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ARTICLES

Fit and Well-Being

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue for Fit, a prudential version of the claim that attitudes must fit their objects, the claim that there is an extra benefit when one's reactions fit their objects. I argue that Fit has surprising and powerful consequences for theories of well-being. Classic versions of the objective list theory, hedonism, desire views, and loving-the-good theories do not accommodate Fit. Suitable modifications change some of the views substantially. Modified views give reactions a robust role as sources of well-being, and they accept that objects call for some attitudes but not others. I argue that objective list theories and loving-the-good theories require the most minimal changes to accommodate Fit, so we have a pro tanto reason to favor these views over alternatives.

Keywords: Well-being; Fit; Prudential good; Prudential value; Fittingness

The claim that the punishment must fit the crime is normative. It is about what punishment is appropriate for what crime. The punishment should not be too severe if the crime is minor, and it should be severe if the crime is terrible. Something similar goes for our attitudes and their objects. Sometimes those attitudes fit their object, for instance, when I get good news about a dear friend and that makes me happy. Sometimes attitudes do not fit their object. A callous person might enjoy somebody's excruciating suffering, even when that suffering calls for compassion, not enjoyment.

The idea that goodness and badness call for some attitudes but not others has played a crucial role in prominent theories about morality and well-being. Strawson famously argued that reactive attitudes (guilt, resentment, and indignation) have appropriateness conditions. For example, it is appropriate to feel guilty when one has done something morally wrong (Strawson 1962). Thomas Hurka argues that it is virtuous to love the good and to hate the evil (Hurka 2001: 10). Elizabeth Anderson, following Franz Brentano, claims that "something is good when it is correct to love it, and bad when it is correct to hate it" (Anderson 1993: 5). Valerie Tiberius, writing about well-being, argues that "different values call for different emotional, motivational, and cognitive dispositions" (Tiberius 2018: 11). In this paper, I argue for Fit, a prudential version of the claim that attitudes must fit their objects:

> **Fit:** if a person P has an instance g of a good G and it is fitting for P to have an instance m of a positive mental state M directed at g, then it is prudentially good for P to direct m at g.

The antecedent of Fit restricts it to goods that call for certain mental states. If there are goods that call for no mental states, Fit does not apply to them. Fit leaves open what exactly those positive mental states are. They could be, for example, pleasure, attitudes, or emotions. It could be that more than one mental state is fitting to a particular good. Achievements seem to call for reactions such as pride and joy. When we do not react with fitting attitudes, we miss out on well-being. For example, one might be embarrassed of one's achievements, in which case one does not get a benefit because one's attitudes are not fitting.[1]

Fit has powerful and surprising consequences for first-order theories of well-being. I argue that classical versions of the objective list theory, hedonism, desire views, and loving-the-good theories do not accommodate Fit. Suitable modifications change some of the views substantially. Modified views give mental states a robust role as sources of well-being and these views accept that objects call for some attitudes but not others.

I lay out my arguments in two parts. In part one (sections 1–3), I argue for Fit and why it involves a prudential phenomenon. I sketch three tests that provide evidence for that claim. In part two (sections 4–7), I examine the resources to accommodate Fit of several families of first-order theories of well-being. I argue that classic versions of the desire theory and hedonism are incompatible with Fit. The objective list theory and loving-the-good theories are compatible in principle but minimal changes should be made to accommodate Fit. This gives us a reason to prefer these theories over alternative views. I address some objections in section 8.

1. Why prudential attitudes must fit their object

In this section, I argue for Fit. First, I clarify a few points about it, then I present a series of cases. In one case, Fit is met and so there is additional benefit from fitting attitudes. In contrast, in other cases, the additional benefit is missing because the individual's reactions are not fitting.

1.1. Clarificatory remarks

It is controversial how to draw a distinction between prudential and non-prudential value, and even whether the latter is a separate and distinct kind of value.[2] Here I assume that what is prudentially good is good for a person and that prudential goodness can come apart from other kinds of goodness. For example, it could be that doing the morally right thing in a particular situation is bad for the person involved. In this paper, I focus on two goods – achievements and moments of deep connection – and two main general cases:

[1]Others have called attention to fittingness, both in morality (Howard 2018) and in well-being (Von Kriegstein 2020). Von Kriegstein suggests the principle that he calls "The Fitting Response Principle (FRP):" "Events of the form [x, having a fitting attitude to an event, t] are bearers of final prudential value for x" (Von Kriegstein 2020: 132). FRP is similar to Fit (von Kriegstein and I arrive at our respective principles independently). Von Kriegstein believes that FRP is one of three principles of what he calls "harmonism." The main insight motivating harmonism is that "prudential value depends often, if not always, on harmonious relationships between mind and world" (Von Kriegstein 2020: 117). In contrast, I provide arguments for the plausibility of Fit as a self-standing principle.

[2]Thomas Hurka (2021) argues that terms such as "good for" and "well-being" do not express a distinct evaluative concept separate from "simply good."

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Achievements: Cocoa spends a great deal of time working on her drawing skills. After much practice, she can draw beautiful landscapes.

Deep Connection: Cocoa is in a romantic relationship. Cocoa and her partner have been through a lot together. They share a moment of deep connection when they look into each other's eyes.

I take it that achievements and moments of deep connection are valuable, but I remain neutral about the kind of value that they have. Whether these goods are prudential or not is a topic in its own right and I prefer not to take a stand here, since I do not provide arguments one way or another. Moreover, Fit only states that there is additional well-being when our attitudes are fitting. This is compatible with their being prudential goods or some other kind of goods.

Fit is also compatible with the fact that some attitudes might be considered prudential goods themselves whether they are fitting or not. For example, being happy might be good in itself, independently of what we are happy about. Fit only says that when happiness fits its object, the individual gets additional well-being.

