

Desire satisfaction, death, and time

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ABSTRACT

Desire satisfaction theories of well-being and deprivationism about the badness of death face similar problems: desire satisfaction theories have trouble locating the time when the satisfaction of a future or past-directed desire benefits a person; deprivationism has trouble locating a time when death is bad for a person. I argue that desire satisfaction theorists and deprivation theorists can address their respective timing problems by accepting fusionism, the view that some events benefit or harm individuals only at fusions of moments in time. Fusionism improves on existing solutions to the timing problem for deprivationism because it locates death's badness at the same time as both the victim of death and death itself, and it accounts for all of the ways that death is bad for a person. Fusionism improves on existing solutions to the problem of temporally locating the benefit of future and past-directed desires because it respects several attractive principles, including the view that the intrinsic value of a time for someone is determined solely by states of affairs that obtain at that time and the view that intrinsically beneficial events benefit a person when they occur.

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1. Introduction

Deprivationism is the view that death can be bad for the person who dies, and that, when it is bad, this is because her death deprives her of more good life. The desire satisfaction theory of well-being is the view that it is prudentially intrinsically good for someone to have her desires satisfied. Deprivationism and the desire satisfaction view seem to share little in common, yet they face similar problems. Desire satisfaction theories have trouble locating the time when the satisfaction of a future or past-directed desire benefits a person. Deprivationism has trouble locating a time when death is bad for a person. These problems cast significant doubt on both theories.

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My plan is to kill two birds with one stone – to solve both problems by advancing a view I call *fusionism*, the view that some events benefit or harm individuals only at fusions of moments in time. Fusionism is a seldom-discussed theory of the temporal locations of benefits and harms.¹ In Section 2, I describe the problems that desire satisfaction theories and deprivationism face with respect to locating the time at which harms and benefits accrue to a person. In Section 3, I argue that fusionism is a superior solution to the problem of locating the time of the benefit of future and past-directed desire satisfaction. In Section 4, I argue that fusionism is a superior solution to the problem of locating a time when death is bad for a person. Section 5 concludes.

2. Two timing problems

2.1. Deprivationism and the timing problem

Epicurus famously posed a challenge to deprivationism.

Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation. So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since as long as we exist death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist. (Epicurus 1940, p. 31)

Philosophers interpret this passage as implying the following argument:

A

- (A1) Anything that is bad for a person is bad for her at a time.
- (A2) There is no time at which death is bad for the person who dies.
- (A3) Hence, death is not bad for the person who dies.²

(A1) is plausible because it is not clear how something could be bad for someone if it is *never* bad for her. Epicurus did not explicitly distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic evils, but I will understand his argument as applying to the claim that death is an extrinsic evil.³ (Extrinsically) bad events appear to be bad for people at particular times. If I break my leg, this is (extrinsically) bad for me at times after the event occurs when I am in pain or unable to do the things I would like to do. It stops being (extrinsically) bad for me once I am no longer in pain and have recovered my mobility. Extrinsically bad events that do not cause any unpleasant experiences seem to be bad at times too. Suppose that being deceived is intrinsically bad for a person. If a colleague causes me to be deceived about my own aptitudes by offering false praise for my work, this is (extrinsically) bad for me at all times when I have false beliefs about my aptitudes that I would not have had had my colleague not praised my work. A2 is plausible if we suppose that death coincides with its victim's ceasing to exist. Because a person does not exist after her death, and hence fails to possess a level of well-being after her death, death cannot affect a person's well-being after it occurs.⁴ Because an event cannot affect a person's well-being before it

occurs, if death does not have an effect on a person's well-being after it occurs, it is unclear *when* it can be bad for a person. Call this 'the timing problem.' It is worth clarifying a few points about the timing problem.

First, I am interested in defending a modest version of deprivationism in response to this problem. According to deprivationism, if death is bad, it is at least extrinsically bad because of the good life that it deprives a person of. It is natural to think that death is bad for someone, when it is bad for them, because they otherwise would have enjoyed more intrinsic goods. I will assume that the contemporary formulation of the Epicurean argument is an attempt to refute the claim that death is extrinsically bad for the person who dies, *qua* deprivation.⁵

Second, I will assume with the proponent of the Epicurean argument what is sometimes called 'the termination thesis': that a person ceases to exist when she dies.⁶ She does not continue to persist as her body. This view is incompatible with some theories of personal identity, but Epicurus assumes it, and it is generally taken for granted by participants in the debate about the Epicurean argument.

Third, the Epicurean argument does not entail that *dying* cannot be bad for the person who dies. Dying is a process that culminates in death. A person exists while she is in the process of dying. Thus, dying might be bad because it involves lots of suffering and prevents the person from enjoying goods that she would have enjoyed had she not been in the process of dying. There is no Epicurean problem here. I am also going to assume that the Epicurean argument applies to particular death events at particular times but not to the fact that someone dies *at all*. When answering the question whether death is bad because of what it deprives a person of, the relevant comparison is not with a life that goes on forever but with a life that goes on for a bit longer and then ends.⁷

Fourth, the question 'when is death bad for the person who dies?' should not be confused with two distinct questions. One question is 'when is the proposition that death is bad for the person who dies true?' The other question is 'when does the harmful event of death occur?' The first question asks when a certain proposition is true, not when an event (death) is bad for a person. On one plausible view, propositions have their truth values at all times, so the proposition *that death is bad for the person who dies* might be true at all times even though death is bad for the person who dies at some times but not others. The second question with which the Epicurean question might be confused asks when death occurs. The answer to this question need not concern us, because identifying a time at which death occurs would be unlikely to move the Epicurean from the position that death is not bad. What concerns the Epicurean seems to be that, *whenever* death occurs, its occurrence coincides with the beginning of its victim's non-existence. I will assume that the fundamental question about the timing of death's badness, the one that leads the Epicurean to deny that death is bad, is the following:

(Q) When is a subject *S* intrinsically worse off in the actual world *w* than *S* is at that time, or those times, in *w**, where *w** is the closest possible world to *w* in which the event (in this case death) does not occur? (Johansson 2012, 467; 2013, 260)

In responding to (Q), priorists, concurrentists, subsequentists, and eternalists agree that there is some time at which *S*'s death in *w* makes *S* intrinsically worse off in *w* than *S* is in *w**, where *w** is a world in which *S*'s death in *w* does not occur. Priorism is the view that death is bad before the person dies, say, by frustrating certain desires the person has while alive. Concurrentism is the view that death is bad at the time of its occurrence. Subsequentism is the view that death is bad for a person at times after it occurs. Eternalism is the view that death is bad for the person at all times or eternally.⁸ Atemporalists and Epicureans, on the other hand, agree that there is no time at which death is bad, but they disagree about what this implies for the badness of death. Atemporalists maintain that death is bad for the person who dies even though it is not bad for her at any time.⁹ I discuss the advantages of fusionism over these views in Section 4.

2.2. Desire satisfaction theories and the problem of temporal well-being

Desire satisfaction theories are one family of views about the basic constituents of well-being or 'value atoms.' A value atom is any state of affairs that is intrinsically good (for someone) in the most fundamental way. Value atoms are *non-derivatively* intrinsically good (for someone). That is, their intrinsic value is not solely a function of the intrinsic value of their proper parts.¹⁰ For example, hedonists would say that my being happy today and my being happy tomorrow is a derivatively intrinsically good state of affairs for me. It is good for me only in virtue of the intrinsic value of the value atoms that are its proper parts. Taken together, value atoms determine the overall intrinsic value of a world (for a person). Desire satisfaction theorists typically include restrictions on the sort of desire satisfaction that counts as a value atom. Chris Heathwood (2007), for example, argues that the satisfaction of a desire is a value atom only if the person desires the object intrinsically and *de re*. I will not take a position on the sort of restrictions a desire satisfaction theorist should adopt, because, with one exception, any desire satisfaction theory must confront the following time-related problem.

Well-being seems to be a largely temporal phenomenon. Just as things can go well or poorly for someone, considering her life as a whole, things can go well or poorly for someone at particular *times* during her life. Desire satisfaction theories seem ill-equipped to account for temporal well-being. Suppose that I desire in 2008 that I climb Mt. Everest in 2010. Suppose also that I climb Everest in 2010, but I no longer desire that I climb it. Or suppose that I strongly desire today that I not have made a fool of myself last night while out for drinks with my friends. Last night, I did not desire that I not make a fool of myself, when I

was too tipsy to care. If I benefit from the satisfaction of my desire that I not have made a fool of myself last night or my desire that I climb Everest in 2010, when does the satisfaction benefit me? When I have the desire? When the object of my desire obtains? Since neither the desire nor the object of the desire, considered on its own, is sufficient to secure a benefit, there is no reason to say that I benefit when one, but not the other, obtains. Moreover, because the desire and its object never coincide in time, this is some reason to think that the benefit of the desire satisfaction is itself atemporal. If the desire satisfaction theory cannot temporally locate the benefit of future or past-directed desire satisfaction, the desire satisfaction view has a problem accounting for temporal well-being. Call this 'the problem of temporal well-being.'

There is one desire satisfaction theory that does not face the problem of temporal well-being. Concurrentism about desire satisfaction is the view that a desire counts as satisfied only if the desire and its object coincide in time (Heathwood 2005, 490). This view precludes the possibility of future or past-directed desire satisfaction. Therefore, it precludes the possibility that future or past-directed desire satisfaction is prudentially intrinsically valuable for a person. Because it does not allow for future or past-directed desire satisfaction, concurrentism does not face the problem of temporal well-being.

I think we should resist concurrentism for two familiar reasons: first, concurrentism entails that future and past-directed desires cannot affect one's well-being, and this is an unattractive feature of the view. If I desire now that I not have made a fool of myself last night, it seems that I am better off if I did not in fact make a fool of myself last night. Many of our desires are directed toward the past or future in this way, and it would be appealing if the desire satisfaction view could account for their effect on our well-being.¹¹ Second, part of the appeal of desire satisfaction theories over simple hedonism is that they do not limit benefits to experienced events. Suppose I desire that my friends respect me but that they do not. I may never come to experience the fact that my friends do not respect me, yet this seems to be bad for me. It is a virtue of desire satisfaction theories that they can explain why. A concurrentist can of course accommodate these cases if they deny the requirement that only experienced events can benefit or harm a person. But, as Dorsey (2013, 157–158) points out, echoing Parfit (1984, 495), once it is granted that the *experience* of desire satisfaction is not necessary to receive a benefit, if concurrentists accept that *spatial* distance between the experience of the desirer and the object of her desire is irrelevant to whether her desire counts as satisfied, then why should *temporal* distance matter? So I think there are reasons to be unhappy with concurrentism, but one can understand my defense of fusionism about temporal well-being as conditional on concurrentism being false.¹²

Aside from concurrentism about desire satisfaction, two answers to the problem of temporal well-being have been offered in the recent literature. Dale Dorsey (2013) defends 'the time-of-desire-view.' According to this view, a person

benefits from the object of a future or past-directed desire at the time she has the desire but not when the object obtains. Eden Lin ([forthcoming](#)) defends what he calls 'asymmetrism', the view that satisfaction of future-directed desires benefits a person at the time the desired object obtains and that the satisfaction of past-directed desires benefits a person at the time of the desire. I will criticize the time-of-desire view and asymmetrism later in Section 3 in order to showcase the comparative advantages of fusionism.

