of this, I think, the agent

³⁶⁹ I suspect at the intrinsic desire level that we have infallible desires. However, this is not a requirement of my argument so I will not defend this here.

³⁷⁰ See section on “the Possibility of Affect”

relative model is the theory which most neatly explains (8). When we analyze the agent relative theory against the criteria for best explanation, we find that it is comparatively superior.

- **Explanatory scope:** The best explanation will explain a more data than the rival explanations.³⁷¹³⁷²
- **Explanatory power (a):** The best explanation will make data more probable than rival explanations.³⁷³
- **Explanatory power (b):** The explanation includes more data than the rivals but with fewer explanatory tools (this is a combination of simplicity and explanatory scope).³⁷⁴
- **Simplicity:** The best explanation will use fewer explanatory tools.³⁷⁵
- **Plausibility:** The best explanation will be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths than rival explanation.³⁷⁶
- **Less ad hoc:** The best explanation will involve fewer new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge than rivals.³⁷⁷

The agent relative theory far surpasses each other theory in terms of scope. The agent relative theory, as far as I see it, explains all the data that I have been addressing. When considering

³⁷¹ Johnson, S., Johnston, A., Toig, A., & Keil, F. (2014). "Explanatory Scope Informs Causal Strength Inferences." *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*. 36. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/91d5t02n>. The authors make a distinction between "manifest scope" and "latent scope." The former has to do with covering all the known data. The latter has to do with covering possible and predicting future events related to the data. See page, 2454.

³⁷² Kuhn, Thomas. "Objectivity, Value Judgement and Theory Choice" in *The Essential Tension*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

³⁷³ Schupbach, Jonah N., and Jan Sprenger. "The Logic of Explanatory Power*." *Philosophy of Science*. 78, no. 1 (2011): 105-27. Accessed September 4, 2021. doi:10.1086/658111.

³⁷⁴ Lewis, D. *Counterfactuals*. (Oxford, Blackwell, 1973), 72-77. This is characterized as "strength," however, for Lewis, strength explicitly implies what I am calling "scope."

³⁷⁵ Kuhn, Thomas. "Objectivity, Value Judgement and Theory Choice."

³⁷⁶ Harman, Gilbert. "The Inference to the Best Explanation," 88–89.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

explanatory power (a) the agent relative theory makes the data much more rational to expect compared to the other models of desire. If the agent relative model is true, then you would expect people to be motivated to obtain, take pleasure in, be rewarded by, have reason for, have a felt need for, have affect about, evaluate as good those object, properties, or states of affairs one finds desirable. If Mary sees P as good *for her*, it, also, seems to make sense of the relation between the degree of desire and the deegreed nature of each of the properties listed above. One can be more or less motivated to obtain a desirable object just as one can take more or less pleasure in obtaining a desired end. The same variation in degree of desire also accords with the variation of degree of reward, felt need, affect regarding, evaluation of, and having reason for.

The agent relative model is not a simple model. It posits intrinsic goods, perceptions, agent relative values, and an extended theory of the self. The theory does explain all the data. When it comes to explanatory power (b), it suffers a decrease in power because of the complexity. However, because it actually connects all of the phenomena to the subject in a way that unifies the data of desire into one clear mental state, its power (b) should not be discounted too quickly. While we may just compare simplicity and scope to determine power (b), I think that a theory which makes the data more coherent than another theory should be considered to have more scope even if they both technically explain the data. Regardless, none of the other theories explain all the data except for the agent relative theory. I take it that it is more important to explain all the data than posit fewer explanatory entities.

The agent relative model holds that the mental event of valuing is coextensive with attaching. The degree to which I see my well-being wrapped up in something else's well-being is the degree to which I value that thing and am attached to it. If I value x, I am attached to x and If I am attached to x, I value x. When I see my well-being wrapped up in P's well-being, I will

likely be motivated to do things to improve P's well-being or prevent a decrease in P's well-being. If I see my well-being wrapped up in P's well-being, I will have affect regarding P. I may believe P to be bad but if I see as part of my psychological self, then I still want P. This connection implies much of the data and the data seems to, at least, be consistent with and in some ways implies the agent relative theory. It seems that 6-8 imply a model of desire that is evaluative and self-regarding. Any non-evaluative theory is false. Desire is related to affect. And affect is evaluative, necessarily.³⁷⁸ It take it, this means that desire implies evaluation. If desire is affective and affect requires evaluation, then desire requires evaluation. If the phenomena requiring explanation implies affect and a theory does not include evaluation, the negation of that theory is suggested by the data.

The agent relative theory may seem more *ad hoc* than its rivals. I do not think it is, however. Being more *ad hoc* is not simply having more new suppositions than your rivals. It is having more new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge. I believe that the agent relative theory is implied by existing knowledge. In my estimation all theories besides the agent neutral and agent relative theories are not powerful explanations. The agent neutral and the agent relative theories nearly posit the same number of suppositions. The agent relative model, however, also implies the extended psychological self. One way the agent relative theory is less ad hoc than the agent neutral theory is that it seems that existing knowledge implies that desires are self-regarding. Because of this the only theory that can explain desire is the agent relative theory. This implies that adding the agent relative requirement does not count as a *new supposition*. Further, I take it that it is part of existing knowledge that desires are affective.

³⁷⁸ Nussbaum, Martha C. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) esp. ch. 1-5.

Affect is necessarily self-regarding. The agent neutral theory cannot account the self-regarding nature of all desires. Because all affect is self-regarding, it becomes mysterious how one can be affected by something other than the self. However, one is often affected by others. Because of this relation to others, it seems when it comes to affect, we run into a pairing problem. How is it that I can be affected by someone else? How is it that my partner can make me happy or sad? It seems this requires a kind of attachment. Not a metaphysical attachment. Rather, a psychological attachment is required. If I am right about this, it indicates that the extended view of the self, suggested by the agent relative account also does not count as an additional supposition. The reason is that it is implied by existing knowledge.

