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The Radical Pluralist Theory of Well-Being: Towards a New Pluralist Conception of Welfare

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Abstract

The philosophy of well-being has generally assumed that only a weak form of pluralism could be true about prudential value: one which posits a plurality of constituents of well-being. The main exponent of theories espousing this form of pluralism are pluralist objective list theories. In this thesis I argue for the need to explore stronger forms of pluralism about well-being. In Chapter 1, I begin by arguing that pluralist objective list theories should develop an account of ill-being. Doing so, however, reveals a particular phenomenon about the relation between objective list goods and ills. This is that they appear to form pairs: each good is a counterpart to a particular and distinct ill (and vice versa), e.g. pleasure and pain, such that the two stand in a special relationship to each other. In Chapter 2 it is argued that objective list theories lack the ability to appropriately explain pairing. In particular, though they can develop accounts of how members of a pair are related, they cannot explain why the pairing relation obtains. This, it is argued, is a serious problem for objective list theories. Following this, in Chapter 3 I argue that perfectionism, an alternative objectivist account of welfare, provides an intuitive explanation of (most of) the objective list theory’s goods and ills as well as of the nature of pairing. However, perfectionism itself encounters a serious problem in its inability to appropriately account for the goodness of pleasure and badness of pain. A broader, eudaimonist solution is then introduced that can save some degree of the perfectionist view. However, this is itself heavily suggestive of the stronger pluralist theories defended by this thesis. Chapter 4 introduces and explains Heathwood’s distinction between different kinds of monism and pluralism. In particular, I employ his proposed notion of radical pluralism in articulating a radical pluralist theory of well-being. On top of postulating a plurality of goods and ills, this theory proposes a plurality of kinds of prudential values (or value properties), i.e., that different goods and ills are good and bad for us in different ways. This will be shown to not only survive initial scrutiny, but also explain pairing in an intuitive way: by postulating a distinct value property for each good-ill pair,
such that each good-ill pair is good and bad for us in the same kind of way, while other pairs are good and bad for us in different kinds of ways. In Chapter 5 I introduce a serious problem facing the radical pluralist theory of well-being, arising from the threat of the incomparability of instances of different values. This would mean that, under radical pluralism, instances of achievement cannot be compared with instances of pleasure. As such bearers of prudential value do seem to be comparable, this constitutes an important obstacle for the theory to overcome. In addressing this, I consider both incomparabilist and comparabilist solutions, dismissing the former and developing a version of the latter based on the articulation of normative relations between such prudential values and of their grounds. Chapter 6 turns to argumentation in favour of the radical pluralist theory of well-being, primarily focused on arguing that there are cases where we can rationally regret not choosing the worse of two (or more) options, even when both options are exclusively prudentially valuable. This, it is maintained, cannot be explained by weaker forms of pluralism, but only by stronger ones like radical pluralism. Finally, in Chapter 7 the radical pluralist theory is applied to three important issues in current discussions of well-being: the formulation of explanatory theories, the variabilism-invariabilism debate, and the problem of alienation faced by at least some objectivist theories. In each case, it is argued that the radical pluralist theory offers novel approaches and insights into these questions, further providing a case for its careful consideration in future discussions of well-being.
Lay Summary

This thesis explores an important topic within the philosophy of well-being – the field that attempts to explain what makes our lives go well or poorly, how they do so, and why. In particular, it focuses on pluralist accounts of well-being, which posit that, in some sense, there are many components to our living good or bad lives. The current way pluralism in this field is understood is in terms of whether there is a single or many basic goods. A monist will argue that there is only one kind of thing that is good for us (e.g. pleasure), while pluralists will argue that two or more kinds of things are good for us (e.g. pleasure, understanding, achievement, and friendship). In this thesis I argue that this does not adequately explain important aspects of well-being and its variety. Instead, I propose a different way we can understand the pluralist claim about the components of well-being: not in terms of how many basic goods there are, but in terms of how many ways there are in which things can be good for us. Based on this I articulate a theory of well-being which holds that there are different dimensions of well-being, each of which stands for a distinct way in which our lives can go well or poorly (e.g. experientially or socially).

The first three chapters of this thesis focus on undermining the current way of understanding pluralism in well-being. The first two chapters focus on the fact that current pluralist theories fail to offer an adequate account of ills (what makes our life go poorly) alongside their account of goods. Chapter 3 discusses a solution to this problem in terms of a further theory of well-being, perfectionism. However, I argue that perfectionism cannot account for the goodness of pleasure and badness of pain, and therefore cannot provide a suitable account of well-being. The final four chapters, on the other hand, focus on the kind of pluralism I argue for. Chapter 4 introduces the proposed understanding of pluralism, outlining my pluralist theory of well-being, including the formulation of four distinct dimensions
of well-being. Chapter 5 considers an important objection to my theory, while Chapters 6 and 7 focus on arguments in favour of the theory.

Not only does the pluralist theory I present introduce a new way of understanding well-being, it also involves a number of practical consequences. For example, it frames certain choices and situations in terms of a *conflict* in values. This not only has an impact on theoretical considerations in the philosophy of well-being, but also implies certain practical outcomes: that we should think about our choices not so much in terms of which option is better for us, but in terms of which value we should prioritise in the wider context of our current and expected future quality of life. The theory argued for in this thesis, then, offers a promising new approach to the field, one that I maintain is worth exploring in some detail.
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Introduction.

Since their inception, objective list theories of well-being have received increasing attention and support, especially in recent years, becoming the standard-bearer for objectivist theories of prudential value. Similarly, pluralist objective list theories are the most prominent example of pluralism within the philosophy of well-being. However, these and other theories of welfare have tended to assume only a particular conception of pluralism, while ignoring other, stronger pluralist claims. In this thesis, I argue towards an objectivist theory of well-being espousing a strong form of pluralism: Heathwood’s (2015) radical pluralism, as well as the associated value property pluralism. This, I argue, avoids some of the explanatory limitations that current pluralist objective list theories, as well as perfectionism, face, while offering compelling explanations of a number of issues in the field. Therefore, I maintain that this radical pluralist theory is a promising new avenue for inquiry in the philosophy of well-being.