3. Fusionism and the problem of temporal well-being

The problem of temporal well-being challenges the desire satisfaction theory to locate a time at which a person benefits from the satisfaction of past and future-directed desires. Except for a brief discussion below, I assume that desire satisfaction theories hold that value atoms are complex in the following sense: they are conjunctions of two states of affairs, neither of which is a value atom.¹³ The value atoms have the following form:

P1 My desiring that (not) B, and (not) B.

Sometimes a desire for an object will occur only before or after its object obtains.

P2 My desiring at t_1 that B obtain at t_3 , and B obtaining at t_3 .

Suppose that P2 is the state of affairs *My desiring in 2008 that I climb Mt. Everest in 2010; and my climbing Mt. Everest in 2010*. P2 does not obtain at t_1 or t_3 because the totality of its constituents does not obtain at either of those times, and the following principle is true.

Parts and Atoms If some but not all of the parts of a state of affairs exist (obtain) at a time t , then the state of affairs does not exist (obtain) at t .¹⁴

Parts and Atoms is uncontroversial. Parts and Atoms entails (1) that P2 does not obtain at t_1 or t_3 and (2) that P2 does not obtain at any moment other than t_1 or t_3 . If P2 obtains at any time, it obtains at a conjunction or *fusion* of times at which all of its parts obtain. The smallest possible fusion at which P2's parts obtain is the fusion of t_1 and t_3 .¹⁵

We can understand the problem of temporal well-being as a challenge to provide an answer to the following question: *when* does P2 benefit me? This question is the same question as (Q): when am I intrinsically better off in w than I am at that time or those times in w^* , where w^* is the nearest possible world where P2 does not obtain? We are here considering value atoms, the fundamental bearers of intrinsic value, so an answer to (Q) should respect the following principle.

Internalism The intrinsic value of a time for someone is determined solely by value atoms that obtain at that time (Bradley 2009, 18).

Internalism is an attractive principle; some consider it to be an axiom of value theory.¹⁶ It is appealing to think that the intrinsic value of a time for someone must be determined solely by things that exist at that time. Without Internalism we open the door to saying some strange things about intrinsic value. Consider,

for instance, the absurd claim that the pleasure I enjoy now does not benefit me intrinsically now, but only in the year 2020. Internalism explains why such claims are false. It would be better to solve the problem of temporal well-being while respecting Internalism.

Internalism restricts our answer to (Q) as follows: if I am better off at some time t in w than I am at t in w^* , then there must be some value atom that obtains at t in w but not at t in w^* . Parts and Atoms and Internalism together entail that I am not intrinsically better off at t_1 or t_3 than I would have been had P2 not obtained.

3.1. Fusionism and internalism

If Internalism is true, then fusionism is the best solution to the problem of temporal well-being. Fusionism says that P2 benefits me *at the fusion* of t_1 and t_3 . Formally:

Fusionism about temporal well-being Any state of affairs of the form *S desiring at t that O obtain at t** and *O obtaining at t** is intrinsically good for S at any fusion of times that includes t and t^* .

Fusionism about temporal well-being entails that I benefit from P2 at the fusion of t_1 and t_3 , but I do not benefit at t_1 or t_3 considered individually. The fusion of t_1 and t_3 is the smallest fusion at which P2 benefits me in the sense that it is the fusion with the fewest temporal parts, but it is not the only fusion at which I benefit from P2. I also benefit from P2 at any larger temporal fusion that has the fusion of t_1 and t_3 as a proper part (e.g. the fusion of t_1 , t_3 , and t_4).¹⁷ Perhaps we should say that I am benefitted only in a *derivative* sense at any of these larger fusions. I benefit at these larger fusions only because they include the fusion of t_1 and t_3 . If I am very happy on Monday, then I am intrinsically better off at the fusion of Monday and Tuesday, but this is true only derivatively in virtue of what happens on Monday.

Fusionism denies that I benefit at either t_1 or t_3 , so fusionism respects Internalism. The value for me of the fusion of t_1 and t_3 is determined solely by features that are intrinsic to the fusion. The complex state of affairs *my desiring in 2008 that I climb Everest in 2010 and my climbing Everest in 2010* is intrinsic to the fusion of 2008 and 2010. Fusionism thus avoids the implication that the value of a time for someone depends on features that are extrinsic to that time.

It may seem odd that a state of affairs could benefit someone at the fusion of times at which it obtains but not at either of the times that compose the fusion. This should not seem odd to desire satisfaction theorists, however, given what they must say about the structure of value atoms. For desire satisfaction theorists, value atoms are complex states of affairs. These complex states of affairs are composed of more basic states of affairs that are not themselves value atoms. They are thus already committed to the view that complex entities can have intrinsic value for individuals when their individual parts do not.

Fusionism solves the problem of *temporal* well-being only if fusions of times are temporally located. I have been assuming that fusions of times are times. I will now defend that assumption. Some fusions of times seem clearly to be times. A day is a time but also a fusion of a bunch of times that make it up. A day is a continuous fusion of each moment between its beginning and end. The satisfaction of a past or future-directed desire will, on the other hand, sometimes obtain at a *discontinuous* fusion of times. P2 obtains at a discontinuous fusion of times; there are times between t_1 and t_3 at which P2 has no parts.

Is a *discontinuous* fusion of times a time? It seems so. Ordinary events occur at discontinuous fusions of times. For example, baseball games may involve rain delays during which the game is stopped and later resumed. Some cricket matches take place intermittently over the course of an entire week. The match is occurring at some times during that week but not others. The match is not taking place when the bowler is at home, asleep in bed. It is better to say that the match has stopped and will resume again in the morning. Plays stop during intermissions and then resume for the next act.¹⁸ Academic courses might take place Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, but not Tuesdays or Thursdays. In these cases, one and the same event is spread out across discontinuous times. But these events are not timeless. There are analogous cases involving spatially located things. The United States of America is located at the fusion of its territories and states, which are spread out discontinuously in space. There are spaces in between its parts that are not a part of the U.S. Nevertheless, the U.S. territory is spatially located. Moreover, events *occur* at the fusion of discontinuous spatial locations. U.S. holidays occur at the fusion of its territories and states. If time is analogous to space, then, if we permit discontinuously spatially located events in our ontology – as we should – we should not be squeamish about discontinuously temporally located events.