The agent relative theory, in my opinion, is explanatorily superior to the other models of desire mentioned above. The only criteria it may not be at the top is *simplicity* and less *ad hoc*. I tried to argue that even though it may be considered complicated, the complexity is necessary to make sense of all the phenomena of desire. Simpler theories such as the motivational theories and the pleasure-based theories do not have enough explanatory tools to unify all the data of desire. A more complicated theory is required. This, complication, is not, in my view, an explanatory vice. I have also tried to argue that the agent relative theory, when compared to the agent neutral theory, is not more *ad hoc*. My understanding of the criterion *less ad hoc* is that the best explanation will involve fewer new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge than rivals. If we only consider the first part of this definition: “the best explanation will involve fewer new suppositions”, the agent relative theory is more *ad hoc* than the agent neutral theory. But if we also consider the second part of the working definition: “not already implied by existing knowledge . . .”, I believe that the agent relative model is not more *ad hoc* than the agent neutral theory. The agent relativity of desire is suggested, if not implied, by existing knowledge.

Further, the agent relativity of all affects, in my view, is implied by existing knowledge, which is at the very least consistent with the extended view of the self.

Even if I am unsuccessful in defending the agent relative model against charges of being too complex and *ad hoc*, I believe these explanatory vices are necessary evils required for any theory of desire. The agent relative theory isn't positing any mechanism that isn't discussed in both philosophical and psychological literature. While a simple theory is elegant, if it is incomplete, it doesn't seem to be an adequate explanation. I believe the agent relative model strikes a reasonable balance between simplicity, ad hoc-ness, and power. The agent relative model has more explanatory virtues than the other theories, it is, in my view, comparatively superior.

The agent relative theory I hold also provides predictive assistance and explanatory power in other related theoretical domains. For example, theories of well-being. One issue with a desire satisfaction theory of well-being is that it tends to reject objective standards. The agent relative theory, however, seems to connect objective standards, desire, well-being, and virtue in a way that, I think, creates an attractive and realistic model of human personal and social affect. I will address these topics in the next section.

CHAPTER FOUR: Desire and Eudemonism

4 – Desire and the Good Life

For something to be intrinsically good it must be life promoting.³⁷⁹ This, as I see it, implies that life is the grounding good. It is not the case that living is the grounding good. Rather, life (or the promotion of life) is what, I hold, grounds all ethical claims. It seems, however, that some intrinsic goods are not identical to life. For example, freedom is an intrinsic good. It is better to be free than a slave. Love is better than hate. It is much better to care, nurture, and prepare your child for his or her future, than to berate, harm, and neglect your child. We have two examples of intrinsic goods that are not identical with life. At this point, I think it would be reasonable to change the position from a value monism to a value pluralism. Resistance to this expansion enters when we evaluate why we find some intrinsic goods, good. Take freedom, for example. It is true that freedom is good all on its own. It does not appear as if freedom is desired in order to achieve anything else; nor does it seem as if freedom is good because it is useful in getting something else. It is just good to be free. The word “good” seems to include being free and excludes being enslaved.³⁸⁰

Freedom, however, is not something on its own to be valued independently of life. Rather, freedom seems to enable an individual to participate in activities that can improve his or her life. That is, S, when free, can cultivate virtues as S sees fit. When S is not free, S is unable to

³⁷⁹ I am using “life” to indicate a degreed property. One can have more or less full life. The fullness of life is relative to the kind of thing one is. So, as many of the Ancients held, one can be more or less real one can be more or less alive. As one can be more like the f(F)orm in which he partakes, one can a better or worse example of the kind of thing he or she is. This fullness of life, at the moment, I reticently equate to well-being.

³⁸⁰ Of course, slave holders, you could imagine, would say it is good to own slaves. But no slave owner would say it would be good if they were the slaves.

express S's humanity fully. To be human involves being free. Furthermore, life is metaphysically required for freedom. It seems that (1) freedom is metaphysically contingent upon life, and (2) that freedom is good (in the case of humans) because it enables an individual to express or be more fully human. Freedom is not an instrumental good, however. It is an intrinsic good. If the goodness of freedom can be attributed to its capacity to enable a human to express his or her humanity, it seems that freedom is an instrumental good. Freedom, however, is good even when someone freely performs actions that limit their own life. Drug use for example. Someone can freely choose to take a drug that, imagine, gives them brain damage. It is bad that this person has brain damage because it reduces their capacity to flourish as a human.³⁸¹ That is, it diminishes their species-specific *life*. It does not follow that freedom can be bad. It follows that we can use it poorly. Freedom does seem to be an intrinsic good that is somehow contingent upon life for its actualization and its value. Because of this, I hold that freedom is a mode of or operation of life. Life operates differently across species. Freedom is an operation or mode of life that humans naturally realize. The other intrinsic goods are also reducible to operations of life. Life, I presume, is the only intrinsic good. It would be fitting to call life the "grounding good" because all the other goods are contingent upon it.³⁸² Intrinsic goods such as happiness, consciousness, love, etc., are all good because of what they are. They are operations of life which are epistemically abstractable from the concept LIFE. Claims about their value are true or false but

³⁸¹ I recognize this sounds as if I am claiming that brain damaged people are less human than people without brain damage. This is not my claim. I am equivocating on the word "human." I am using the phrase "to be human" as shorthand for all the possible properties an individual can have that makes them a closer example to the archetypal human. The other way I am using the word "human" is to refer to those who belong to the species *Homo sapiens*. Brain damaged people are just as human as those who are not because they are the same species as those who do not have brain damage. People with brain damage that impacts their lives, I hold, are held back from flourishing as human but this clearly does not make them unhuman.

³⁸² I think this suggest my position is consistent with pluralism even though I am looking for a monism.

metaphysically, intrinsic goods, are nothing other than operations of life (which we refer to as “good“).

The set of intrinsic goods (happiness, freedom, love, pleasure, consciousness, etc.) are states of affairs and properties that make our lives function properly according to the kind of thing we are. One can flourish more as a human if she is loved and cared for rather than hated and abused. The function of desires, I hold, is to point us toward these intrinsic goods. That is, a desire is a psychological mechanism which enables an agent to perceive states of affairs in the world that promote his species-specific well-being. For S to desire P is for S to see P as good for S. Desires point us to objects that may actualize an intrinsic good in our lives, in turn making us more excellent at being human.

It is important to contextualize how I am seeing the relation between good and bad. To do this we will examine St. Augustine’s theory of evil as based on the Platonists and Aristotle.