Section 1 – Preliminaries and clarifications.

I briefly clarify here how throughout this thesis I will understand “well-being” and thus what the scope of my arguments will be. First, note that there are a number of related notions and terms which are used synonymously with “well-being”. These include “good for”, “prudential value”, “welfare”, and “quality of life”. Among these, “prudential value” is in need of further clarification. Within the philosophy of well-being, ethics, and value theory, this has been used as a technical term to refer to the kind of value with which well-being is concerned. Hence, when something is constitutive of our well-being it is said to be prudentially valuable, or good for us rather than, say, morally valuable. Throughout the coming chapters I will use these terms interchangeably, and, therefore, the following comments should be understood as applying to all of these.
Second, the concern of the philosophy of well-being is in identifying and explaining what is non-instrumentally good for us, as opposed to what is merely instrumentally good for us or good in some other sense (e.g. morally). That is, where some \( x \) is instrumentally good for a subject \( s \), \( x \) is good for \( s \) in virtue of being conducive or otherwise leading to some further valuable \( y \). When \( y \)’s value for \( s \) cannot be explained in terms of the value of some further thing, \( y \) is said to be non-instrumentally good for \( s \).

While a thorough analysis of the concept of well-being falls outside of the scope of this thesis, the following will provide a brief introduction to the topic of well-being. Our intuitive notion of well-being will serve as a good starting point. This concerns what we might term the self-interest of a subject. That is, something that is prudentially valuable for a subject is something that improves a subject’s life or part thereof for them. This highlights an important feature of welfare: its relational nature (Railton 1986; Rosati 1996, 2008; Korsgaard 2013). Most authors conceive of prudential value in terms of a dyadic relational value property \( G \) standing between a valuable \( x \) and a prudential subject \( s \), such that if \( x \) is good for \( s \), then \( xGs \). This is to be contrasted with monadic value properties such as moral value or what Sumner (1996) refers to as Perfectionist value.

To conclude these preliminaries, there are a number of controversies over the scope of well-being. Some of these concern conceptual questions, while others are best understood as raising substantive issues, but the boundary between the two matters is not always clear-cut. Kagan (1992), for instance, highlights a

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1Note that some deny this, such as Moore (1903) and Scanlon (1998), though the latter’s commitments are more unclear (e.g. see Rønnow-Rasmussen 2007, p406 footnote 2).

2Note that in later chapters I will mostly refer to value properties in terms of the capitalised \( V \), such that \( xVs \). This is in order to remain neutral as to whether \( x \) is good or bad for \( s \).

3None of this should be understood as denying the possibility of non-prudential relational values (e.g. Rønnow-Rasmussen 2007, Korsgaard 2013), though I will mostly ignore it for the sake of simplicity.
dialectic within the philosophy of well-being which alternates between restricting and expanding the limits of welfare. For example, we might doubt that things can be non-instrumentally good or bad for us when they are external to our minds (mental statism) or when we have no attitudes towards them (subjectivism, or internalism under Rosati 1996 – I will be employing the former henceforth, see next section). Though in some cases these may be a matter of substantive conceptions of well-being, we should not exclude that, rightly or wrongly, resistance to expansion beyond any of these limits may instead depend on a particular concept of well-being. Unless relevant, I will set these concerns to a side to permit as wide a scope as possible.

Section 2 – Objective List Theories.

This section briefly characterises objective list theories (henceforth, OLTs). Fletcher (2016, p148) notes the difficulty in precisely defining OLTs, in part due to the variety of theories which fall within this category. Therefore, I begin with a simple, general, characterisation before focusing on the specific features of the particular views with which I will be primarily concerned. OLTs provide an account of welfare by identifying kinds of bearers of non-instrumental prudential value as the constituents of well-being. For example, Fletcher’s (2013) OLT account lists six kinds of bearers as non-instrumentally good for us: achievement, friendship, happiness, pleasure, self-respect, and virtue. Hence, if any particular is an instance of one of these kinds, then it is non-instrumentally good for us according to the theory.4 I will refer to these specified kinds of bearers as goods. Thus, the

4I am glossing over requirements of how to understand, conceptually, what it is for a prudentially valuable (for s) x to in fact benefit s. Some ways of doing so, such as possession, can be problematic, as, e.g., Korsgaard (2013, 2014) notes (e.g. saying that a pleasure is good for us when possessed suggests that there might be pleasures that are not possessed). I will leave this point of possible contention largely untouched. Thus, any specific terminology used in connection to this issue, such “possessing” or “obtaining”, should be seen as involving no theoretical commitments.
theory claims that some $x$ is non-instrumentally good for us \textit{if and only if} it is an instance of a listed good.

There are two key features of these claims which can be identified as essential for a theory to be an OLT. First, the fact that their attributions of value are to be understood as objective. The objectivism-subjectivism distinction is generally understood as a matter of, respectively, attitude-independence and -dependence (Fletcher 2016; Griffin 1986; Lewis 1989; Sumner 1996; Heathwood 2014, 2016).\(^5\) A subjectivist account will assert that some $x$ is non-instrumentally good for a subject $s$ only if\(^6\) $s$ has a positive attitude towards $x$ (e.g. desire-satisfaction theories). Objectivist accounts, then, are committed to denying this position, such that if $x$ is non-instrumentally good for $s$, it \textit{need not be} that $s$ has a positive or, for that matter, any kind of attitude towards $x$. However, attitude-independent attributions of value can make space for attitudes in \textit{some capacity}. First, it allows for $s$ having a positive attitude towards a valuable $x$, as desiring something cannot be an impediment to its being good for us. Second, it allows attitudes to play a role in determining whether $x$ is an instance of a good. After all, some goods may be, perhaps partly, constituted by an attitude: e.g. pleasure under certain accounts (e.g. Feldman’s 2004; Brandt’s 1979; and Heathwood’s 2007). Finally, it at least makes space for the possibility that, while some things are objectively good for us (i.e., independently of our attitudes towards them), some others are subjectively so. Though perhaps such an account of well-being would be better characterised as mixed, rather than as an objectivist one, it seems acceptable to make space for the \textit{conceptual} possibility that something that is valuable could be so \textit{either} objectively or subjectively.\(^7\)

\(^5\)Note that there are alternatives conceptions, e.g., in terms of mind-independence and -dependence (e.g. Woodard 2016).