One might attempt to explain away each example by denying that each is a single event that occurs at a discontinuous fusion of times. A baseball game isn't itself an *event* that occurs at a discontinuous fusion of times, but a *series* of distinct events (the first inning, the second inning, and so on) each of which occurs at continuous fusions of times. Whether we call the baseball game an 'event' or a 'series' is not of great importance – though I find it very strange to deny that a baseball game is an event – unless we were also to hold the view that a series of events is itself not located at any time. But this last view is implausible. There is something that one of the teams involved in the game *wins* and that game *occurs*. Whether it is an event or a series of events, it is not timeless. Finally, even if discontinuous fusions of times were not times, this would call at most for a minor modification of fusionism as stated above. The phrase 'any fusion of times' could be replaced with 'any continuous fusion of times.' Clearly, there are many such fusions, since any set of times that together constitute a discontinuous fusion will also be part of a continuous fusion.

3.2. Advantages of fusionism over other views

I have argued that fusionism offers a way to temporally locate the benefit of future and past-directed desire satisfaction while respecting Internalism. Existing answers to the problem of temporal well-being violate Internalism. According to Dorsey's time-of-desire view, a person benefits from the object of a future or past-directed desire at the time she has the desire (Dorsey 2013).¹⁹ On this view, P2 benefits me at t_1 , when I have the desire but before the desired object obtains. It is important to emphasize that, according to Dorsey, it is the desired *object* that is the value atom (Dorsey 2013, 152). What is good for me, in the most fundamental way, is the object of my desire. More on this below. The time-of-desire view violates Internalism because it entails that the intrinsic value of a time (t_1) for a person can depend on value atoms (my climbing of Everest) that are not intrinsic to that time. Whether I benefit at t_1 – how good t_1 is for me – depends on value atoms that obtain at t_3 . According to Lin's asymmetrism, the satisfaction of future-directed desires benefits a person at the time the desired object obtains, and the satisfaction of past-directed desires benefits a person at the time of the desire. On asymmetrism, P2 benefits me at t_3 , when B obtains but when I no longer have the desire. Asymmetrism also violates Internalism, but the way it does so depends on what the value atom is supposed to be. If the value atom is the complex state of affairs *my desiring in 2008 that I climb Everest in 2010 and my climbing Everest in 2010*, then asymmetrism violates Internalism because it entails that you benefit intrinsically from the satisfaction of your future-directed desire to climb Everest at t_3 , the time the desire's object obtains. So the intrinsic value for me of t_3 is determined by a value atom that does not obtain at t_3 (by Parts and Atoms) in violation of Internalism. For similar reasons, if the value atom is my desire, then asymmetrism will violate Internalism in cases involving future-directed desire satisfaction. If he says that the value atom is the object of my desire, then asymmetrism will violate Internalism in cases involving past-directed desire satisfaction. The only way for asymmetrism to avoid violating Internalism is to hold that desires are value atoms when they are directed at past objects but that the objects of desire are value atoms when desires are directed at future objects. This view seems implausible on its face.

Dorsey argues that the time-of-desire view is in fact compatible with Internalism. He says,

One might say that the time at which I climb Mount Everest is derivatively good for me, and is derivatively good for me because a value atom (my scaling of Everest) occurs at that time, respecting Internalism. Insofar as a proper part of this time is an object of my desire (i.e. my climbing of Mount Everest), we can perfectly well say, even on the time-of-desire view, that this particular time is derivatively intrinsically good for me on the basis of value atoms occurring at that time. What the time-of-desire view must say – which is not incompatible with Internalism – is that the time at which I climb Mount Everest is intrinsically good for me at a different time. If, say, during 2008 I desire to climb Mount Everest before I die, and I accomplish this feat in 2010, 2010 is derivatively intrinsically good for me in 2008: one intrinsic

property of 2010 – one of the states of affairs that make up 2010 – is intrinsically good for me in 2008, the time at which I desired to climb Mount Everest. Nothing about this is incompatible with Internalism. The time-of-desire view can hold that 2010 is good for me only on the basis of value atoms occurring during 2010, which is precisely what Internalism requires. (Dorsey 2013, 169)

The success of Dorsey's argument depends on his 'Hobbesian' view that the object of one's desire – *my climbing Everest* – is a value atom (Dorsey (2013, 152)). This requires rejecting the 'Moorean' view I have been assuming: that the value atoms posited by desire satisfaction theories are complex, consisting of a desire and its object. Following Bradley (2009, 19), I think we should resist the Hobbesian view and hence the claim that the state of affairs *my climbing Mount Everest* is a value atom. If my climbing Everest is a value atom, then it involves the instantiation of a *fundamentally* good-making property. But the desire satisfaction view says that my climbing Everest in 2010 is good for me only because I desire it in 2008 (or at some other time). This means that whether my climbing Mount Everest is good for me depends on a state of affairs that is not a proper part of my climbing Mount Everest. Thus, my climbing Everest fails to be a value atom, because it fails to involve the instantiation of a *fundamentally* good-making property. The value atom must consist of my climbing Everest *and* my desiring to climb Everest.²⁰ If we think that value atoms must involve the instantiation of fundamentally good-making properties, Dorsey's argument for the claim that the time-of-desire view is compatible with Internalism fails; it depends on the false claim that 2010 is (derivatively) intrinsically good for me in virtue of having a value atom as one of its parts. If the time-of-desire view is incompatible with Internalism, then so is asymmetrism. Asymmetrism locates the benefit of future or past-directed desire satisfaction at either the time of the desire or the time its object obtains (but not at the fusion of those times). Asymmetrism will always violate internalism by making the intrinsic value of a time depend on value atoms that are extrinsic to that time.