4.1 - Augustine’s Theory of Existence

On our brief detour into the history of philosophy please note, I am using Augustine as a representative of the position that goodness is life³⁸³ and badness (or evil) is a privation. I am not taking a stance on any theological position here. To start to see how Augustine sees life I believe we should look at his theory of existence. A concise statement of Augustine’s theory of existence is found his book, *On the Morals of the Manicheans*. Augustine claims that things which tend

³⁸³ Augustine holds that Goodness is identical to Being itself. I am taking liberties by replacing BEING with LIFE

toward existence tend toward order.³⁸⁴ If something has order, it exists - as its proper kind.³⁸⁵ Order, further, produces uniformity in the object it arranges.³⁸⁶ In book six, he connects these ideas by stating, “existence is nothing else than being one.”³⁸⁷ Simple things have no parts and are thus a unit. These simple things, according to Augustine, “exist by themselves.”³⁸⁸ As much as something exists, it acquires unity. Things that are not simple obtain an *ad hoc* unity “by agreement of their parts.”³⁸⁹ In so doing, they exist. The difference between existing and not existing is arrangement and disorder. Created things, being mutable, tend toward disorder or perversion; they, therefore, tend toward non-existence. When something changes for the better, it changes from a state of perversion (disorder) to a more orderly state. Because existence is harmony and unity, things that improve tend toward existence (unity). When created things tend toward unity, they tend toward a proper relationship with the world. That is, they are closer to the proper order with respect to the other subjects and objects. It seems to me that this understanding of unity is antiquated in its metaphysics. However, psychologically it seems not far off. When we have a balance of natural goods in our life, we are better off than when we have too much of a good thing. I will discuss this shortly but if someone has too much freedom then this may cause

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.* VI

³⁸⁵. It is important here to note that Augustine has a concept of kind nature. God did not create all the same kinds of things. He created a diversity of entities which make the world more perfect (cf. *On the Free Choice of the Will* 3.13). Entities have their own natures (secondary natures) that make them what they are and give them their own particular attributes. This introduces a natural hierarchy of being. Which will be discussed as the paper proceeds.

³⁸⁶ Augustine, *On the Morals of the Manicheans*. VI

³⁸⁷ Augustine, *On the Morals of the Manicheans*. VI

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

them to be isolated and alienated. Having too much pleasure can cause you to become lazy and selfish. What is needed, I think, is a balance of goods in one's life. But this can't be done with desire alone. Desires cannot balance – they merely point. We need our rationality to achieve a healthy balance of goods in our lives. To illustrate how the concept UNITY is related to well-being, goodness needs to be connected to both corruption and unit.

4.2 - Corruption and Nature

Perversion or corruption makes an ordered thing disordered. Corruption takes away from its unity and it limits its nature. The word “nature,” according to Augustine, “means nothing else than that which anything is conceived of as being in its own kind. Hence is the new word which we now use derived from the word for being,—essence namely, or, as we usually say, substance,—while before these words were in use, the word nature was used instead.”³⁹⁰ When something corrupts a nature, it does not make the substance less real. It doesn't limit its being in this sense of existing. Psychologically it creates a lack of psychological integration. Something can either exist or not exist. But when something is corrupted it is reduced or limited in nature. The way perversion or corruption degrades a nature is by making it a worse example of its being according to its kind. To put it a different way, it takes something away from the substance that should have been there. For example, a perversion of a human nature would be the inability to walk. A perversion of a cat's nature would be the inability to attach itself to objects with its claws. If a man could not leap from a building and attach to a tree with his claws, we would not say that something was missing. And so, this would not be a corruption (or perversion) of a

³⁹⁰ Augustine, *On the Morals of the Manicheans*. II.

human. A corruption must be indexed to an object's kind nature or its species. That is, to its set of potentialities and functions as member of that kind.

Augustine makes this Aristotelian claim clearly book six of *On the Morals of the Manicheans*. He says, "but if you ask what corruption is, consider to what it seeks to bring the things which it corrupts; for it affects those things according to its own nature."³⁹¹ He continues to say that if something can be changed it does not stay unified as a substance. That is, it does not stay pure as an independent entity.

4.3 - The Nature of Corruption

Corruption, however, does not exist by itself. It is not a substance as the Manicheans thought. Only a substance or an attribute can be the object of corruption. When a substance stands in relation to something that is opposed to its nature³⁹² it is corrupted. But the substance that is corrupted (perverted) or even the substance doing the corrupting is not corruption itself. Corruption is suffering the loss of integrity and purity.³⁹³ That which suffers loss of integrity is a substance. Corruption cannot, therefore, be a substance.

To see this, let's examine the notion of substance. The term "substance" can be understood in two ways. The first, Aristotle called "primary substance." A primary substance is an individual or a particular thing. For example, Augustine is a primary substance. Primary substances are the subjects of predication. Primary substances can lose and gain attributes (properties). For example, Augustine can lose hair and gain weight. The second use of the term

³⁹¹ *Ibid.* VI.

³⁹² Augustine, *On the Morals of the Manicheans*, V

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

“substance” is secondary substance. A secondary substance, according to Aristotle, is a kind nature. For example, humanity or humanness. Secondary substances are essences or natures. An essence for Aristotle is that which a species has that distinguishes it from all other things and because of which it belongs to a particular species.³⁹⁴ Human essence is that which humans have that nothing else has. This *differentia* is what differentiates substances within the same genus. To make the difference between primary and secondary substance clear, consider this example: imagine a world in which there were 12 humans and nothing else. In this world, there would be 12 primary substances but only one secondary substance. That is, there are 12 individuals who are all human and share a nature (or essence).³⁹⁵ Corruption, then cannot be a primary substance because it is the perversion of substances.

It may be suggested that corruption is a substance in the secondary sense. But this is untenable. If corruption were a secondary substance, it would be a species. It would have a set of attributes which differentiate it from all other essences. Kind natures, however, are such that if they were instantiated, they would be had by a particular primary substances or attributes. But corruption does not appear in any particular manner. It cannot be instantiated as its own thing. Any created thing can be corrupted. It may be suggested that corruption can be an attribute with a kind nature. But this cannot be either. Attributes add quality to a substance. But when primary substance is corrupted, nothing is added to it; rather something is taken from it. Corruption reduces a being according to a nature. When corruption is predicated of something, it is predicated as a lacking, not a gaining of the substance.

³⁹⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. 1034a6–8.

³⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Categories*. 2a34–2b7.

Lastly, corruption does not have its own set of attributes. It is only describable in light of the primary substance or as a deficient attribute of a primary substance. For example, when a person is blind, we do not say that this person has the attribute of blindness. We say this person cannot see. Blindness is not a proper thing. It is an absence of a faculty. So, it seems that corruption is not describable on its own terms. This means that corruption cannot make anything its own kind of thing (a particular kind nature). Thus, rendering it impossible for it to be a secondary nature in any respect.