Finally, it might be helpful to clarify that fitting attitudes are different from merely useful attitudes. Suppose that Jeff Bezos offers me two million dollars to admire him as a moral saint. It would be useful for me to admire him in that way (my bank account tells me so), but it might not be fitting to admire him. Jeff Bezos does not merit to be so admired, according to the standard of moral sainthood.

1.2. The cases

In the general case Achievements (p. 4), Cocoa works hard to accomplish her goal of drawing well, but we do not know yet how she reacts to having achieved something. According to Fit, there is an extra benefit when her reaction is fitting:

Achievement–Fit: Cocoa learns to draw well after much practice. When she draws something beautiful, she feels proud and happy about it.

Achievements involve setting goals and the capacity to follow through.[3] Given the effort that we invest in our achievements, pride and joy are fitting attitudes for achievements.

Here I remain neutral on whether all achievements are good, and as to whether achievements are prudentially good or good in some other way. First, suppose that at least some achievements are prudentially good, or even more minimally, that Cocoa's achievement is. If that is right, by having achieved something, Cocoa benefits, she gets some well-being. She would benefit to some extent, even if she did not feel anything about her achievements. According to Fit, Cocoa gets an additional benefit when she reacts with fitting attitudes. Second, suppose that Cocoa's achievement is good aesthetically, but not prudentially. If she feels nothing at all when she achieves something, she does not get any well-being. If Fit is true, when she reacts with fitting attitudes, she gets some well-being, even when her achievements as such do not make her better off. Contrast Achievement–Fit with the following case:

Achievements–Shame: Cocoa's reaction to her achievements is shame. She is an extreme perfectionist and what she does is never good enough in her eyes.

[3]See Bradford (2015) for a theory about the nature of achievements and their value.

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> Every time that she finishes a beautiful drawing, she feels ashamed of it and of herself for producing something that she sees as so defective.

In this case, Cocoa's reaction to her achievements does not bring an additional benefit. It might even make her worse off. One might think that this is due to what Eric Mathison (2018: 89) calls an "error of orientation." Objective bads call for negative responses and objective goods call for positive responses. An error of orientation occurs when one's reaction to something objectively bad is positive and when one's reaction to an objective good is negative.[4]

There is an error of orientation in Achievements–Shame because Cocoa reacts with a negative emotion (shame) when her achievements call for a positive reaction (pride and joy). However, we should not conclude that only errors of orientation explain why Cocoa does not get an additional benefit:

> **Achievement–Glad:** When Cocoa draws something beautiful, she appreciates that her drawing is beautiful. Cocoa feels glad that something beautiful, the drawing, exists in the world. However, she does not feel anything positive about herself as the creator of the drawing. She would feel equally glad if somebody else had created the drawing.

That Cocoa is glad about the drawings might make her better off. Since her drawings are beautiful, it makes sense to be glad that they exist. Cocoa might benefit because this is a positive attitude. However, she could benefit more if she felt proud of herself too, since this is a fitting attitude toward one's achievements. She misses out on the extra fit benefit. Consider the final Achievements case:

> **Achievement–Chocolate:** Cocoa does not feel an emotion when she achieves something. Instead, when she draws something beautiful her taste buds get stimulated as if she was eating chocolate ice cream and she loves how that feels. Let's call that collection of mental states "chocolate ice cream pleasure."[5]

Cocoa reacts to her achievements with chocolate ice cream pleasure, instead of pride and joy, so she does not get the extra benefit that comes from fittingness. She might benefit to some extent because she experiences pleasure. However, if she felt appropriate emotions, she would benefit even more. The added benefit would come from the fact that pride and joy are fitting attitudes for achievements.

In Achievement–Chocolate and Achievement–Glad, Cocoa feels a positive reaction, but it is not fitting, so she gets no extra fit benefit. An error of orientation cannot explain the absence of the extra fit benefit in Achievement–Chocolate and Achievement–Glad, since Cocoa experiences something positive. Only in

[4]Hurka implies that a pleasure might not fit its object when their orientation does not match: "[the attitude's] positive orientation, as a pleasure in or desire for its object, matches the positive value of its object, where this positive-to-positive matching makes for or is the fittingness" (Hurka 2019: 454–55).

[5]Ben Bramble considers a similar case: Blue only has experiences of the color blue and cannot have experiences associated with love, friendship, and other goods (Bramble 2016: 205). Bramble locates Blue's problem in the lack of diversity of pleasures. If Fit is true, even when a person can experience a diversity of reactions, she might miss out on a benefit when her attitudes are not fitting.

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Achievement–Fit does Cocoa get the relevant added benefit. Something similar goes for a moment of deep connection:

> **Deep Connection–Fit:** Cocoa experiences a moment of deep connection. She realizes how precious that moment is, and she feels love for her partner, and gratitude for the chance to be a part of it.

To get the extra fit benefit from the moment of deep connection, one should react with fitting emotions. Otherwise, one misses out on a fit benefit, even when one gets other sorts of benefits. Contrast Deep Connection–Fit with other cases:

> **Deep Connection–Shame:** Cocoa feels the moment of deep connection, but she is ashamed of it. There is nothing morally wrong about her relationship, but social prejudice is strong, and she feels that it is shameful to be in it, given how society sees the particular relationship that she is in.

> **Deep Connection–Glad:** Cocoa feels the moment of deep connection. She appreciates the value and importance of love in the world. Instead of feeling gratitude, love, or happiness, she feels glad that that moment happened since the world is better with more love in it. She would be equally glad about other people feeling a moment of deep connection.

> **Deep Connection–Chocolate:** Cocoa feels a moment of deep connection, but reacts with chocolate ice cream pleasure, instead of gratitude or other fitting emotions.