\(^6\)Following Sumner (1996, p38) this is formulated in terms of attitude-independence being a \textit{necessary} feature of attributions of prudential value, not a \textit{sufficient} one. This is done to allow the possibilities that some things we have a positive attitude towards may not be good for us – e.g. if we have a stronger negative attitude towards them.

\(^7\)Note that this is different from Hybrid Theories (e.g. Kagan 2009).
Turning to the second distinctive feature of OLTs, this is that the claims they make are *enumerative*. That is, as Fletcher (2013) argues, OLTs limit their claims to enumerating the constituents of well-being (prudential goods) rather than providing an explanation of why they are in fact good for us: they tell us *what* is good for us, but not *why*. Indeed, Fletcher (2013) argues for the use of a distinction between explanatory and enumerative theories as a basis of classification for theories of well-being. Thus, while Desire Satisfaction \(x\) is good for \(s\) if and only if \(s\) desires \(x\) is primarily an explanatory theory (i.e., \(x\) is good for \(s\) because \(s\) desires \(x\), such that \(s\)'s desiring \(x\) makes \(x\) good for \(s\)), OLTs (kinds \(g_1, g_2, g_3\) are prudential goods) are primarily enumerative (i.e., instances of kinds \(g_1, g_2, g_3, \ldots\) are non-instrumentally good for us). However, more recently, the use of the enumerative-explanatory distinction as a basis for classifying theories has come under criticism by Lin (2017), who suggests that all theories involve both enumerative and explanatory claims. I will not comment on the merits of Lin’s argument here, as in Chapter 2 Section 1.1 I clarify what I take to be OLTs’ commitments with regards to explanatory claims and argue for there being two ways in which we can understand the enumerative-explanatory distinction. For now, then, we can leave this point to the fact that OLT claims remain distinctive insofar as they attribute the status of prudential good to particular categories but provide no further explanation of why these are goods.

Furthermore, OLTs have often been characterised as essentially pluralist. However, as Fletcher (2013, 2016) argues, this is not necessarily the case. OLTs are merely committed to identifying what kinds of things are good for us, which does not rule out that there is only one kind that is good for us. Thus, a theory which only identifies knowledge as *non-instrumentally* and objectively prudentially valuable, without specifying a further account of why this is (e.g. through Perfectionism – Hurka 1993; Brink 2003, 2008; Prinzing 2020; Bradford 2021), is also an OLT, albeit a *monist* one (Fletcher 2016). More importantly, this means
that one other notable theory of well-being should be understood as being a monist OLT: Hedonism. At least, this is true under a particular characterisation of the theory: that some \(x\) is good for \(s\) if and only if \(x\) is an episode of \(s\)'s pleasure. In other words, when we understand Hedonism as identifying a single good in pleasure. However, it should be at least noted that there may be alternative interpretations of the theory, under which Hedonism is a particular subjectivist account which makes a claim as to which kind of mental state or attitude determines the value of bearers, i.e., pleasure (e.g. Lin 2016 makes a suggestion along these lines in terms of attitudinal pleasure). Thus, some \(x\) is good for \(s\), under this kind of Hedonism, if and only if it is pleasant for \(s\).\(^8\)

That being said, it should also be recognised that almost all pluralist theories of well-being have been OLTs (Lin’s 2016 suggested pluralist subjective list theory being a notable exception), making pluralist OLTs the paradigm of pluralism within the philosophy of well-being (to the point of making pluralism appear constitutive of what it is to be an OLT, as Fletcher 2016 notes). As this thesis argues for a theory of well-being espousing a stronger kind of pluralism (see next section), pluralist OLTs are both its key adversary, and thus focus of my criticisms, as well as its key interlocutor, as most of my arguments are primarily aimed to convince their proponents.

Finally, this short overview of OLTs is missing an important aspect, due to this component being commonly overlooked in these theories: an account of ill-being. A theory of ill-being is one which provides an account of what is bad for us. It seems clear that the above discussion of different theories was only concerned with what is good for us. But it is also clear that a theory of prudential value is committed to accounting for both positive and negative prudential value. This

\(^8\)Note that in Chapter 2, section 4.4 I will argue that all pleasures, not just Feldman’s 2004 attitudinal pleasures, are intentional mental states which can be directed at some object \(x\), such as to, formally, fulfil the criteria of being the value-determinant of a subjectivist theory.
omission is one which Kagan (2014) highlights as more or less pervasive in treatments of prudential value, though more recent discussions have sought to address this (e.g. Tully 2017; Bradford 2021). Here, I limit myself to noting the fact of this lacuna, while turning to a more detailed treatment of it and to what OLTs are committed with regards to prudential disvalue in Chapter 1. While generally “well-being” will refer to the evaluative domain as a whole – both positive and negative prudential value – where I discuss the contrast between positive and negative prudential value, well-being refers only to positive prudential value and “ill-being” to negative prudential value.

Section 3 – Pluralism in well-being: plural goods vs. plural values.