4.4 - Corruption and Evil

Augustine says, “what is corrupted is perverted; and what is perverted suffers the loss of order, and order is good.”³⁹⁶ To be corrupted is to have some goodness taken from the substance. It is a loss of something that ought to be there. This is Augustine’s view of evil. But you can replace “evil” with “bad” if you prefer. Badness (or evil) is a privation. It is a lack of something where it ought to be. Corruption is not a thing. It is the absence of something. It is contrary to nature. Augustine claims, “for evil is no nature, if it is contrary to nature. Now, according to you, evil is a certain nature and substance. Moreover, whatever is contrary to nature must oppose nature and seek its destruction.”³⁹⁷ For Augustine then corruption is the opposite of nature. Evil (or badness) is the privation of something where it should be, according to a substance’s kind. If badness is opposed to nature or an absence of a proper good, then badness (or evil) is nothing. It literally is not anything.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *Ibid*, II.

For Augustine, badness is disorder, disharmony, and an absence of proper goods. Badness, then is not a thing. Badness only occurs insofar as a nature is corrupted. We should conclude, therefore, that when S is said to be “bad” S is lacking some property that S should have given the kind of thing S is. I don’t think Augustine is correct on all his points. I do agree that evil or badness is a privation. Because of this I see exemplifying the proper measure of a set of species-specific and non-species-specific properties to be goodness itself.³⁹⁸ To exist is to be good. But life itself is goodness. Evil or badness then is a privation. It is an absence of something where it should be. I hold it is also fitting to refer to disorder as “bad” or in some cases “evil.” Because of this I do not think life can have negative properties. That is, life is goodness itself. Badness then is a reduction of life (capacities etc.).

4.5 - Desire and Well-being

Desires point us to the natural goods in the world. The participation in natural goods (freedom, pleasure, happiness, love, life, etc..) make our lives better. Desires, as I see them, are a seeking mechanism that survey one environment and internal states and point a subject at states of affairs seen as potentially actualizing an intrinsic good in his or her life. These perceptions, or in Oddie’s terms “value-seemings,” are also motivational. Not only do desires point us at natural goods but because of their affective, and therefore, self-regarding nature they also can and frequently do motivate us to act. While our instrumental desires (M-desires) fail quite often by not giving us the intrinsic good we are seeking, our intrinsic desires (N-desires) are infrequently wrong. The reason is that natural goods are always a proper object of desire. This does not mean that we should acquire as much of all the natural goods we can. It seems there is a balance. When

³⁹⁸ This “goodness” can be degraded.

our M-desire and our N-desire come apart we fail to obtain the object that will satisfy us. For example, the user of heroin desires to have the feeling of euphoria (N-desire). This feeling is not bad. Pleasure is an intrinsic good. But the object of his M-desire is the wrong object. Heroin eventually takes away what he is attempting to achieve. Many addicts report that they do not enjoy drug but still want it.³⁹⁹

It seems, further, that some of our moral errors are related to an incongruence between our N-desires and our M-desires. When people match the wrong object with the N-desire they will ultimately fail to satisfy the good they were trying to incorporate into their lives. It isn't that people are failing to perceive intrinsic goods (their N-desirings are apt). Sometimes we confuse the instrumental (M) object as something that will give us the intrinsic (N) object of the desire. When this occurs, it can lead to unhappiness and sometimes moral failure. One reason the heroin addict, for example, is doing something wrong is because he is trying to satisfy the N-desire for pleasure with something that will remove intrinsic goods from his life. Furthermore, imagine that an individual obtains pleasure from hurting other people. The M object of his desire is hurting others. However, his N object is the pleasure. I propose, in this case, that if this person did not get pleasure from hurting others, then he would not harm others. The pleasure, this individual gets from his wrong actions, is good. The way he obtains the pleasure, however, is bad.⁴⁰⁰ It reduces intrinsic goods in another. For example, it reduces the pleasure the other is experiencing;

³⁹⁹ Berridge K. C. "Wanting and Liking: Observations from the Neuroscience and Psychology Laboratory." *Inquiry* (Oslo, Norway), (2009), 52(4), 378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00201740903087359>; T.E. Robinson, K.C. See also, Berridge "The neural basis of drug craving: an incentive-sensitization theory of addiction." *Brain Res. Rev.*, 18 (1993), pp. 247-29

⁴⁰⁰ It may, however, be mixed when it comes to agent relative badness. Overall, murder, I premise, would be agent relatively bad as well. However, if it increases the overall well-being of the murder (which I think would be nomically infeasible), it would be good in an agent relative manner. Murder, I hold, would ultimately reduce his well-being and would (likely) be bad in an agent relative manner as well.

further performing an act of physical violence also takes away from another's autonomy for a short period of time. Any reduction of intrinsic goods (that does not result in an overall balance of goods) in another, in my position, is bad.

The incongruity between the M and N desire may give rise to the subject's wrong actions. If S sees physical violence as giving S pleasure, then S sees inflicting pain as good for S. S obtains pleasure in causing physical harm. But doing so is not only irrational and harmful, ultimately it unlikely to give S what S wants. I presume this kind of behavior will cause S to function more frequently at a high level of awareness.⁴⁰¹ This would cause S to be at a higher stress level than if S were not at the higher level of awareness. Stress will cause discomfort reducing S's enjoyment and satisfaction. Further, S may get hurt, reducing physical pleasure. S may view people instrumentally, leading S to see at least some people as not having much if any moral standing. This seems to likely lead S to have an entrenched sense of entitlement which would be violated frequently.⁴⁰² I hold that when our N and M desires are incongruent it can lead to ethical errors, as in the case above, and reduce one's overall well-being.

Moreover, when one fails to find a balance of goods in ones' life he will also not be living as well as he could have been. The heroin addict is favoring pleasure over other intrinsically valuable things such as autonomy, an upward life trajectory, community, and virtue. A drug addict's autonomy is clearly limited by his addiction. The addict is a good example have

⁴⁰¹ By level of awareness, I mean how much attention one is spending on his or her environment and how highly he or she is disposed to act given particular manifestation conditions. For example, at a higher level of alertness or awareness one would notice where the exits were, who appeared threatening, etc. This person would feel ready to in the way he or see saw fit. The lower level of awareness or alertness, in this context, would be engrossed in a video on your phone with your headphones on. In this situation one's level of awareness is very low.