If a moment of deep connection is prudentially good, in all the cases where Cocoa experiences the deep connection, she benefits from that experience. However, in all cases other than Deep Connection–Fit, Cocoa does not get the extra fit benefit.

In Deep Connection–Shame, there is an error of orientation since a moment of deep connection calls for positive mental states such as happiness and gratitude, and shame is a negative emotion, so Cocoa does not get the extra fit benefit. In contrast, in Deep Connection–Glad and Deep Connection–Chocolate, Cocoa reacts positively, but that does not bring her the distinctive and additional fit benefit, even if she still gets some benefit from her positive reactions. Being glad that there is love in the world might benefit her, but the distinctive fit benefit is still missing.

2. Well-being, care, compassion, and rewards

The following three tests provide evidence for the claim that Fit is about what is good for us, about a prudential phenomenon.

2.1. Care

In his "Welfare and Rational Care," Stephen Darwall argues for a theory of well-being based on the idea that there is a strong connection between well-being and care: "A person's welfare is, I claim, the object of a desire spawned by concern for that person" (Darwall 2002: 24). For Darwall, well-being just is what we want for those that we care about. Even if one rejects his view about what constitutes well-being, a weaker claim is still plausible. Think about those you care about, perhaps your spouse, kids, parents, siblings, friends, your pets, or yourself. Consider what you want for them.

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When we care about somebody, we want what is good for them for their own sake.[6] A care-based test would go as follows:

> **Care test:** when something g is prudentially good for a person P, when we care about P, we want g for P for P's own sake.

Happiness passes the care test. When we care about somebody, we want them to be happy for their own sake, not just to make us happy or because we find happiness to be a fine thing in the world. This suggests that happiness is a prudential phenomenon. Fittingness passes the care test too. Think about people that one cares about a great deal. When they achieve something, I take it that one does not want them to be ashamed, but proud. Would we want them to react with chocolate ice cream pleasure or with pride and joy? The answer is surely "pride and joy." That is evidence for the claim that the extra value from fitting attitudes is indeed prudential.

2.2. Compassion

Compassion has been tied to well-being across philosophical and religious traditions. Augustine (1955) claimed that "pity (*misericordia*) is a kind of compassion (*compassio*) in our hearts for the misery of others which compels us to help them if we can" (*De civitate Dei* IX.5). According to Christopher W. Gowans, "fundamental Buddhist virtues such as compassion and loving kindness involve a concern to promote the well-being of other people" (Gowans 2016: 71). Tobias A. Fuchs (2018) even suggests a test based on compassion that "yields a sufficient condition for knowing when welfare is affected" (Fuchs 2018: 137).

We see two main features of compassion in these quotes. It is an emotional reaction to the suffering of others, and it motivates us to act, to promote people's well-being. This is expressed in the following version of the test:

> **Compassion test:** We feel compassion for a person P when there is an instance g of a good G that P misses out on.

We see Cocoa drawing and working so hard to improve her skills. We learn that she does not feel pride or joy when she draws a beautiful landscape. Perhaps one day Cocoa mentions that she is ashamed of her drawings. She might feel glad that her beautiful drawings exist, but she does not feel proud of herself and her achievements. She misses out on a prudential good. We would feel compassion for her and would be moved to do something to help her if we could. Perhaps we would offer a word of encouragement and make more salient all the value of her work. We would feel compassion for Cocoa because we think that she is not as well as she could be, because she misses out on something that is good for her.

2.3. Rewards and punishment

There is a connection between rewards and well-being such that we reward people by making them better off.[7] We get the following test:

[6]Adams (2002: 91–93, 97–98), Feldman (2004: 9–10), and Van Weelden (2017: 26–27) also accept a connection between care and well-being.

[7]Other philosophers have also seen a connection between rewards and well-being; see, for example, Bradley (2014: 229), Crisp (2006: 638–39), and Heathwood (2010: 646).

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Reward Test: When something g is prudentially good for a person P, g is a potential reward for P.

Imagine that Cocoa has helped you in a time of need and you want to reward her. You are aware of how ashamed she is of her moments of deep connection, even though there is nothing wrong about the relationship she is in. Perhaps you know a therapist that has been helpful to people in similar cases, so you share the information with Cocoa. Your hope is that she will not feel ashamed, but instead feel love and gratitude. That we see fitting attitudes as a potential reward for Cocoa suggests that we see them as prudential, as something that would make her better off.

Something similar goes for punishment. Sometimes we punish people by depriving them of something that is good for them. For example, we might hold on to a gift for a teenager when she has behaved poorly. This suggests the following:

Punishment Test: When something g is prudentially good for a person P, depriving P of g is a potential punishment for P.

Think about somebody who has done something wrong. Cocoa's condition in Achievements–Shame and Achievement–Chocolate is a good candidate for a potential punishment. It might not be a punishment suitable for a terrible crime, but it might be appropriate for some wrongdoings. Notice that the punishment is not to give Cocoa something enjoyable such as chocolate ice cream pleasure, but to deprive her of something good, namely the fit benefit.

These tests provide evidence for the claim that Fit is about a prudential phenomenon. Some philosophers might not be fully convinced by this evidence, but detractors need to explain the evidence provided by the tests.

3. On fit and well-being

In this short section, I assess the significance of previous sections and present my plan for the rest of the paper. I have argued that fittingness of attitudes is prudentially good and that Fit has some pre-theoretical plausibility. The cases and the tests provide evidence for this. If Fit is true, it follows that:

Mental States Matter: there is an extra benefit when our positive mental states fit their objects, so it is prudentially relevant what attitudes we have. Positive mental states are not fungible. They are not all the same regardless of what object they are reactions to.