Asymmetrism and the time-of-desire view violate a second attractive principle:

Temporal Independence A person's well-being at a time in no way depends on what happens at other times.

Both asymmetrism and the time-of-desire view are incompatible with Temporal Independence. Because of this, the time-of-desire view in particular must say some strange things about well-being at a time. The time-of-desire view must say, 'of a person raised in adversity, that his youth was not so bad after all, simply because his childhood hopes were eventually fulfilled later in life' (Velleman 1991, 340).²¹ Or suppose that our lives in 2008 are identical, but you have one of your 2008 desires satisfied in 2010 when you climb Everest. I would have no reason to be envious of your life in 2008.²² But if the time-of-desire view is true, then I would have reason to be envious in 2008, because things are going better for you then than they are for me.

So fusionism is compatible with Internalism and Temporal Independence. The time-of-desire view and asymmetrism are not compatible with these principles. I will briefly discuss three further advantages of fusionism. The first is that fusionism locates the benefit a person receives from the satisfaction of her desire at the time (i.e. the fusion of times) when desire satisfaction occurs. It is highly attractive to say that intrinsically valuable events benefit a person precisely when they happen. Take an experience of pleasure for instance. If an instance of pleasure benefits a person intrinsically, it benefits her precisely *the time at which it occurs* and no other time. A desire satisfaction theorist should be able to say that having your desire satisfied benefits you *when* the desire satisfaction occurs. Concurrentism is attractive partly because it allows us to say this by restricting desire satisfaction to cases where the desire and its object occur at the same moment. Fusionism also allows us to restrict the timing of the benefit of desire satisfaction to the time of its occurrence, but the time of occurrence is a fusion of moments rather than a discrete moment. Fusionism says that a person benefits from the satisfaction of her desire at the fusion of times at which the desire and its object obtain. This allows a desire satisfaction theorist to say, attractively, that the satisfaction of a future or past-directed desire benefits a person intrinsically at precisely the time (i.e. the fusion) at which it occurs. The time-of-desire view and asymmetrism cannot say this.

Fusionism is supported by a further attractive principle. Lin argues that one reason to prefer asymmetrism over the time-of-desire view is that asymmetrism, but not the time-of-desire view, is consistent with the following principle.

First Principle You do not receive a particular benefit at t unless, at t , all of the necessary conditions on your receiving that benefit have been met. (Lin [forthcoming](#), 8)

Fusionism is compatible with the First Principle. Suppose that a condition has been met at a time t if and only if it either is met at t or was met at some time prior to t . According to desire satisfaction theories, the necessary conditions on receiving a benefit are that you desire an object and that the object obtains. Both of the necessary conditions are met on your receiving a benefit any fusion at which the desire and its object occur. The necessary conditions have been met at the fusion because they both obtain at the fusion.

Finally, fusionism is compatible with 'the resonance constraint' on personal good, which is taken up by both Lin ([forthcoming](#)) and Dorsey (2013). Dorsey quotes Peter Railton's clear articulation of this constraint.

... it does seem to me to capture an important feature of the concept of intrinsic value to say that what is intrinsically valuable for a person must have a connection with what he would find in some degree compelling or attractive, at least if he were rational and aware. It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any such way to engage him (Railton 1986, 9).

The resonance constraint is a significant motivation for desire satisfaction theories. They are attractive in part because they respect the thought that one must

possess a favorable attitude toward that which is good for her. It is plausible that, if we accept the general version of the resonance constraint, we should accept a more specific version (Dorsey 2013, 156–157). Lin calls this the ‘Synchronic Resonance Constraint.’

Synchronic Resonance Constraint You do not benefit from a particular event, e , at time t unless, at t , you have a favorable attitude toward e (Lin forthcoming, 18–19).

If the Synchronic Resonance Constraint is true, it poses a problem for asymmetrism, because asymmetrism entails that you can benefit from climbing Everest at a time when you do not desire it.²³ The Synchronic Resonance Constraint does not pose a problem for fusionism. According to fusionism, climbing Everest benefits you – derivatively, in virtue of being one part of a complex value atom – only at the fusion of times at which you (i) climb Everest and (ii) desire that you climb Everest. Any fusion of times at which the object of a desire benefits a person is one at which both the desire and its object obtain, as required by the Synchronic Resonance Constraint.

I have offered a cumulative case for fusionism about temporal well-being. I showed that fusionism is compatible with Internalism, Temporal Independence, and the attractive thought that an intrinsically valuable event benefits a person at precisely the time at which it occurs. The time-of-desire view and asymmetrism are not compatible with those principles. Fusionism also respects the First Principle, which poses a problem for the time-of-desire view. Finally, fusionism respects the Synchronic Resonance Constraint, which poses a problem for asymmetrism.

4. Fusionism about the badness of death

I will now consider a further application of fusionism, as a reply to the Epicurean argument that death is not bad for the one who dies. Fusionism about the badness of death holds that death is bad for the deceased at *fusions* of times even though it is not bad at any moment. This is a different view than fusionism about temporal well-being, which I defended in the previous section. Fusionism about temporal well-being is a view about the timing of the benefit of value atoms, the states of affairs that are intrinsically good or bad for us in the most fundamental way. Fusionism about the badness of death concerns the timing of the *extrinsic* badness of death.²⁴