⁴⁰² See. James, Aaron. *Assholes: A Theory*. New York: Doubleday, 2012.

Nietzsche's reversed cripple. When we, continuously chase one intrinsically valuable thing at the expense of the others, we fail to flourish as humans.

When we fail to incorporate goods in our lives we also fail to flourish as a human. For example, if we have many of the natural goods life has to offer (e.g., freedom, pleasure, security) but fail to acquire other natural goods (e.g., wisdom, courage, justice), then we will be less excellent at being human than we could have been. To illustrate what I have in mind, keeping in the imagery of the reversed cripple, it seems as if we can think of natural goods as weights tethered to the body of an individual (S). These weights keep S on the ground, safe, and enable S to function in the world as S was intended. Some weights were tethered onto S by others and some weights S has to tether S's self. Imagine further that each weight has a specific place to which it and only it can be tethered but more of the same kind of weight can be tethered to the same spot. If S only acquires some weights and not others, S will be unbalanced, causing S to be weighted down which would hinder S's ability to fully live. If S continues to add more of the same weight to the unbalanced parts, S will be more and more weighted down. S will become more and more focused on the parts that are overweighted—as in Morello and Schroder's work in the learning theory of desire. One is rewarded by the experience of an intrinsic good. Upon repeated exposure to a particular good, the subject will "learn" that one thing is to be preferred to the other, thus focusing on the one at the expense of the other.

This I think may elicit vices. If S focusses too much (or places too much value) on pleasure, then S is more open to lying or cheating to obtain the pleasure. S may appear better than honesty at that moment. Furthermore, S would be more open to taking actions that will directly reduce, S's over well-being for the sake of obtaining pleasure. Pleasure, however, is not bad. Acquiring too much of it, I hold, can fixate a subject on that good at the expense of other

goods. What is life promoting is a balanced distribution of a variety of weights across S's body (given S's own nature and character). When this balance is had, one is living a good life.⁴⁰³ One is flourishing as an example of one's species. Desires point us to the goods in the world and we are responsible for facilitating a fit between M-desires and the N-desires.

One benefit of my theory is that it can account for weakness of the will. My theory is not straightforwardly Socratic. Socrates thought to believe that doing P is good is enough to motivate S to do P. When one does something wrong it is because of ignorance; one thinks P is good, but P is not good. I think this is wrong. I can believe that P is wrong but still do (and want to do) P. My solution has it, as do many others, that the Socratic account is too doxastic. What is at issue in weakness of the will is a perceptual issue. To be motivated to do P is to see P as good for oneself. One can be wrong about what satisfies his N-desires, that is the object of the M-desires. I can see (or believe) P (eating pizza – the M-object) as good for me (in terms making me feel healthy - the N-object) but I would be disappointed upon eating pizza because of it is not fitting object for that N-desire. I see pizza as giving me something intrinsically valuable. I may be wrong about this, or I may overestimate how much (or the kind of) value P has, but that is not how I perceive it. The attraction to P is strong; it is motivating. This, I take it, explains why I believe P to be bad (or see P as bad simpliciter) but still do P (or want to do P). Believing that P is good alone is unnecessary and insufficient to motivate S to P or perform actions with regard to the promotion of P. Wanting P often suggests a motivation. The slow doxastic processes of the system 2 can be resisted by the fast automatic, evaluating, perceptual processes of system 1.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ This is not the "is" of identity.

⁴⁰⁴ Kahneman, Daniel., *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

Our desires are belief resistant. Since desires are often motivational and they are belief resistant, I think it neatly accounts for weakness of the will.

4.5.1 -Desire Satisfaction and the Good Life

I tend to dismiss desire satisfaction theories of value because of their rejection of objective standards. The general desire satisfaction model states that S's life is going well for S to the degree to which S's informed, self-regarding, desires are fulfilled.⁴⁰⁵ The problem I have with this view is that it faces apparently clear counter examples. You can get what you want, and your life can go poorly for you. You can want a drug, get the drug, know the drug is bad for you, but take it – then become addicted to it. This seems to cause a reduction in well-being. Also, if someone wanted to commit suicide, it is hard to see how they would be better off if they were dead. One can also want something such as limbs removed – something else that would be difficult to reconcile with a better life. It seems any view that holds self-harm can improve well-being, is flatly incorrect. A basic desire satisfaction model implies just this. If it is true that S's life is going well for S to the degree to which S is satisfying S's desires and S wants to seriously harm S's self, then this implies that S harming S's self improves S's well-being. However, harming oneself is an instance of taking away from one's well-being, not improving one's well-being. For reasons like these I do not find desire satisfaction model of well-being convincing. I do not want to dig into the literature on well-being or desire satisfaction theory. Rather, I just want to present generic desire satisfaction model from which to contrast my desire satisfaction model of well-being.

⁴⁰⁵ Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), ch. 3; Derek Parfit. *Reasons and Persons*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 493.

I believe the agent relative account of desire can connect desire to well-being in a way that appears to fit neatly with our intuitions. I have argued that (1) there are a set of intrinsic goods, (2) having a balance of intrinsic goods is what makes one's life go well, (3) all our desires are for these intrinsic goods, (3) some of our M-desires are incongruent with our N-desires, and (4) our desires point us to a variety of means to obtain intrinsic goods. If 1-4 is true, it seems we have a place and a purpose for desire in a theory of well-being and we have a direct connection to a set of objective standards which, as a matter of natural fact, make our lives go well. For S to desire P, S sees P as good for S's well-being. If S's N-desires reliably point at intrinsic goods and S's M-desires tend to point subjects to states of affairs that enable the acquisition of intrinsic goods, then following one's desires prudently should promote well-being. However, it is clearly not the case that our satisfying our desires always improves our lives. This failure on the part of desire is not the fault of the N-desire, rather it is the fault of the instrumental desire (M-desire). When S sees P as good for S, S will tend (because the desire is agent relative) be motivated to (when possible) obtain P. In my view obtaining P is good for oneself when the objects of the N and M desires are co-realizable.