Mental States Matter tells us that some objects call for some mental states, but not others. This claim follows from Fit because if Fit is true, what kind of mental state one has is relevant for whether one gets a fit benefit. When the mental state is fitting, one gets the benefit, and when it is not fitting, one does not get the benefit. My arguments for Fit give us reasons to accept the following claim too:

No Endorsement Necessary: there is an extra benefit when an individual's reaction fits the object whether or not she wants that fitting reaction (or whether she has any other second-order positive attitude toward it).

No Endorsement Necessary tells us that fitting attitudes are a source of well-being whether we endorse them or not. The cases and tests did not need any information

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about whether Cocoa wants fitting attitudes or not. One might even think that Cocoa should want fitting attitudes and that she misses out on well-being when she does not have them.

These claims about well-being provide guidance about what well-being theories to accept, namely theories that accommodate Fit. In the rest of the paper, I explore the consequences for several families of well-being theories. I argue that classic versions of desire theories and hedonism, prominent objective list theories, and a hybrid theory (a loving-the-good theory) do not accommodate Fit.

I argue that objective list theories and loving-the-good theories are compatible with Fit, but current versions are silent about it. However, a suitable and relatively minor modification is enough to accommodate Fit. We have reasons from Fit to accept the modified views that are compatible with Fit. Whether these views can accommodate Fit or not indicates something important about how these views explain well-being, and what they get right or wrong about it.

4. Loving-the-good theories

Derek Parfit, Robert Adams, Richard Kraut, and Shelly Kagan have suggested views according to which well-being just is loving the good:[8]

> Pleasure with many other kinds of object has no value. And, if they are entirely devoid of pleasure, there is no value in knowledge, rational activity, love, or the awareness of beauty. What is of value, or is good for someone, is to have both; to be engaged in these activities, and to be strongly wanting to be so engaged (Parfit 1984: 501–2).

> …the objects we desire must prove themselves worthy of being wanted by having certain characteristics. If they lack features that make them worth wanting, then the fact that we want them does not make up for that deficiency (Kraut 1994: 44).

> I wish to explore the idea that what is good for a person is a life that is hers, and that two criteria (perhaps not the only criteria) for a life being a good one for a person are that she should enjoy it, and that what she enjoys should be, in some objective sense, excellent (Adams 2002: 93–94).

> I am well off if and only if there are objective goods in my life and I take pleasure in them, I enjoy having them (Kagan 2009: 255).[9]

I use "love" to refer to different mental states that might be relevant for well-being. Kagan and Parfit think that pleasure is the relevant mental state, Kraut thinks that desire is, and Adams thinks that it is enjoyment. I focus on views on the

[8]These views are usually classified as hybrid views. For an overview and discussion of hybrid views, see Woodard (2016). See Moore (2021) for an overview of views that accept that a connection between subjectivist and objectivist elements matter. This is what Moore calls "attitudinalism."

[9]Susan Wolf argues that "meaning arises from loving objects worthy of love and engaging with them in a positive way." That is, when "subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness" (Wolf 2010: 8–9). I am primarily interested in well-being, so I do not discuss Wolf's view about meaning here. The similarities are, however, worth noticing.

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loving-the-good family that fall under what Christopher Woodard calls "the joint necessity model."[10] According to this model, objective value and subjective engagement with that value are each a necessary condition of well-being (Woodard 2016: 164):

> If a person P has well-being, (1) P has an instance g of an objective good G, and (2) P loves g.

For views of this kind, the only way to get well-being is to love the good. Since love and objective value are each a necessary condition of well-being, there cannot be well-being when one of them is missing. There cannot be well-being when we love what is not objectively valuable and there cannot be well-being when we do not love what is objectively valuable.

According to loving-the-good theories (LTG theories for short), there is well-being only when Cocoa loves the good. There is no benefit in Achievements–Shame and Deep Connection–Shame because Cocoa does not love her achievements or moments of deep connection. According to LTG theories, for Cocoa to benefit in the other cases, it must be that moments of deep connection and achievements are objective goods. Otherwise, there would be no benefit. Moreover, when achievements and moments of deep connection are not loved, they are not prudentially good at all. They could be good in some other way, but not prudentially good because loving them is necessary for well-being.

At least some proponents of the view claim that the nature of the connection matters for whether there is benefit or not. According to Kagan, pleasure must be "properly 'connected' to objective value" (Kagan 2009: 255). Kagan leaves unspecified what exactly the proper connection between pleasure and objective value is. He takes that point onboard "whatever, precisely, that connection comes to" (Kagan 2009: 260). Similarly, Kraut thinks that "one must be related in the right way to what one loves" (Kraut 1994: 44).

Hurka makes a similar point about objective value in general, but the point can be made about prudential value too. Consider a person who eats a piece of chocolate while she reads poetry but takes no pleasure in reading poetry. Hurka, convincingly, points out that the pleasure of eating chocolate and the reading of poetry does not create additional value: "Additional value requires a specific pleasure, one directed *at* the objective state it's joined with, or in this case a pleasure *in* reading poetry" (Hurka 2019: 453).

Fit says something that LTG views do not say, namely that the kind of loving directed at an object matters prudentially. It follows from LTG theories that Cocoa benefits in all cases where she loves the good. It is not relevant what kind of love that is. In Achievement–Glad and Deep Connection–Glad, Cocoa loves her achievements and her moments of deep connection. Her love is directed at something objectively valuable, and it responds to the good making features of those goods.

Cocoa appreciates the aesthetic qualities of her achievements and their place in her community and culture. Cocoa sees love and deep connections as good. She is glad that they exist in the world. A third person observing the drawings and knowing about the deep connection might also be glad that they exist. However, Cocoa misses out on well-being because she does not react with the attitudes that fit the goods of achievements and deep connections, in so far as they are part of her life and not merely something that exists out there in the world.