Fusionism about the badness of death says that S is intrinsically worse off in w at some fusion $F[a, b]$ than S is at $F[a, b]$ in w^* , where a = some times before S 's death at t_0 when S is still alive, $b = t_1 - t_n$, times after S 's death in w^* , where w^* is the nearest possible world in which S 's death does not occur at t_0 , and where $t_1 - t_n$ are those times at which states of affairs obtain in w^* that ground the fact that S is better off in w^* than in w .²⁵ If we assume that, had S not died at t_0 in w , S would have gone on to live happily for some period of time $t_1 - t_n$, then $t_1 - t_n$ will include times when S is alive and possesses a positive level of well-being in

w^* . Notice, however, that if fusionism about temporal well-being is true, then there can be cases in which death is bad for S at a fusion of times that includes times after S 's death, even though S 's level of well-being is not positive at any of the times after S 's death in the nearest possible world where S 's death does not occur. Suppose that fusionism about temporal well-being is true. Suppose also that S 's death at t_0 in w prevents the object of S 's future-directed desire from obtaining in w , where S has the desire before but not after t_0 in w , and where the object obtains (only) after t_0 in w^* . Finally, suppose that S 's death makes no other difference to the satisfaction or frustration of S 's desires. Then S 's death is bad for S at a fusion of times, some parts of which are located after t_0 . But S 's well-being level in w^* is not positive at any time after t_0 .

Fusionism answers the question, 'when is S intrinsically worse off in w than S is at that time, or those times, in w^* , where w^* is the closest world in which her death in w does not occur?' as follows:

Fusionism about the badness of death S is intrinsically worse off at some fusion $F[a, b]$ in w than she is at $F[a, b]$ in w^* where w^* is the closest world to w in which her death in w does not occur.

On this view, death is bad for a person at $F[a, b]$. Because we are assuming the termination thesis, some of the times in $F[a, b]$ will be ones at which S does not exist in w . It does not in general seem problematic, however, to say that someone exists at a fusion of times so long as S exists at some of the times that make it up. If I die at noon on Thursday, this does not imply that I do not exist on Thursday. I simply fail to exist at *every* time of which Thursday is composed.²⁶ There will ordinarily be many fusions in w at which S is worse off than S is in w^* . Suppose that S lives for 40 years and then dies at t . Had S not died, S would have lived happily for 20 more years and then died. Some of the fusions at which S 's is worse off than S would have been had S not died at t will include all 40 years of S 's life. Other fusions will include only the final year of her life. So fusionism entails that there are *many* times at which S 's death is bad for S insofar as there are many fusions at which S is worse off than S otherwise would have been. This can be true even though there is no *moment* within any of these fusions at which S 's level of well-being is lower than it otherwise would have been.

4.1. Advantages of fusionism over competing solutions to the timing problem

Fusionism avoids a common objection to subsequentism: that death cannot be bad for someone at times after her death because a person cannot be intrinsically worse off at a time if she doesn't exist at that time.²⁷ Fusionism does not locate the badness of death at times after death, so it is not open to this objection. The person who dies exists at fusions of times before and after her death, even though she fails to exist at some of the times that compose the fusion. Therefore, she can be worse off at those fusions.

Fusionism is also superior to priorism and concurrentism. Priorism holds that death is bad for a person at times before she dies because death frustrates certain projects and desires that she had prior to her death. This seems to have implausible implications about the badness of death in certain cases. If *S*'s death makes no difference to the satisfaction or frustration of *S*'s actual desires then the priorist who accepts the Epicurean premise (A1) must say, implausibly, that *S*'s death is not bad for *S*. The priorist must say this even if, had *S* not died at *t*, then *S* would have acquired desires after *t*, which would have been satisfied.²⁸ Priorism also presupposes the time-of-desire view, which, I have argued, is implausible.

Concurrentism locates the time of the badness of death at the *moment* one dies. But there may not be anything bad about the moment of one's death. Suppose one dies painlessly in her sleep and that she would have been unconscious at that moment even had she not died then. Because she is deprived of nothing at the moment of her death, and because she suffers no pain at the moment of her demise, concurrentism entails that her death is not bad for her at any time. It is plausible that many deaths are like this. For many actual deaths, then, concurrentism will entail either the atemporalist conclusion that death is bad for the person who dies at no time or the Epicurean conclusion that death is not bad for the person at all. I say more about the disadvantages of atemporalism in the next section. Unlike priorism and concurrentism, fusionism does not leave anything out of its explanation of the time of the badness of death. The fusion at which a deceased person is intrinsically worse off includes all of the times in virtue of which things would have gone better for the deceased had they not died. Finally, as pointed out in my initial description of fusionism about the badness of death, *if* death were bad partly in virtue of frustrating the desires of the living, fusionism could account for this by including the fusion of the time of the desire and the time at which the desired object would have obtained had the person not died among the times at which a person's death is bad for her.

4.2. The uniformity objection

One might object that locating the timing of the badness of death at a fusion of times makes the timing of death's badness unlike the timing of any other evil. We must locate death's badness at fusions of times whereas we can locate the badness of other extrinsically bad events at non-fused times. This 'uniformity objection' is sometimes raised against atemporalism, but fusionism seems open to the objection as well.²⁹ Here, however, fusionism about temporal well-being helps fusionism about the badness of death. If the benefit of the satisfaction of future and past-directed desires is located at the fusion of the time at which the desire obtains and the time its object obtains, then the extrinsic badness of some non-death-related evils will be located at fusions of times as well. If someone frustrates my 2008 desire to climb Everest in 2010 by preventing me

from climbing Everest in 2010, they deprive me of something that would have been intrinsically good for me at the fusion of 2008 and 2010. Depriving someone of something that would have been intrinsically valuable for them at a fusion is extrinsically bad for them at that fusion. Thus, fusionism about temporal well-being allows for non-death events that are extrinsically bad for individuals at fusions. This goes some way toward addressing the uniformity objection to fusionism about the badness of death. This is an advantage of fusionism over atemporalism, because atemporalism cannot address the uniformity objection this way. To make a similar reply to the uniformity objection, the atemporalist would have to argue that the benefit of the satisfaction of future and past-directed desires is not located at any time. Though this reply would address the uniformity objection, it would not move the Epicurean to abandon his position. An Epicurean will reject the claim that a person timelessly benefits from the satisfaction of future and past-directed desires for the same reasons he will reject the claim that death is timelessly bad for the person who dies.³⁰

But the uniformity objection suggests a further objection to fusionism. Perhaps an Epicurean will accept not only (A1) but the more precise:

(A1*) Anything that is bad for a person is bad for that person at some moment.