The last introductory clarification concerns the kind of pluralism that is appealed to by pluralist OLTs and the rest of the field more generally. As may be clear from the discussion of OLTs above, pluralist theories of well-being postulate a plurality of constituents of well-being. In Lin’s words “monism is the view that there is only one kind of basic good and one basic bad [and …] pluralism is the view that there is either more than one basic good or more than one basic bad” (Lin 2014, p127).\(^9\) This seems to be the general consensus in the literature, either implicitly or explicitly (e.g. Lin 2014, p127, 2016, p331; Fletcher 2016, p149), as also seen in the fact that theories such as Hedonism are classified as monist in virtue of postulating a single good (i.e., pleasure), while OLTs such as Fletcher’s (2013) are classified as pluralist in virtue of postulating a plurality of goods (i.e., achievement, friendship, happiness, pleasure, self-respect, and virtue).

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\(^9\)Note that here Pluralism is defined in terms of a plurality of either basic goods or bads (i.e., ills). This slightly departs from my provisional simplification above. In my later discussion of the relation between goods and ills I will broadly agree with Lin’s (2014) characterisation, but this will have to wait for later.
However, this is not the only possible conception of pluralism. Another, stronger, kind of pluralism, which, so far, has not been applied to well-being, instead postulates a plurality of kinds of values: things can go well or poorly in different kinds of ways. This distinction is exemplified in the works of Heathwood (2015), Tucker (2016), and Mason (2018), who all formulate slightly different ways of drawing this weak-strong pluralism distinction. For our purposes, the former two will be more relevant, and I will ultimately formulate my proposal in terms of Heathwood’s taxonomy of monism-pluralism (see Chapter 4 for a full characterisation of these as well as the reason for relying on Heathwood over the others).

Stronger pluralist theories, such as value property pluralism, have received significant interest in moral philosophy and value theory more generally, finding a number of supporters, including Berlin (1969), Williams (1973a, 1981a), Griffin (1986), Nussbaum (1986), Stocker (1990), Wolf (1992), and Kekes (1993). Indeed, prudential value is commonly taken as distinct from moral or aesthetic value precisely in this sense (Heathwood 2015), such that value property pluralism is true at this broader level. However, with few exceptions, this kind of pluralism has not been applied within well-being. The main aim of this thesis is to articulate and argue for a radical pluralist theory of prudential value positing distinct value properties for each of the goods that are ordinarily listed by pluralist OLTs. This theory, I will argue, introduces a new perspective to the field, one which permits new ways of understanding a number of different issues and which demystifies some of the impasses facing current discussions of welfare.

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10 Heathwood (2015) remarks about this possibility, while Griffin (1986) articulates a theory best understood in these terms. Finnis (1980) may also be best understood as formulating a position of this kind, while Mason (2018) instead attributes it to Mill’s Qualitative Hedonism. More recently, Mitchell & Alexandrova (2020) have articulated and argued for a related position.
Chapter 1 argues for the necessity, for any theory of well-being, to provide an account of ill-being. Based on this I define what an OLT theory of negative prudential value may involves. This will highlight an important phenomenon that arises out of such a more complete OLT: the pairing of goods and ills. That is, the fact that reasonable pluralist OLTs involve a list of goods and a list of ills, where particular goods are paired with particular ills (e.g. pleasure with pain and achievement with failure). I then further clarify what appear to be the basic features of this pairing, noting that this is not an isolated phenomenon: i.e., only applicable to some goods and ills, but a pervasive one.

Chapter 2 poses a challenge to pluralist OLTs. This concerns the fact that pairing, a phenomenon that specifically arises from within OLTs, also seems unaccountable by OLTs themselves. Different approaches to said account will be proposed, which will be narrowed down to the claim that paired goods and ills are mutually exclusive. However, this analysis, though initially promising, will be found lacking insofar as it fails to account for why the posited pairing relation obtains to begin with: a necessary explanandum given what I will call the Problem from the Proliferation of Pairs.

Chapter 3 begins by clarifying the need for a particular kind of explanatory claim in order to account for pairing within a value monist framework. I then turn to consider the most significant available objectivist theory fitting these requirements: Perfectionism. After articulating its theoretical background (i.e. as an instance of Eudaimonism) as well as its theory of positive and of negative value, I explain how Perfectionism offers a viable account of pairing. However, I argue that Perfectionism fails to appropriately account for the value of pleasure and pain. This problem is not only a serious concern in its own right, but, as I will maintain, also points to a stronger kind of pluralism (e.g. value property pluralism), as an
appeal to a plurality of different value properties would allow us to formulate a
similar plurality of explanatory claims. This would, in turn, allow us to overcome
the problems facing Perfectionism within a broader Eudaimonist account.

Chapter 4 will initially take a more exegetical character, articulating in greater
depth the distinctions between different kinds of pluralisms, while applying them
to different accounts of well-being. Following Heathwood’s (2015) taxonomy, I
analyse substantive monism and pluralism, which concern the number of basic
goods or kinds of bearers; value property monism and pluralism, which concern
the number of kinds of values or value properties within a domain. On top of these,
Heathwood also identifies radical monism and pluralism, which, however, do not
refer to distinct conceptions of pluralism, but rather make a distinction concerning
how the other two can be combined. After clarifying and arguing for a particular
understanding of some of the key notions involved in stronger forms of pluralism,
I articulate a radical pluralist theory of well-being and explain how it accounts for
pairing.

In Chapter 5, I consider the main obstacle to accepting a theory of well-being
embracing radical pluralism. This is a problem arising from the widespread
assumption that instances of different values are incomparable; however,
instances of goods which, according to the radical pluralist theory, would bear
different prudential values do appear to be comparable. This would mean that the
radical pluralist theory of well-being is false (i.e. well-being is not a value property
pluralist domain). In response to this I will consider both incomparabilist and
comparabilist accounts of choice and comparison (or lack thereof) between
instances of different values. I will find the incomparabilist account unacceptable
for our purposes, thereby turning to provide an account of how we can indeed
compare instances of different values. This will require an account of how these
values are structured by normative relations between said values. Finally, I will
offer an account of the grounds for these normative relations based on a metaphorical characterisation of said grounds offered by Chang (2004).