[10]I also refer to these views as "loving-the-good theories" when discussing how this family of views can be extended to ill-being (what is intrinsically bad for us) (Bruno-Niño 2022).

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It follows from LTG theories that Cocoa benefits in the Glad cases because she loves the good. It does not follow from the view that Cocoa gets an additional benefit when her reactions fit their objects in Achievement–Fit and Deep Connection–Fit. In these cases, just like in Achievement–Glad and Deep Connection–Glad, Cocoa loves the good. The view is compatible with Fit, but it does not say anything to accommodate it.

Something, however, can be added to the view. We can leave everything as is and add that when reactions are fitting, there is an additional benefit. With this change, we would get the right results in the Cocoa cases. It would follow from the view that Cocoa benefits more when her reactions are fitting. This strikes me as a minor change to the view. This change is enough to accommodate Fit because, for LTG theories, mental states play a role as a source of well-being and because the connection between mental states and objects matters. This is a good position for a view to be in. As we will see, other well-being theories face significant problems to accommodate Fit.

It might be helpful to address a potential concern about Fit and LTG theories. In section 3, I argued that reasons for Fit are also reasons for No Endorsement Necessary, the claim that there is an extra benefit when our reactions fit their objects whether or not the individual wants the extra benefit. One might think that No Endorsement Necessary and LTG theories are incompatible. LTG theories require that for something to be prudentially good for us, we must love it. But if No Endorsement Necessary is true, fit is prudentially good for us even if we do not love it. I believe that the tension between LTG theories and No Endorsement Necessary is merely apparent. Recall the joint necessity model of well-being for LTG theories:

> If a person P has well-being, (1) P has an instance g of an objective good G, and (2) P loves g.

According to this model, it is required for well-being that one loves what is objectively good. The instance g of the good in the necessary conditions is a non-prudential good. The view does not have a recursive requirement that for loving the good to be prudentially good, one must love loving the good. If it had that requirement on loving the good, it would be natural to think that there is another higher-level requirement to love loving loving the good, but this would lead to an infinite regress that the theory might want to avoid.

Other theories, even subjectivist views, do not have that recursive requirement either. The desire theory, for example, says that desire satisfaction is good for us. It does not say that for desire satisfaction to be prudentially good, one must desire desire satisfaction. Accordingly, LTG theories and No Endorsement Necessary are compatible.

5. Objective list theory

According to objective list theorists, there is a list of goods that are objectively good for us, regardless of our attitudes toward them. Different lists have been suggested and whether they can accommodate Fit depends on the items in the list. In this section, I argue that objective list theories can in principle accommodate Fit when we add the relevant details to the view.

5.1. Two objective list theories: bare and essential attitudes

According to Richard Arneson's bare objective list theory (BOLT), there is a list of objective goods, and it is intrinsically good for a person to have those goods in her

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life (Arneson 1999: 119). The items in the list are good for the person who has them independently of her attitudes toward them. Arneson claims that for something to be objectively good, it is neither necessary nor sufficient that the individual desires it, or that she enjoys it (Arneson 1999: 141–42).

According to what I call "the essential attitudes objective list theory" ("EA" for short), some attitudes are "necessary components" of the items in an objective list of prudential goods (Fletcher 2013: 216). Guy Fletcher and Christopher Rice claim that being in a loving relationship, for example, contributes to the person's well-being in virtue of the essential features of loving relationships, for instance, mutual care and affection (Fletcher 2013; Rice 2013). A person cannot have the objective good of a loving relationship if there are no positive attitudes involved (Rice 2013: 197, 206).

According to Fletcher, "It is plausible to claim that achievement has an attitudinal component because in achieving something one succeeds in one's aim and so one has an attitude of aiming towards some goal" (Fletcher 2013: 216, fn. 24). In all the Achievement cases, Cocoa aims toward a goal because she wants to draw better. Whenever she achieves something, it follows from the EA that Cocoa benefits from her achievements.

A moment of deep connection is not an item in the list, so according to the EA, there is no direct benefit from it. But perhaps we could say that one benefits from a moment of deep connection in so far as it is part of a loving relationship (which is an item in Fletcher's and Rice's lists). Suppose that a moment of deep connection is an essential constituent of a loving relationship. According to the EA, if the other essential components of a loving relationship are also present, Cocoa benefits whenever she experiences a moment of deep connection. According to the EA, we fully benefit from our achievements and loving relationships whether or not our attitudes toward them are fitting. Something similar goes for the BOLT. However, there is still space for Fit in those views: fit could be an item in the objective list.

If fit was an item in the list, Cocoa would benefit from her achievements when her attitudes are fitting because she would have two goods, namely, achievements and fittingness. In Achievement–Glad, where she reacts with an unfitting attitude, she would have the good of achievement, but not the good of fit. That would explain the additional benefit when attitudes are fitting.

Fletcher accepts virtue as an objective good (Fletcher 2013: 214). Hurka, famously, argues that virtue is to love the good and hate the evil (Hurka 2001: 10). If virtue is to love the good, then when one loves the good, one gets well-being. The resulting view integrates fit to the EA, and it accommodates Fit.[11]

Even though attitudes do not determine whether a good is in the list or not, Arneson thinks that attitudes could play some role in determining well-being for some items in the list. As an example, he mentions that an objective list theory could accept the satisfaction of important life aims as an item in the list. A person's ranking of the importance of her aims would play an important role in determining well-being within an item in the list (Arneson 1999: 117). Arneson also accepts that attitudes might be "prerequisites" of objective goods (Arneson 1999: 142). Like the satisfaction of important life aims, fit could be an item in the bare objective list too.

[11]Thanks to Joseph Van Weelden and two anonymous referees for suggesting to explore this possibility on behalf of objective list theories.