What makes our lives go well is establishing and maintaining a balanced⁴⁰⁶ set of intrinsic goods throughout our lives. It is typical for individuals to reduce desire to what I am calling "instrumental desire." That is, for example, a desire for a coke or a desire for a nap. The satisfaction of these kinds of desires, on their own, cannot guarantee well-being. The reason is that fulfilled desires, when examined at the instrumental level, often lead one to unhappiness and dissatisfaction. However, if desires point us to intrinsic goods and intrinsic goods are what make

⁴⁰⁶ I will leave this ambiguous for now. But I am thinking of the moral realm as the ancients did- in terms of health. Having a well-balanced soul is what I think desires contribute to.

one's life go well, then desires clearly assist in living a good life. An issue arises when it comes to balancing the intrinsic goods. Well-being is not a matter of simply adding units of intrinsic goods. Rather, there also is a distribution requirement. Quantities of some goods (kindness for example) can reduce one's well-being depending on the culture or psychological history. It may be that given S's culture and psychological history the best distribution of goods for S will appear radically different from another individual.⁴⁰⁷ The object standards in this theory include the six principles discussed in Moral Foundations theory.⁴⁰⁸ The best distribution of these goods is relative. Two lives, therefore, which display the same quantity of intrinsic goods can differ in their well-being. The individual with a more fitting distribution of intrinsic goods will be better off.⁴⁰⁹

This distribution of goods is not the function of the desires. The balancing of one's mental economy and external goods is the role of rationality. Desires tend to be belief resistant. However, they are created and can become habitual. For example, the more I eat sugar the more I want it. Wanting sugar becomes characterological since it has been internalized as a habit. Other desires work the same way. Frequent exposure often leads to an increase in attraction.⁴¹⁰ One can manage particular desires by directing his attention to and away from it. One can acquire desires

⁴⁰⁷ I am thinking of the relativity of virtue ethics. Virtue ethics seems to index "good" to a function of a species. Humans have the same function (objective standard) but the mean between the extremes can appear quite different depending on the person. In book II section 6, he says, "the intermediate relatively to us is not to be taken so; if ten pounds are too much for a particular person to eat and two too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order six pounds; for this also is perhaps too much for the person who is to take it, or too little- too little for Milo, too much for the beginner in athletic exercises. The same is true of running and wrestling. Thus a master of any art avoids excess and defect, but seeks the intermediate and chooses this- the intermediate not in the object but relatively to us." <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.2.ii.html>

⁴⁰⁸ I have discussed these principles in previous sections. But also see: <https://moralfoundations.org/>

⁴⁰⁹ I am indebted to Graham Oddie for this clarification and much of the wording.

⁴¹⁰ Swap, Walter C. "Interpersonal Attraction and Repeated Exposure to Rewarders and Punishers." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. 3, no. 2 (1977): 248–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014616727700300219>.

when she sees something as good for her that she didn't see as good for her before. One must, however, decide to manage his or her desires. This managing is an act of rationality. It seems that we can reason our way into and out of a desire. I can learn more about something that will make me see it as good for me. I can also learn more about something that will make me see it as less or not good for me. Rationality allows us to assess the fulfillment of desires. We often see P as good for us but know it isn't. If the desire is sufficiently weak or we are particularly well habituated to resist, then we will not seek the desired end because we believe it would be bad for us. Further, we always want pleasure, but sometimes too much is bad. In many cases, frequent engagement with highly pleasurable actions (such as the consumption of alcohol or drugs and activities such as sex, gambling, or skydiving) can lead to addiction- and a reduction of well-being. It seems that none of these actions are bad on their own. They are only bad because of what they do to someone's life and those around him or her. Sex is the farthest thing on the list I think from being bad. But sexual addiction can cause serious harm to an individual's life. It is not the act that is bad or wanting to perform the act that is bad. What is bad (bad for the agent here) is the harm frequent consumption and participation causes in the particular circumstance. We want things that are bad for us all the time and we must explain to ourselves why we should not have those things. It is the job of rationality to manage our desires and the consumption and balance of intrinsic goods.

Typically, desire satisfaction accounts claim that there are no objective standards for well-being (unlike hedonism). If your informed and self-regarding desire is fulfilled, the desire satisfaction theorist claims, your life is going well for you. But these kinds of desire satisfaction accounts tend not to see desires as perceptions of intrinsic value. If you take the agent relative account of desire, however, you have an objective model. What makes one's life go well is the

satisfaction of her well-ordered intrinsic desires. Since N-desires are for intrinsic goods or value, if we obtain these objects we are - (1) satisfying our desire and (2) acquiring an objective standard – namely an intrinsic good. However, for human flourishing, it is not enough just to satisfy our desires. Our desires must be well-ordered. That is, we can't become reverse cripples (this would not be living a good life). We must have the correct balance of intrinsic values relative to our lives. This is mainly the role of rationality, but it can also be corrected by our desires. If S is addicted to drugs, and S desires to not be—at times, S will find S dissatisfied when S see something like autonomy or an upward trajectory as good for S. It might be that the addict is content while intoxicated but I premise the pain of withdrawal and the psychological and physical complications that come with addiction, will objectively reduce the addict's well-being. If the addict gained more autonomy, then it seems reasonable that he would be better off. It seems, then, the degree to which S's intrinsic desires are satisfied and well-ordered according to S's circumstances⁴¹¹ is the degree to which S's life is going well.

⁴¹¹ I do wish to relativize this to an individual's or a group's particular circumstances. It seems as if flourishing will look different across cultures and people. Not all individuals need the same things and not all individuals act the same when they are enjoying the identical good. I do hold all humans want the same things, but I do not hold that we want the same things in the same ways, to the same degree, in the same style, at the same time, etc.,

CHAPTER FIVE - Conclusion and Final Remarks

I have argued that the perceptual evaluative models are the most promising theories of desire. They provide the strongest explanation of the nature of desire and desires' connections to the good life.

However, it may be objected that the distinction between agent neutral and agent relative models of desire is not sufficiently clear. In reply to this concern, I offer the following. There are two perceptual models of desire. The agent neutral and the agent relative. The agent neutral account of desire is, in my opinion, unable to account for motivation and several other important aspects of desire. The agent relative model can account for these missing aspects. Desires, I argue, are agent relative because they are affective because all affective states require attachment.⁴¹² If S is attached to P, then S sees S's well-being as wrapped up in the well-being of P. Given attachment is a necessary condition for affect, then attachment is required for desire. If attachment is required for desire, then desires must be agent relative because at the very foundation of desire is the psychological self which includes (as constituents) representations of other things and people. Even if it is not the case that desire requires attachment, I believe the agent relative model is still superior to the other models. If a desire does not include an agent relative value, then it seems as if it cannot account for (among other things) (1) motivation; nor can it (2) account for the reasonableness of desire; nor (3) the affective nature of desires. Desires appear to be agent relative. Further, if desires are for intrinsic goods, it seems they play a role in

⁴¹² I am not claiming that all agent-relative states are affective. I argue, rather, that all affective states are agent-relative.

our well-being. A modified desire satisfaction account of well-being (see summary below) seems to be a promising extension of the agent relative theory.