An Epicurean who accepts (A1*) and a suitably modified (A2*) will be unmoved by the fusionist's response to the initial formulation of the Epicurean argument. Fusionism concedes that there is no moment at which death is bad for its victim.

Adopting (A1*) seems to ask us to address a different concern than the one captured by the initial formulation of the Epicurean argument. That motivation, I take it, was the observation that, whenever death occurs, its occurrence coincides with the beginning of its victim's non-existence. This seems to entail that there is no *time* at which a person fares worse than she would have fared had her death not occurred. Fusionism addresses this concern. But suppose the Epicurean's specific concern is that there must be some *moment* at which a person's death is bad for her. In reply a fusionist can contend that, depending on what we take 'moment' to refer to in (A1*), either no event is such that it is bad for a person at a moment or (A1*) is consistent with fusionism. If internalism is true then, a value atom *v* makes a difference to *S*'s well-being at a moment *m* only if the value atom obtains (in its entirety) at *m*. An event *e* that deprives *S* of *v* is extrinsically bad for *S* at *m* only if *v* would have obtained (in its entirety) at *m* had *e* not occurred. Hedonism is in the best position to account for well-being at a moment, because it holds that the value atoms are simple states of affairs. Ben Bradley takes this to be a significant advantage of hedonism over desire satisfaction theories of well-being, which, in virtue of the complex character of their value atoms, have difficulty accommodating momentary well-being. Bradley writes, 'the [moment] a pleasure is good for me is just the [moment] of the pleasure, and pleasures are in principle locatable [at moments]' (Bradley 2009, 18).³¹ Suppose that a moment is an indivisible temporal atom. On this

view, moments are infinitesimally *brief*. It's not even clear that we can say that moments are temporally extended. But, plausibly, an experience of pleasure is not infinitesimally brief. It must *span* an interval or period of time. If moments are temporal atoms, then, even if hedonism were true, there would not be any events such that they are (intrinsically or extrinsically) bad for a person at moments. (A1*) would therefore imply that no events were bad for anyone. I take this to be a reductio of (A1*). On the other hand, if moments are 'nothing but rather short periods,'³² then (A1*) is consistent with the view that events can be extrinsically bad for individuals at fusions. Indeed it *requires* that bad events are bad for individuals at fusions, but it arbitrarily restricts the candidate fusions to very short continuous ones. I see no reason to privilege very short continuous fusions over other sorts of fusions. Therefore, whether moments are indivisible temporal atoms or very brief periods, (A1*) is implausible.

Atemporalism seems to enjoy one advantage compared with fusionism. Consider a possible world in which a person dies at the last moment in time. After that moment, time ceases to exist. It seems that death would be bad for a person who dies at the last moment in time. In this case, either a fusionist must deny that death is bad, because there are no times after death to create a fusion with the times of death's occurrence or the times before death's occurrence, or they must accept that death is atemporally bad in this case.

A fusionist can reply to the end of time case several different ways. First, a fusionist might contend that such cases are impossible because time is necessarily infinite. If time has an end, a fusionist can point out that only in ordinary cases does a person's death *seem* to be bad for her at a time, just as other events seem to be bad at times. So only in these ordinary cases should try to accommodate this intuition. But in the very unusual 'end of time' case, we have no clear intuition that death is temporally bad for the victim. Nor do we have a clear intuition that any deprivation, such as losing one's best friend, is bad at any time in the 'end of time' case.³³ So, the fusionist can grant that, in *that* kind of case, the person's death – and any other deprivation – is atemporally bad for her. This requires her to deny that (A1) is necessarily true, but that is harmless. (A1) is true only for events that occur at times other than the last moment in time. Finally, a fusionist might deny that person's death is bad for her in the end of time case. Only in ordinary cases does a person's death *seem* to be bad for her, just as other events seem to be bad. So only in these ordinary cases should try to accommodate this intuition. But in the very unusual 'end of time' case, we have no clear intuition that death is bad for the victim. Nor do we have a clear intuition that any deprivation, such as losing one's best friend, is bad in the 'end of time' case. Accepting the implication that death is not bad in the end of time case would thus be a small cost for fusionism, for it can account for the badness of death in any cases that concern us in the actual world, cases about which we have firmer intuitions.

5. Conclusion

I have argued that fusionism is superior to asymmetrism and the time-of-desire view as a solution to the problem of temporal well-being for desire satisfaction theories. Unlike the time-of-desire view and asymmetrism, fusionism is compatible with Internalism and Temporal Independence. It is also compatible with the view that intrinsically beneficial events benefit a person at precisely the time at which they occur and the view that an event benefits a person when and only when all of the necessary conditions for the benefit obtain. I then applied fusionism as a reply to the Epicurean challenge concerning the extrinsic badness of death. Fusionism allows deprivationists to locate death's victim and death's badness at the same time as death itself and to account for all of the ways that death is bad. Because fusionism solves otherwise intractable problems for deprivationism and desire satisfaction theories, deprivationists and desire satisfaction theorists should consider embracing fusionism.