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5.2. Practical reasonableness and excellence in agency

Other objective lists already have items in the list that go well with Fit. In his objective list, John Finnis includes the prudential good of practical reasonableness. This is the good of ordering one's emotions, choices, and actions by intelligence and reason (Finnis 1998: 83). The other goods in his list are conservation of oneself (health and bodily integrity), the good of personal sexual union, procreation and education of children, and specific human goods (the good of knowing the truth about god and the good of living in fellowship with others) (Finnis 1998: 81–82).

Mark Murphy includes excellence in agency in his list of objective goods (Murphy 2001: 118). The other goods in Murphy's list are life, knowledge, aesthetic experience, excellence in play and work, inner peace, friendship and community, religion, and happiness (Murphy 2001: 97). Both practical reasonableness and excellence in agency involve some kind of fittingness. For Finnis, practical reasonableness involves ordering our emotions according to reason. For Murphy, excellence in agency involves acting well.[12]

As they are, these views are silent about Fit. For example, Finnis does not say that we get an extra benefit when our emotions are ordered in such a way that they fit their objects. Murphy does not say that acting well involves reacting with fitting attitudes. However, we can add to Finnis' view that when one reacts with fitting mental states, there is an additional benefit related to practical reasonableness. We can add to Murphy's view that reacting with fitting mental states brings an additional benefit related to excellence in agency. One might not want to accept all items included in Finnis' and Murphy's lists. However, that practical reasonableness and excellence in agency can incorporate Fit gives us a reason to accept those items in an objective list of prudential goods.

6. Desire theories

According to desire theories, well-being just is the satisfaction of our desires. One might think that these theories easily accommodate intuitions about fitting reactions, since a subset of our mental states plays a prudential role for desire theories. Consider a classic desire satisfaction view:

> The desire-fulfillment theory of well-being – also known as desire satisfaction, preferentism, or simply the desire theory – holds, in its simplest form, that what is good in itself for people and other subjects of welfare is their getting what they want, or the fulfillment of their desires, and what is bad in itself for them is their not getting what they want, or the frustration of their desires (Heathwood 2016: 135).

According to desire views, the satisfaction of a person's desires constitutes her well-being.[13] Getting what they want is necessary and sufficient for well-being. Cocoa wants to draw well and she wants a moment of deep connection. As long as her desires

[12]Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out the connection between Fit, practical reasonableness, and excellence in agency.

[13]I sketch the general features of desire theories, but many versions have been defended in the literature, so I am bound to abstract from some details. The same goes for other theories that I discuss. I hope that this approach does not make a significant difference for present purposes since the focus is how general features of the different views account for their issues to accommodate Fit.

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are satisfied, Cocoa benefits, according to desire views. When she achieves something and she feels a moment of deep connection, her desires are satisfied and that accounts for all her well-being. Strength of desire might make a difference for desire theories. Cocoa would benefit more from her improved drawing skills if her desire for them had been stronger, but the fittingness of her reactions is irrelevant according to these views.

Plausibly, what makes purely subjectivist views distinctive is the role they give to attitudes. David Sobel and Steven Wall characterize a normative role that attitudes can take. When attitudes take this role, they "have free play to create value for the agent wherever they go, even if they settle on objectively worthless or disvaluable objects" (Sobel and Wall 2021: 2832). According to Sobel and Wall, "Fully subjectivist views of well-being place no jurisdictional limits on the sovereign power of these attitudes" (Sobel and Wall 2021: 2833).

The desire theory is purely subjectivist because desires have sovereign prudential power. Desire satisfaction is all that matters for well-being. Fit places jurisdictional limits on the power of desires. If Fit is true, desire satisfaction is not the only source of well-being. Instead, well-being also arises when our reactions are directed at objects that call for them. Since desire satisfaction is the only source of well-being for desire theories, they cannot even make sense of the phenomenon of reactions that are more fitting to some objects than to others.

These views cannot explain why we feel compassion for Cocoa in the Shame and Chocolate versions of Achievements and Deep Connection, why we do not want Cocoa's situation for somebody that we care about, and why fitting reactions would be a suitable reward for a good action. Classic desire views are incompatible with Fit.

Fit does not require that we want fitting reactions. Fittingness as such adds a benefit. In contrast, for desire theories, the only way to get more benefit is to get more desires satisfied, since desire satisfaction is the only source of well-being. For classic desire theories, the only way to get an additional benefit from fit is to want it.

Suppose that Cocoa is ashamed of her achievements, but she comes to want to experience pride and joy instead. When she finally gets to feel pride and joy, her desire is satisfied, so she gets some well-being. Fit does not dispute this result, but desire theories and Fit explain the additional well-being differently.

According to desire theories, Cocoa benefits from feeling pride and joy from her achievements because that constitutes the satisfaction of a desire. There is nothing special about pride and joy as responses to achievements. Consider the following scenario. Cocoa feels ashamed of her achievements, but she wants to experience chocolate ice cream pleasure when she achieves something. She has not really considered pride and joy, so she does not form the desire to feel pride and joy. When she comes to react with chocolate ice cream pleasure when she achieves something, her desire is satisfied and so she benefits. As long as the desire to feel chocolate ice cream pleasure is as strong as the desire to feel pride and joy, when those desires are satisfied, it follows from the desire theory that Cocoa benefits equally.

Fit is compatible with the claim that there is benefit from desire satisfaction. But according to Fit, there is additional benefit when Cocoa feels pride and joy because those are fitting reactions to her achievements. In the case where she wants to experience chocolate ice cream pleasure, she would benefit even more if she also felt pride and joy. One source of benefit would be desire satisfaction, the other, her fitting reactions. According to Fit, Cocoa should want to feel pride and joy. This is not a result that the desire theory can accept. For desire theories, features of the object are not relevant at all

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for well-being. Desires have all the power to determine well-being, regardless of their object.