I would like to address another possible concern. Since my theory focuses largely on the self, it appears to suggest a form of psychological egoism. My response to this is twofold. First, I do not think it would be a problem if the view was egoistic in this sense. I would more strongly object if one concluded that my position implied ethical egoism. If this were charged, I think a quick distinction between value theory and normative ethics would obviate the objection.

However, I doubt the agent relative model is egoistic in any negative way. I agree with egoists that we are self-interested. All our affective motivations are self-interested. I hold this because I think the only way for a desire to motivate is for them to be interpreted as agent relative.

However, the theory of self I have sketched, implies each person's psychological self includes significant attachments to (representations of) other things and people. Given this attachment and the view that (the important sense in which we mean the phrase) the self is the referent of the "psychological self," our self includes other things and other people. My attachment to P implies that I see my well-being as is partially constituted by my representations of P's well-being.⁴¹³ On the agent relative view, the self includes the other so on the agent relative view one can't be egoistic in the negative sense. Our motives or intentions or desires may be self-regarding but typically include our interest, investment, our valuing, and love of another.

Each theory I have discussed, I believe, has significantly enhanced our understanding of desire. It seems, however, that each theory other than the agent-relative theory captured only one

⁴¹³ Again, I am indebted to Graham Oddie for making the implications of my position clear to me. I was considering the relation between S's well-being and another's well-being in causal terms. However, while there are causal relations, a more accurate understanding of what I am expressing is that S's well-being is partly constituted by S's representations of Q's well-being (where P is attached to Q).

or a few central aspects of desire. As a result, each overstates the importance of some central aspects of desire ignoring others or attempting to fit them in awkwardly. Among the other theories discussed, I believe the agent neutral theory is the most successful. The main problem I have with the theory is that, among other things, it does not seem to account for motivation.⁴¹⁴ Because the agent neutral view is not self-regarding, it leaves an explanatory gap between desire and motivation. Seeing P as good is consistent with not wanting P. It is unclear why it that S acts on value seeming P and not Q.⁴¹⁵ The problem, I think, runs deeper. I have argued that all affect requires attachment. If this is correct and attachment is essentially and universally agent relative, all affect is essentially and universally self-regarding. If all affect is essentially and universally self-regarding and to be self-regarding is to be agent relative, all affect is essentially and universally agent relative. Desire is affective. If all affect is essentially and universally agent relative and desire is affective, then desire is essentially and universally agent relative. Because the agent neutral account doesn't include agent relativity, it seems that the agent relative model should be seen as a modest improvement on the agent-neutral evaluative perceptual theory.

With this modest addition to the evaluative perceptual model, it seems we are able to clear some related evaluative issues. For example, the agent relative model explains weakness of the will and well-being. I believe the extended view of the self is explanatorily powerful because it explains how affect is psychologically possible. It explains both our deep pain when others are harmed or gone, as well as it explains our joys. Our affective connection to other things requires

⁴¹⁴ See both discussions about the agent neutral model for my other objections.

⁴¹⁵ A reply from an agent neutral theorist may be that S actions of desire for P and not for Q because S sees P as better than Q, where "better" should be thought of as something like "closer." Some things appear larger to us than other things and may not be in reality. The same is true of value seemings. One object may elicit a behavioral response and another does not. I do not think this reply works because the agent neutral account cannot connect the agent neutral value seeming with the personal and subjective motives of agents. For S to be motivated to obtain P S needs an agent relative desire or reason – that is an agent relative motive.

an evaluative self-regarding mental event (specifically a judgement or a perception). It requires the self seeing its well-being as wrapped up in that of another. This I think is the foundation or necessary condition for all affects. Because the extended self grounds affect, and desire is affective, desires entail a kind of attachment as well.

Regardless of how much I like this part of the theory, it is not essential. The essential part of the agent relative account of desire is for S to see P as good for S. This implies that desires are agent relative value perceptions. Furthermore, my metaethics may be incorrect and while this would alter the view significantly, it would not alter the analysis. I can hold that to value P is to be attached to P. The degree to which you value P is the degree to which you see your well-being wrapped up in P's well-being. We can still say that the word "good" refers to a set of things that tend to make our life go well.⁴¹⁶ And the word "bad" for the opposite. While I do not think value nihilism is true, if it were and my theory of value⁴¹⁷ is close to the truth, my analysis would still stand. Furthermore, if my modified desire satisfaction theory fails, my analysis still stands. The desire satisfaction theory implies moral realism, and my analysis does not.

The agent relative model seems strong even if (imagine) most of the content of my theory is off the mark. Say the work in psychology and anthropology I've cited is wrong. There are no universal, what Haidt calls, "moral foundations." For S to desire P in this scenario can still be for S to see P as good for S's well-being. The idea that someone would want to be in serious pain without deriving some satisfaction from it appears psychologically implausible. In this world, health seems important to its inhabitants. Well-being in my position is like health. It is the health of the overall person and her relations. In this world, then, I presume we would still desire

⁴¹⁶ The definition of "well" I thin would have be functional or somehow otherwise reductive.

⁴¹⁷ That is, for S to value P is for S to be attached to P.

a similar set of objects. Our N-desires would be for those properties or states of affairs that tend to biologically improve our well-being. We call these properties or states of affairs “good,” but in the world I am positing here nothing is really truly good or bad. To survive, however, we need to successfully attune to our needs. We do not like death and so we do not like the things that harm us. That is, we do not like those things that decrease our sense of well-being.⁴¹⁸ It is objectively no better or worse for anyone to have more or less well-being. But having a low sense of well-being may be what subjects in this world call “bad.” We call those things “bad.” Often, we can recognize the difference between things that will harm us and help us. Because our needs help us survive, we call the things that will help us survive “good,” and the things that will hinder our survival “bad”. We are attuned to them. It seems reasonable to hold that those who have better attunement to properties or states of affairs that actually improve one’s overall sense of well-being will be more fit and therefore likely to pass on his or her DNA. Because we have evaluated our needs as good, and we have evaluated other sets of properties or states of affairs as good it seems we have stepped into an evaluative model.