Chapter 6 will turn to argumentation in favour of the radical pluralist theory of well-being. After raising and dismissing two important lines of argument from the literature, I turn to the articulation of the key argument in favour of the theory. This argues that value property monist theories cannot account for genuine conflicts grounding the rationality of regretting a lesser, forsaken option, while, on the other hand, value property pluralism can explain it. Through examples I argue that this kind of regret is also true in purely prudential cases, hence providing an argument for value property pluralism about well-being (and hence for radical pluralism given a commitment to substantive pluralism).

Finally, Chapter 7 will discuss the application of the radical pluralist theory of well-being to three issues in discussions of well-being: the formulation of explanatory theories, the variabilism-invariabilism debate, and the problem of alienation facing objectivist theories. In each case, the radical pluralist theory will be found to offer novel insights which promise to resolve these concerns.

Thus, the radical pluralist theory of well-being appears to have the potential to offer novel insights and outlooks on the philosophy of well-being, and in this thesis I endeavour to argue for it and its future careful consideration.
Chapter 1. Objective List Theories, Theories of Ill-being, and good-ill pairs.

This chapter will introduce an important but often-overlooked component of any viable account of prudential value: a theory of ill-being. This is the component of such accounts that explains what is bad for us and why it is, as opposed to what is good for us and why. Unfortunately, this has often been ignored in explicit formulations of particular theories, or only given scant attention. This is luckily changing since Kagan’s (2014) article on the issue, with increasing attention dedicated both to evaluating theories in virtue of their account of negative value and to developing said accounts in greater depth (e.g. Tully 2017; Bradford 2020).

After exploring what a theory of ill-being requires with reference to hedonism, desire-satisfactionism (DS), and perfectionism, I will present an account of ill-being within a pluralist objective list theory (OLT henceforth). Here, I will argue that pluralist OLTs are plausibly committed to including certain features within their account of ill-being: that the account also be an OLT one, and that said OLT account be pluralist in nature.

Having established the commitments of my target OLT theory of prudential value, I will explore an intuitive feature of our theory. This is that each good stands in a special kind of opposition to a distinct ill (and vice versa). I call this a pairing relationship, where the relevant goods and ills are said to be paired and to form a good-ill pair. Following this discussion, the last part of this chapter argues in favour of either of two strong substantive claims about the place of such pairs in our OLT: either that all goods and ills must be paired with an ill or good (the symmetry thesis) or, at least, that a substantial proportion must be members of such pairs (the strong thesis). This will be done first with reference to existing lists, showing how the specified goods all lend themselves to generating a plausible and corresponding, robust ill; next, I will present a simple OLT that includes four highly
plausible goods – pleasure, achievement, knowledge (or understanding), and friendship – and four corresponding ills – pain, failure, ignorance, and isolation (or enmity).
Section 1 – Ill-Being in the Philosophy of Well-Being.

In the introduction I introduced different theories of well-being, including pluralist OLTs. However, the characterisation of pluralist OLTs currently lacks an important component of the theory: its account of ill-being (i.e., what is bad for us or has negative prudential value). That is, a successful theory of well-being must not only account for what is good for us, but also what is bad for us. Thus, it seems that OLTs, as currently articulated, are incomplete.

This is Kagan’s (2014) contention about not only OLTs, but theories of well-being in general. Most accounts of welfare, he argues, have limited themselves to a discussion of candidate goods and simply gestured at what the corresponding ill must be, assuming that what is said about the good must apply, with little change, to what is bad for us. However, this assumption is not only unwarranted, but in many cases clearly false (as will be discussed below). It, then, has had important and negative consequences on the formulation of a number of accounts. Kagan then continues by providing a programmatic account of ill-being for several theories of well-being. This highlights a number of issues resulting from these omissions. With reference to Kagan’s discussion of qualitative hedonism and DS, I will briefly illustrate his case.

Hedonism, Kagan claims, is perhaps the only major theory of well-being that does provide a positive account of ill-being: i.e., it not only claims that pleasure is non-instrumentally good for us, but also that pain is non-instrumentally bad for us. Despite this, hedonists are not entirely innocent of the charge of having focused too much on well-being over ill-being. This is revealed, Kagan argues, in the formulation of qualitative hedonism, which in its evaluation of a pleasure includes a non-quantitative measure (i.e., quality) denoting, for example, whether the pleasure is epistemically rich or not. However, such accounts do not attempt to provide an account of how to qualitatively evaluate pains; indeed, much of the
assumptions here about how certain pleasures are qualitatively superior — not merely quantitatively — to others does not appear to extend to pains: the pain of being physically tortured does not appear to be either worse or less bad than a quantitatively comparable case of emotional suffering (Kagan 2014). Even extending the terminology to pain seems problematic, as referring to the supposedly more harmful pains as having a higher quality is at best misleading.

This demonstrates the deleterious effect that ignoring the ill-being component of welfare has often had. In what follows I will give two further brief examples of this: DS and perfectionism. However, for each I will also suggest how we should go about formulating their respective theories of ill-being, except in the case of qualitative hedonism, as it is not clear that this is possible for qualitative hedonism.

Turning to DS accounts, these have mostly focused their efforts on articulating a subjectivist picture of what is good for us, i.e., what we desire. By contrast, they have not dedicated sufficient time to articulating an account of what is bad for us. Kagan argues that such theories often appeal to “desire-frustration” (the failure to fulfil a desire), but that this cannot do the appropriate explanatory work as the frustration of a desire is the mere failure to secure something good. This, however, would not constitute something robustly bad for us but merely the absence of something good. For example, the frustration of A’s desire for x consists in the failure of x to obtain. But this is merely the absence of something that would be good for A (under the theory) rather than something that would make A worse off; and it seems odd to think that the failure to secure something good, other things being equal, harms us (i.e. it is robustly bad for us). This is also clear if we understand desires as the good-making attitudes in the subjectivist theories, which confer or project value upon the desired thing or state of affairs.¹ The absence of that upon which a desire has conferred value is not itself bad, but

¹Thus making the value of a desired x an extrinsic property of x.
merely neutral. Similarly, a desire-not – i.e. a desire that x not obtain – cannot do the relevant bad-making job as, first, it would still merely make the obtaining of x a desire-frustration of the same kind as above – i.e. neutral rather than robustly bad – and, second, it would mean that the continuing absence of x consists in the satisfaction of the relevant desire. Thus, it would make the absence of x good for us. But, the absence of pain – understood here under DS as an experience we desire not to have (i.e. we desire-not the experience p) – is not good for us but merely not bad; similarly, the obtaining of pain is not neutral but robustly bad. In fact, Kagan argues that, in order to account for ill-being within DS theories, we must posit a distinct bad-making attitude to oppose the good-making desiring: aversion. Thus, x is bad for us where we have an aversion towards it (and x obtains).