Notes

1. The only mention of fusionism is found in a brief passage in Johansson (2012, 475) who both introduces the view and coins the term 'fusionism'.
2. Hershenov (2007) defends this very argument. Johansson (2013) understands the Epicurean argument this way.
3. Epicurus himself seemed to have intrinsic badness in mind in formulating his argument. See Bradley (2004) for a discussion of Epicurus's failure to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic badness.
4. But see Bradley (2009) and Feit (2016) for defenses of the view that the dead have levels of well-being. See Johansson (2013) and Purves (2016) for objections to Bradley. See Carlson and Johansson (forthcoming) for a reply to Feit.
5. Draper (2004) claims that Epicurus was a deprivationist and so would not have taken deprivationism to be a target of his argument.
6. Feldman (1992) coined the term 'the termination thesis'. He argues against the termination thesis in his (1992) and (2000b).
7. The fact that someone dies at all might be *good* if an immortal life would be worse than a mortal life. Williams (1973) is the *locus classicus* of this view.
8. Feldman (1991, 1992, 154) defends eternalism. Priorism is defended in Feinberg (1984); Li (1999); Luper (2007, 2009, ch. 6); and Pitcher (1984). Subsequentism is defended by Bradley (2004, 2009); Feit (2002); and Grey (1999).
9. See Silverstein (2010) for a defense of atemporalism.
10. Bradley (2009, 5) introduces the term 'value atom'. My description follows his. His description of the nature of value atoms is close to Feldman's (2000a) description of 'basic intrinsic value states'.
11. Bradley (2009, 23) and Dorsey (2013, 157) make this point.
12. In the interest of avoiding terminological confusion, notice that concurrentism about desire satisfaction is logically independent of concurrentism about the timing of the badness of death. The former is a restriction on when intrinsically beneficial events can obtain; the latter view is about when an extrinsically bad event (death) is bad for a person. I say more below about concurrentism about the timing of the badness of death.

13. The desire satisfaction view is one example of a correspondence theory. On correspondence theories, all value atoms have two parts. One part 'consists of someone having a particular propositional attitude' and the other part 'consists of the propositional object of that attitude being true or false' (Bradley 2009, 17). Achievementism is another correspondence theory. Achievementists hold that achievements (pursuing and obtaining a goal) are among the things that are intrinsically good for people. Achievementism entails that it is intrinsically good for me to succeed in my efforts. Because correspondence theories all posit the existence of value atoms that have two states of affairs as parts, one consisting of a propositional attitude and the other consisting of its object being true or false, and because these two states of affairs may not obtain at the same moment, all correspondence theories face the problem of temporal well-being.
14. 'Obtain' is included in parentheses so that no questions are begged against the view that states of affairs are abstract entities. On this view, while states of affairs *obtain* at some times but not others, they do not *exist* at any time (or place).
15. P2 obtains at other fusions as well. It obtains at any fusion of times that includes the fusion of t_1 and t_3 . I say more below about the relevance of this fact for what we should say about the time at which I *benefit* from P2.
16. E.g. (Broome [2004, 101]; [Bradley 2009, 18–27]). Bruckner (2013) and Dorsey (2013) reject it. Bradley (2009, 19) argues that Internalism follows from a Moorean view of intrinsic value. Dorsey (2013) and Johansson (2013, 263) argue that it does not.
17. In discussing the extrinsic badness of death, Johansson (2012) points out that there might be 'many fusions that are worse for me than they would have been if my death had not occurred'. He also points out that some of these fusions are very 'scattered (e.g. the fusion of 1189 and July 4, 2044)'. More on this below.
18. I thank Benjamin Mitchell-Yellin for suggesting some of these examples to me.
19. Bruckner (2013) also adopts this view for future-directed desires. Bigelow, Campbell, and Pargetter (1990) assume this view.
20. See Bradley (2009, 27–28) for a similar objection to the view that the object of the desire is a value atom.
21. Johansson (2014, 159) describes this example as a problem for the time-of-desire view.
22. Johansson (2013, 263) offers a similar example.
23. Lin (forthcoming, 18) denies that the general version of the resonance constraint implies the synchronic version. He also points out that the time-of-desire view violates a slightly modified version of the Synchronic Resonance Constraint.
24. It is worth noting that fusionism about temporal well-being entails fusionism about the badness of death if deprivationism is true. If death is extrinsically bad for someone who dies because of the goods of which it deprives her, and some of those goods would have obtained only at fusions of times, then we must locate the extrinsic badness of death at the fusions at which those goods would have obtained.
25. Johansson (2012, 474–476) briefly entertains a very similar answer to the timing question.
26. In certain conversational contexts, existence claims can seem infelicitous when they are true in virtue of a person's existing at some but not all of the moments that compose a fusion. Consider, for instance, the claim that I exist during the drafting of the Articles of the Confederation because I exist at the fusion of times between the 16th and 20th centuries and the Articles of Confederation were

- drafted in the eighteenth century. But I believe claims like this are infelicitous because they ordinarily imply that I exist *at the moment* the articles were drafted.
27. Several authors have noted this problem for subsequentism (see e.g. [Luper 2007, 2009]; [Johansson 2013, 265–266; 2014, 151–153]; [Purves 2015]).
 28. Johansson (2013, 261–262) and Luper (2009, 136) raise this objection to priorism.
 29. E.g. ([Bradley 2004; 2009, 74–78]; Feit [2002, 361]). Johansson (2013, 267) coins the term ‘uniformity objection’.
 30. Johansson (2014, 162–163) acknowledges that an Epicurean will be unmoved by this reply. Johansson offers other replies to the uniformity objection elsewhere (2012, 266–270; 2014, 262–263).
 31. Parentheses are added. Bradley uses the term ‘time(s)’, but, given that the passage occurs in the context of arguing for the superiority of hedonism over correspondence theories on the grounds that correspondence theories cannot account for well-being at a moment, it is clear that he thinks that hedonism *can* account for momentary well-being.
 32. McMahan (2002, 180).
 33. I thank Jens Johansson for helping me to work through this issue. Johansson (2013, 269) discusses the example of dying at the last point in time in the course of replying to the uniformity objection to atemporalism.

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