It is more advantageous for evaluations to come in an automatic perceptual variety.⁴¹⁹ If we see something as bad for us, we tend to avoid it. And “bad” in this context refers to states of affairs represented as harmful. Discursive thought (system 2) comes late in humans’ evolutionary story.⁴²⁰ Our automatic systems (system 1) appear designed to guide avoidance and approach. If we see something as good for us, we are drawn to it. A perception is much quicker than a

⁴¹⁸ We can replace “sense of well-being” here for a sense of security, capability, contentment, and community.

⁴¹⁹ As it does in system 1 in the dual processing Model. See earlier discussion.

⁴²⁰ Cf. Evans J. “Dual-processing Accounts of Reasoning, Judgment, and Social Cognition”. p. 259.

thought process.⁴²¹ An animal that must consider what is good or bad for him relative to a possible threat, will die more frequently than one that makes these evaluations immediately. Since desires cannot be judgements, are automatic, uncontrolled, and belief resistant they are likely perceptions. Desires are value perceptions. The word “value” or “valuing” is intended to be equivalent to the act of attaching. Even if desires are not contingent upon an attachment, I believe they still need to be self-regarding. If they are not self-regarding then related motivational states seem opaque. Desires, however, can be motivational. Much of people’s behavior can be understood by appealing to, among other things, desire. Yet, one’s desire for P may not be applicable to another’s desire for P. Furthermore, there is a reason why people want what they want. Without desires being self-regarding the reason to pursue them does not seem applicable to any one person. I think we need a closer connection.

We need a reason why an S wants P, rather than general reason why any S should want P. If a desire is non-doxastic and motivational, it seems desires can be a set of automatic responses.⁴²² The evaluative system-1-responses to external stimuli, entail vulnerability⁴²³ of the

⁴²¹ Bellini-Leite S. “The embodied embedded character of system 1 processing.” *Mens sana monographs*, (2013), 11(1), 239–252. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0973-1229.109345>

⁴²² Or we could call them “mental events” rather than “responses”.

⁴²³ This is a restatement of the vulnerability relation. Vulnerability is a relation between a subject (S) and the subject’s representation of another (O): either in O’s entirety or in O’s parts. This representation as it pertains to O, is S’s sense of O’s well-being⁴²³ (either in part or in whole: SOW). This SOW is such that S’s sense of well-being (SSW) is partly constituted by SOW. If S is vulnerable in O, then any sense of reduction O’s well-being (reduction of SOW) constitutes a reduction in SSW. The part whole relation of “sense of well-being” is worth noting. S can be vulnerable in parts of O. This is by S sensing aspects (or parts) of another (O) as particularly interconnected with SSW. S then would be vulnerable in S’s sense of the security and or quality of those parts of O’s well-being (SOW-P). The same goes for SOW in its entirety (SOW-E). That is, any reduction in O’s overall well-being (as perceived by S), will constitute a reduction in SSW. In this case, (SSW) C (SOW-E). Here the “C” represents the relation vulnerability. Vulnerability is one directional. The statement, [(SSW) C (SOW-E)], implies that SSW is constituted by S’s sense of aspects of O’s well-being. For S to be vulnerable in O doesn’t imply that O is vulnerable in S.

self in that of another.⁴²⁴ Desires, I hold, imply this vulnerability relation. Because of this, S's wanting P requires agent relativity.⁴²⁵

I believe the view can also remain eudemonistic. If I am granted my quick sketch of a world above, then one can be persistently excellent at being for the good.⁴²⁶ When “the good” merely refers to physical, psychological, and social health, it seems likely there are facts about what makes one’s life go better. These are natural facts.⁴²⁷ By acquiring objects of desires in such a way that enables flourishing, desires are eudemonistic.

The core aspects, it seems, of my analysis stand even if a lot of the theoretical underpinnings may fail. This is not to say that I think they do fail. The agent relativity of desire, does however, fill (in my opinion) a lacuna previously found in the theories of desire. The agent relative theory given its full theoretical apparatus, provides a powerful explanation for many aspects of moral psychology. While I’ll grant the possibility of value nihilism for the sake of the argument, it seems we can develop an axiological discourse with real world relations that is neither spooky nor bizarre. Intrinsic goods are those properties and states of affairs that improve our well-being. One can make true statements about these properties and states of affairs. I believe value realism explains our evaluative attitudes much better than value nihilism.

The full agent relative theory attempts to paint a realistic picture not just of desire but of affect in general. It unifies the data of desire and neatly closes the explanatory gap between our

⁴²⁴ I discuss this above when considering the possibility affect, and attachment. Martha Nussbaum has an excellent treatment on the “affective vulnerability” I am talking about above. Nussbaum uses “vulnerability” however, since I am borrowing from her concept of vulnerability her discussion applies here. Nussbaum, Martha C. 2001. *Upheavals of thought: the intelligence of emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴²⁵ I am using “reason” here in a very general sense.

⁴²⁶ Adams, Robert Merrihew. *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009).

⁴²⁷ Or would be.

affect and others' influence.⁴²⁸ It seems that much of our motivation is self-interested. Egoism is disturbing to many. Someone who is mostly or only self-interested is morally offensive. However, while many of our motivations can be reduced to selfishness, most of us do not evaluate the self-interestedness of observed psychological egoism negatively. The explanation of egoism is often unpleasant. The reality of our observed egoism, however, is not. The reason for this, I think, is that egoism has it right, that we are in fact self-interested. But egoism also has it wrong because the self is not detached from other people and things. On the full agent relative model, the tension between the theory of psychological egoism's distastefulness and the reality of egoism's palatableness is gone. We include other people and things into our psychological selves. So, intentions, motives, desires, and emotions can include both the narrow self and the extended self. What seem to be non-self regarding desires are simply desires for the well-being of the extended self.

In this project I have offered an improvement on current analyses of desire. In particular, I have offered a constructive amendment to what I have called the "agent neutral account perceptual evaluative account." In doing so, I developed a model that, I hope, provides the theoretical tools to explain a lacuna in moral psychology. The possibility of affect. Because of the nature of affect, I hold all affective states to be self-regarding. Desires are no exception. I take it that the agent relative theory neatly explains the required data of desire. In addition, it seems to be situated to make accurate predictions about disparate yet related phenomena. I leave it to the reader to assess whether I have been successful in providing a foundation for an explanatory bridge between theories of desire, moral psychology, and the ethics of the good life.

⁴²⁸ See discussion on the possibility of affect.

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