Finally, perfectionism explains what is good for us in terms of the development and exercise of our distinctly human capacities. I will discuss such accounts in much more detail in Chapter 3, so here I will only present a brief sketch of such a theory. This identifies our welfare with the excellent exercise of our core human capacities, which is explained in terms of the former constituting the fulfilment of the latter (e.g. Hurka 1993; Brink 2008). For example, assuming that our rational capacity is a core human one, its excellent exercise will be good for us, which includes among other features the honest consideration and search for evidence. Note that such an excellent exercise may not in fact produce knowledge or understanding, even though these will tend to be its outcome. After all, due to no fault of our own, we may reach the wrong conclusion (e.g. pervasive misleading evidence).

As with other theories, the perfectionist account of ill-being has received less attention. An early attempt at developing this can be found in Kraut (1994) who tries to account for the badness of plausible ills (e.g. ignorance and pain) in purely instrumental terms: i.e., pain, for example, is not bad in itself, but rather bad
insofar as it prevents us from attaining some perfectionist good, such as the exercise of our rational capacities. The problem with this account is that this would still only make pain bad *qua* absence of the good. But this is not a satisfactory account of ill-being as it only permits of things being worse for us in the sense of less good, rather than in the sense of being robustly bad for us: i.e., because the ills would only be preventing us from acquiring a particular good. Therefore, I suggest that we understand this kind of perfectionist account as holding the following theory of ill-being: *x* is bad for us insofar as it is (or is constitutive of) a *poor* exercise of a core capacity *x*. Thus, ignorance would be bad for us insofar as it is (or is the result of) the poor exercise of our rational capacity, such that said exercise “malfils” (to borrow a term from Bradford, 2021) said capacity. For example, acquiring a belief as a result of a reckless consideration of evidence (and failure to gather further evidence), as well as, for instance, a lazy reflection on the logical connections between said belief and our wider belief system, would be bad for us, insofar as this constitutes a poor exercise of our rational capacity (though note that this may be compatible with the belief being true and even justified).
Section 2 – OLTs and Ill-Being.

Section 2.1 – An overview of OLTs on ill-being and a first formulation of the view.

The lack of attention to ill-being extends to objectivist theories such as OLTs. Most authors that subscribe to such views only implicitly gesture to posited ills.

To remind ourselves, an OLT’s account of well-being is formulated in terms of a list of kinds of things that are non-instrumentally good for us. This could be a monist list – e.g. hedonism, where pleasure is the only thing that is non-instrumentally good for us (e.g. Fletcher 2013) – or a pluralist list – which may include pleasure, understanding, achievement and friendship. Hedonism, as we saw in section 1, also provides a theory of ill-being by positing a single ill: pain. Thus, if hedonism is a monist OLT and its theory of ill-being consists in positing a single (monist) ill, we can easily extrapolate what a theory of ill-being for OLTs in general would look like: a list of kinds of things that are non-instrumentally bad for us. Thus, where the list of goods is a list of the ultimate bearers of positive prudential value, the list of ills would be a list of the ultimate bearers of negative prudential value.

In the case of a pluralist OLT of positive value, then, we might expect a pluralist list of ills to constitute the ill-being side of the theory. For example, such a list might include pain (or unpleasantness more generally, including emotional suffering), ignorance, the loss of loved ones, enmity, isolation, and failure. As we will see below, this assumption can be questioned, but it is ultimately the most plausible way of conceiving of a pluralist OLT’s commitments about negative prudential value.

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2This is not meant to be a final list. Its purpose is merely illustrative, being aimed at demonstrating what ills list under an OLT might look like.
Note that, in the next chapter, this initial picture will be complicated somewhat. This will be the result of the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the commitments of OLTs in reaction to the explanatory pressure placed on them by the subject of the present chapter.

Section 2.2 – Is a well-being OLT committed to an OLT account of ill-being?

Before continuing, we should consider the above picture more critically. For this purpose I will consider two objections to this conception of OLT ill-being.

The first of these criticism can be dismissed quickly, but it is worth raising as a possibility. This is that an OLT theory of ill-being, instead of providing a list of ills, should be articulated with reference to an absence of one of its listed goods. That is, that what is bad for us is an absence of the postulated goods. There are a number of reasons to reject this possibility. First, if we understand the claim as saying that what is bad for us consists merely in something not being good for us, then the suggestion would make harm merely a matter of being less well-off, rather than being poorly off. This flies in the face of evidence provided by particular, paradigmatic cases. For instance, the absence of pleasure does not seem to be bad for us. Rather, pain is bad for us, a state that cannot merely be defined in terms of the absence of pleasure. Thus, I take it that an absence *qua* not being the bearer of positive prudential value cannot be an ill. An ill, we must say, must be the bearer of *negative* prudential value: it must be *robustly* bad for us.