This problem extends to any attitude-based view, as long as it accepts the claim that attitudes have sovereign prudential power. Dale Dorsey's judgment subjectivism is a belief-based subjectivist view. Roughly, a person values something only if she believes that it is good for her (when her beliefs are coherent and under conditions of full consideration) (Dorsey 2012: 415–17; 2021: 147, 144). It is a subjectivist view because what is good for the person is what she values. As long as beliefs determine well-being, judgment subjectivism is incompatible with Fit too.

For judgment subjectivism, Cocoa's belief that drawing well is good for her is necessary and sufficient for her achievement to be good for her. Whether she feels pride and joy, or chocolate ice cream pleasure, is irrelevant for her well-being. Judgment subjectivism is incompatible with Fit and it cannot explain how fitting reactions are sources of well-being.

One might think that desire theories can accept a notion of fit. For example, consider a desire theory according to which something is good for us if and only if, in suitable circumstances, one does or would have an intrinsic desire to have that thing. Apply this theory to the following case. An individual has a good G and it meets the relevant desire-theoretic standard (circumstances are suitable and one intrinsically desires G). Suppose that desiring G is also good only if one wants to desire G. This second desire meets the standard too. This individual also has a thing NG, but NG does not meet the desire-theoretic standard (either the suitable conditions are not met or one does not intrinsically desire NG). In this scenario, desiring G is more fitting than desiring NG, since only the former meets the desire theoretic standard.

One might wonder whether, contrary to what I claim, this theory implies that well-being arises only when our reactions are directed at objects that call for them and so that such reactions are more fitting to some objects than to others.[14] I would agree that a theory of this sort can accept a notion of fittingness, since according to this view it is more fitting to desire some things than others. But notice that this is, roughly, the claim that it is fitting to desire what one desires. No property of the object makes it the case that one should desire it in a fitting way. Desires entirely make it the case that something is more fitting than something else. This notion of fit does not do justice to the cases and the tests in section 2. For example, according to the above desire theory, it could be fitting for Cocoa to desire chocolate ice cream pleasure as a response to achievements instead of pride and joy. But the comparison between the cases Achievement–Chocolate and Achievement–Fit still suggests that it is better for Cocoa to feel pride and joy than chocolate ice pleasure.

7. Hedonism

Hedonism faces similar challenges to accommodate Fit. Consider the following view:

> *Classic hedonism:* "All and only pleasure is good for you, and all and only displeasure is bad for you" (Gregory 2016: 115).[15]

[14]Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this concern on behalf of desire theories.

[15]It is complicated for a statement of hedonism to do justice to the differences between hedonist views. What I call "Classic hedonism" strikes me as a good general view. It is what Alex Gregory calls "Classic Hedonism+" (Gregory 2016: 115). See Gregory 2016 for an overview of hedonist views and their challenges.

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According to classic hedonism, well-being just is pleasure. As the sole constituent of well-being, pleasure is all that matters for well-being. Like desire views, hedonism can account for degrees of benefit too. Cocoa would benefit more from chocolate ice cream pleasure as a reaction to her achievements if that pleasure was more intense. Imagine two cases. In one, Cocoa reacts to her achievements with pride and joy. In the other, she reacts with chocolate ice cream pleasure. Assume that the intensity of both reactions is the same. For hedonism, Cocoa benefits equally in both cases. Fit, in contrast, states that fitting reactions contribute to well-being, so Cocoa benefits more when she feels pride and joy for her achievements, even when the intensity and amount of pleasure are the same as those of unfitting attitudes.

For hedonism to be compatible with Fit, the connection between pleasure and its objects would have to matter prudentially. This strikes me as a departure from the spirit of classic hedonism. This view gives pleasure all the prudential weight, regardless of its connection to anything else. In contrast, Fit says that there is a distinctive kind of benefit that originates in the fittingness of our attitudes, not from pleasure. Classic hedonism strikes me as incompatible with Fit. However, different versions of hedonism result from taking on board different views about the nature of pleasure, and the resulting views might have different resources to accommodate Fit. Consider two families of views:

> **Phenomenological view:** pleasure is a mental state characterized by its phenomenology, that is, by what it feels like to feel pleasure.

> **Attitudinal view:** pleasure is an attitude, an intentional mental state that has an object. Phenomenology is not what defines pleasure.[16]

A hedonist view that adopts a phenomenological view about the nature of pleasure identifies as the basic unit of well-being a mental state defined by its phenomenology. Pleasure, understood this way, lacks intentionality. It does not take an object. It has causes, but it is not pleasure about something. On this view, pleasure does not have the right structure to take on an object. A hedonist view in combination with the phenomenological view about the nature of pleasure is incompatible with Fit. It cannot even make sense of the phenomenon of fitting reactions, since pleasure cannot take an object on this view.

A hedonist view combined with an attitudinal view about the nature of pleasure can do better with Fit, but current views of this type still fail to accommodate Fit as they are. Fred Feldman holds a view of this kind, his attitudinal hedonism. According to Feldman, attitudinal pleasure is the "chief good" for us, and "pleasure taken in higher-altitude objects" is better than pleasure taken in objects that are not higher-altitude (Feldman 2004: 57, 75).

This view has some resources to accommodate Fit. Unlike hedonist views that adopt a phenomenological view, for an attitudinal view pleasure has in principle the right structure for Fit, since it can take an object. This view does not face the same problems to accommodate Fit as the desire theory either. The main problem for desire views is that attitudes are sovereign to determine well-being. Feldman's view is not subjectivist in this way. Attitudes in Feldman's view are not sovereign, but constrained by their objects.

[16]Moore 2019 (especially section 2.1.) and Bramble 2016 discuss views about the nature of pleasure and their connection to hedonist theories.