Second, if, on the other hand, we take this claim to suggest that the absence of these goods has negative prudential value, then this is also problematic. This is because anything that is not an instance of one of these goods would constitute an ill. But this is implausible. As any state that is not an instance of a particular
good is an absence of that same good, even instances of a different good would count as ills if they were not also instances of the first. Thus, an achievement that is not pleasant would be an ill qua absence of pleasure. This, I take it, is simply false. Moreover, this is implausible insofar as this analysis would interpret, for instance, a hedonically neutral state (i.e., a state that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant) as an ill just as much as a painful state that involves no pleasure. The two are, however, clearly different, where the latter is certainly worse than the former. But it is not more of an absence than the former. To account for this, we cannot, other things being equal, make mere absences of a good the bearers of negative prudential value.\(^3\)

Finally, even if one finds the arguments above unconvincing, supporting the absence suggestion would not exclude my suggested OLT account of ill-being. After all, the OLT would still have to formulate a list of ills, simply (partly) constituted by absences of the good, that are the bearers of negative prudential value. Thus, this suggestion is not only implausible, but under its most charitable construal, it would not actually involve a rejection of the account of ill-being outlined in the previous section.

A second objection to the earlier construal of an OLT ill-being account questions whether an OLT theory of well-being is committed to an OLT theory of ill-being. Instead, we might appeal to, for instance, a DS theory of ill-being alongside the OLT theory of positive prudential value. As we will see, a weaker form of this consideration is indeed possible. However, the claim in its current, stronger form cannot be sustained. First, it is implausible, I take it, to postulate an asymmetry in our accounts of ill-being and well-being, especially if we assume that they are simply a matter of opposite values of the same kind (i.e. positive and negative

\(^3\)Of course, there may be goods where the absence of a good are robustly bad for us. For instance, a failure to achieve one of our ends (I understand these in the sense of Bradford’s 2015, 2016a analysis of achievement, see section 4.4) is constituted by the absence of this end. But this absence is bad for us only qua part of a structured state where we pursued said end but did not attain it.
prudential value).\(^4\) We must therefore have some strong reasons to postulate such asymmetries. To my knowledge, these do not exist, at least when it comes to OLTs, which have a perfectly coherent account of ill-being. Of course, we may object to OLTs *in general*. For example, we might object to them on the grounds that they do not have an account of *why* these disparate kinds of things are all good (or bad) for us. But this would not give us reason to accept the OLT account of well-being but not of ill-being, but rather to reject both. This is clear when we consider our options for a theory of ill-being. These might be a perfectionist or a DS account (hedonism here is taken to be an OLT and so will be discussed below). Without going into the merits of these (as was seen above, both seem to be able to provide a coherent account), it seems clear to me that any motivation for accepting a DS or perfectionist theory of ill-being would motivate accepting a symmetrical DS or perfectionist account of well-being, given that both also provide coherent accounts of positive value. Indeed, as Bradford (2021) has pointed out, a perfectionist failure to provide a coherent theory of ill-being should motivate either a reformulation of the theory such that it can do so or the rejection of perfectionism itself. This is particularly true given the perfectionist rationale of unifying our account of well-being – i.e., if it unified well-being but not well-being and ill-being, it would fail at its own purpose. Thus, an acceptance of perfectionism as a theory of ill-being but not of well-being must either be motivated by a failure on part of the perfectionist to provide a theory of well-being or a failure on part of OLTs to provide an account of ill-being. But, as both provide coherent accounts of both well-being and ill-being, any such failure on either side would motivate espousing the other theory more globally – i.e. for well-being and ill-being. The case regarding DS is even starker. After all, it would mean that we are accepting an objectivist account of well-being and a subjectivist account of ill-being. This, on top of similar reasons against an OLT-Perfectionist well-being-ill-being mixed account, should also tell against this possibility, given the metaphysical baggage

\(^4\)A similar possibility is discussed in Tully (2017) with regards to DS accounts.
that proponents of each take to support their view and undermine the other. Thus, given an acceptance of an OLT account of well-being, we should also accept an OLT account of ill-being.

Section 2.3 – Further commitments of an OLT account of ill-being.

Having set these considerations to rest and settled on a broad framework for OLT accounts of ill-being, we can move onto investigating what such a view is committed to. The articulation so far of the OLT theory of ill-being is as follows: OLTs must spell out a list of kinds of things which are non-instrumentally bad for us. However, this is still quite a broad statement of our target. Therefore, here I will make a further specification about what kind of ills list a pluralist OLT of well-being should plausibly propose as part of its theory of ill-being.

This is that, OLTs that provide a pluralist list of goods should plausibly also provide a pluralist list of ills. This may seem trivial, but there is nothing incoherent about an OLT that argues for a plurality of goods but only one ill. After all, if we accept the OLT interpretation of hedonism, the latter’s account of ill-being consists in a monistic list. So an account of ill-being centered around the claim that pain is non-instrumentally bad for us is an OLT account of ill-being. Moreover, there is no explicit commitment for a pluralist account of well-being to provide a pluralist account of ill-being. Therefore, it is perfectly possible for an OLT to provide a list of goods that included pleasure, friendship, achievement, virtue and aesthetic experience, for instance, and a list of ills that only included pain.

However, I take this to be implausible given the kind of reasons (e.g. analysis of certain scenarios) that would have motivated espousing a pluralist account of positive prudential value. That is, the reasons that lead to a pluralist list of goods would also lead to a plural list of ills, such that anyone moved to a pluralist account
of positive prudential value would be moved to a pluralist account of negative prudential value. Broadly speaking, there are two such kinds of reasons. The first is that a particular good or ill strikes us as, intuitively, good or bad for us in a way that cannot be reduced to the presence of another good or ill. For example, friendship might strike us as good for us independently of the pleasure that usually attends it. Thus, we might think that a friendship that over its course leads to more pain than pleasure (overall) is still one that is worth having for our sake. I suspect that if we find this kind of reasoning convincing regarding goods, such that we find a plurality of things irreducibly good for us in themselves, we will also find it convincing regarding ills such that we find a plurality of things bad for us in themselves. In particular, this seems true given that someone who thinks that there is a plurality of goods will have given up their theoretical (or not) presumption in favour of attempting to reduce everything that is good for us to one single good or good-making property; much the same would go for ills.