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However, upon closer examination, this view does not accommodate Fit as it is. According to this view, a person can get more benefit when the pleasure that she experiences is directed at a higher-altitude object. In this sense, higher-altitude objects are more deserving of being enjoyed. However, the additional benefit comes from the quality of the object that pleasure is directed at.

Suppose that a moment of deep connection is of higher altitude than achievements. When we feel pleasure towards a deep connection and towards achievements, we get more benefit in the former case. The type of pleasure or whether it fits its object is irrelevant. Consider the cases Achievement–Glad and Deep Connection–Glad. In both cases, Cocoa reacts positively to her achievements and moment of deep connection. In those cases, Cocoa is glad that her achievements and moments of deep connection exist in the world. On the assumption that a moment of deep connection is of higher altitude than an achievement, Cocoa benefits more in Deep Connection–Glad. But the view is silent about whether Cocoa would benefit more if her reactions were fitting. Recall Fit:

> **Fit:** if a person P has an instance g of a good G and it is fitting for P to have an instance m of a positive mental state M directed at g, then it is prudentially good for P to direct m at g.

According to Fit, what is prudentially good for P is that the mental state is directed at the relevant good, that is, that the mental states are fitting. Fit does not locate prudential value in the worthiness of the object or on the attitude alone. Although Fit is compatible with the claim that extra prudential value can come from the object, it does not say that the object itself contributes to well-being.

In the Glad cases above, according to Fit, Cocoa benefits equally in terms of fit, since in both cases the mental state is not fitting. Compare Achievement–Glad to Achievement–Fit. The objects are the same and so of equal value. According to Feldman, the benefit is the same, but Fit says that Cocoa benefits more in Achievement–Fit than in Achievement–Glad, since there is fit in the former, but not in the latter.

Since Feldman's view already acknowledges that the connection between mental states and objects matters, we could add Fit to the view. We would then accept that Cocoa benefits more when she has fitting reactions. We can set aside the classification issue of whether the view is still a hedonist view. However, it is important to notice that the modified attitudinal hedonism accepts that the object of our mental states and how we react to them matter for well-being.[17]

8. Addressing some worries

One might worry that my methodology puts the cart before the horse. Shouldn't we give more credence to well-regarded first-order theories of well-being? If we did, we would conclude that there must be something wrong with Fit since it is not compatible with prominent versions of them. A related worry is that my argument begs the question

[17]Valerie Tiberius's value-fulfillment view about well-being might be a promising view to accommodate Fit, since values, attitudes, and appropriateness are connected in this view. The relation between Fit and Tiberius' unique and intricate view would deserve a section or even a paper of its own. In this paper, I focus on families of views instead.

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against subjectivist views. If fittingness is an objectivist-friendly phenomenon to start with, subjectivism never had a chance.

As I mentioned in section 3, my hope is that the tests and cases presented in sections 1 and 2 give us at least some independent reasons to accept Fit and so some reasons to reject views that do not accommodate it. However, it is worth addressing some remaining worries.

No Endorsement Necessary might initially seem unfriendly to subjectivists. Perhaps if Cocoa does not want the fitting attitudes, they are not good for her. However, as I mentioned in section 4, I believe that No Endorsement Necessary is compatible with subjectivist views. Desire theories, for example, accept that desire satisfaction is good for us, but the theory does not seem to require that we desire desire satisfaction. Endorsement of desire satisfaction is not necessary according to these views.

Moreover, it strikes me as methodologically suspect to first accept a view or views and then reject Fit because it is incompatible with them. This approach rejects from the start our pre-theoretical intuitions about the phenomenon instantiated in the problematic cases, the tests, and Fit. That subjectivism is incompatible with Fit and that Fit is incompatible with subjectivist views are conclusions of my arguments. It might be that we uncovered an objectivist phenomenon that is unfriendly to subjectivism, but that discovery should not be held against the view.

One might also worry about fittingness and blame. I have argued that when our attitudes do not fit their objects, we miss out on additional benefit. One might wonder whether that adds an additional source of blame and error for us. In some of the cases, Cocoa does not get an additional benefit, but nothing follows about whether she has done anything wrong, prudentially or otherwise. If Cocoa's situation in Achievement–Chocolate is due to a chip implanted in her brain unbeknownst to her, for example, she is completely blameless for her situation.

Finally, one might object to the idea that there are right and wrong ways to feel, enjoy, and even love. If I am right and Fit is a prudential phenomenon, the evaluative standard set by Fit is about the nature of well-being. This standard determines that there are right and wrong ways to relate to an object to get an additional benefit. That is just how the normative world is.

9. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that one gets an additional benefit when one's positive mental states fit their objects. I provided some reasons for that claim based on care, compassion, and rewards. When we care for somebody, we want their mental states to fit their objects. When someone's attitudes do not fit their objects, we feel compassion for them, and we see fitting attitudes as a suitable potential reward for some good actions. I pointed out that Fit involves the following two claims: (1) fittingness of mental states contributes to well-being regardless of whether one wants it (No Endorsement Necessary) and (2) mental states are not fungible; it matters what reactions we have toward what objects (Mental States Matter). Surprisingly, some first-order theories of well-being are incompatible with Fit.

Some hedonist views and desire theories cannot accept Fit. For these views, pleasure and desire satisfaction, respectively, are the sole source of well-being. As such, they cannot accept that there can be additional well-being when our reactions fit their objects. Objective list theories that allow that the connection between mental states and objects can matter for well-being and loving-the-good theories are best suited to accommodate Fit. As they are, these views are silent about Fit, but to accept it, they only need to add

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that we get extra well-being when our mental states fit their objects. This gives us pro tanto reason to prefer these theories over competing views.

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