The second kind of reason involves considering precisely those scenarios or thought experiments that might be motivating a move to pluralist OLTs. These cases are ones where value appears to vary, and the target putative good or ill is claimed to be isolated as the only variable explaining such change in value. One such kind of case is the Experience Machine (EM) (e.g. Nozick 1974). Again, I suspect that the (supposed) general preference for the hedonically poorer life outside of the EM may well be motivated not only by the supposed goods that are present in such a life but absent in the EM, but also by ills present in the latter but absent in a normal life. For example, we might not only suppose that the EM life is not preferable because it lacks achievement, but because it involves a good deal of failure: i.e., in such a life we would have taken on a goal and pursued it but not in fact accomplished it. Similarly for friendship and isolation, where it seems to us in the EM that we have plenty of friendships, but we are in fact completely cut off from others. Imagine, then, that we are given the opportunity to enter an EM. Our pleasure will be maximised in it, but we will not in fact achieve
anything or develop meaningful personal relations (though it will look like we did). If it is true that we would not choose to enter the EM, we may conclude that there is something outside the EM which we are missing: e.g. achievement and friendship. But we might also conclude that there is something in the EM that is bad for us: e.g. failure and isolation.

Thus, if we think the life outside of the EM is better (ceteris paribus) than the life inside it, such that we are motivated to include a plurality of goods, then this also gives us reason to include a plurality of ills. Absent any particular considerations against pluralist lists of ills, which, as far as I am aware, do not exist, then given a pluralist list of goods we should plausibly accept a pluralist list of ills. I therefore take an OLT account that espouses a monistic theory of negative prudential value while retaining a pluralist one of positive prudential value to be highly counterintuitive.

Section 2.4 – A statement of the final, target OLT account of ill-being.

To summarise, we can conclude that a pluralist OLT theory of prudential value is committed to providing the following: (a) a theory of ill-being that is also (b) OLT and (c) pluralist in nature. This will consist in defining a pluralist list of kinds of things that are irreducibly and non-instrumentally bad for us, on top of the pluralist list of kinds of things that are bad for us.

This, then, is the kind of OLT that will be the focus of the present discussion. However, this still leaves a number of issues unanswered. The most important of

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5 Further support might be given by considering cases in light of something like Hooker’s (1996, 2015) Sympathy Test, which serves to allow reflection on whether we consider a candidate good or ill as merely instrumentally good or bad for us. There are some concerns with this approach (e.g. Fuchs 2018), but it still provides non-conclusive evidence.
these for our purposes will be that of the relationship between the items on the two lists. This will be the subject of the following sections.
Section 3 – The Pairing of Goods and Ills.

Section 3.1 – Goods and corresponding ills.

In what follows I will focus on what appears to be an interesting phenomenon Kagan (2014, p273) highlights about the relationship between the list of goods and ills. That is that all or at least most of the goods and ills typically on an OLT stand in a particular relation to a particular, opposing ill and good (respectively). This is a relationship of opposition such that each appears as the counterpart of the other. For example, pleasure is a counterpart of pain, knowledge of ignorance etc. I will call this a pairing relationship. I take this to be a unique relationship holding between a good and an ill. Thus, I am assuming that any good that is paired with an ill can only be paired with that ill (and vice versa), and that the relation, being one concerning an opposition, cannot hold between two goods or two ills.

The claims that such pairs exist and that goods and ills indeed must be paired is not only intuitive and has been taken almost for granted in the literature (e.g. Kagan 2014, p273; Heathwood 2014, p202), but is also observable by considering independently intuitive goods and ills. The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to establishing said phenomenon, as well as to articulating two theses about concerning it, one stronger and one weaker. I will begin here by showing that this claim is not only plausible given particular lists in the literature, but also likely taken for granted, though this seems to have been obscured by the lack of attention to discussions of ill-being.

To start with, I will look at two candidate lists of goods in the literature: Fletcher’s (2013) and Murphy’s (2001). These lists have been chosen in virtue of being
representative of the kinds of prudential goods often discussed in the literature. They will be supplemented by other OLT lists when relevant.

Starting with Fletcher (2013), his list includes achievement, friendship, happiness, pleasure, self-respect and virtue as its fundamental goods. Murphy (2001), on the other hand, includes life, knowledge, aesthetic experience, excellence in play and work, excellence in agency, inner peace, friendship and community, religion, happiness. I will not question here the actual items included, or any ones that have perhaps been excluded. Rather, I will focus on what these lists might suggest about a corresponding theory of ill-being.

As with most discussions in the literature, these lists do not in fact provide a list of ills. However, each of the goods outlined suggests a corresponding ill, one which does not merely strike us as worse qua lack of a good, but rather robustly bad for us. Thus, in the case of Fletcher’s list, we could derive a list of ills such as the following: (respectively) failure, isolation/enmity, unhappiness, pain, self-disrespect (or any plausible self-regarding attitude of the kind), and vice. Each of these can be characterised in terms of a robust ill (i.e. not a mere absence) and appears to be plausibly bad for us (not merely less good than having the corresponding good). The same is the case with Murphy’s list, from which we can generate corresponding ills for each of his goods: death (as opposed to non-existence), ignorance, experience of the ugly (or perhaps pleasure in the ugly – this likely depends on our account of aesthetic experience), mediocrity or badness at play and work, mediocrity in agency, inner distress or conflict, enmity and isolation (or ostracisation), irreligion (or atheism, apostasy, heresy), and unhappiness.

Indeed, I suspect that for at least some of the original goods, their inclusion might have been motivated not just by their being intuitively good, but by some corresponding opposite appearing to be robustly bad. For example, though how
we might account for the badness of death is of course a fraught issue, it seems that, at least in part, it is the fact that death strikes us as bad for us which motivates the idea that life itself (i.e. rather than the goods therein) is good for us. In fact, the expectation that listed goods would find a corresponding ill is such that, if it were difficult to formulate such a corresponding ill, we might doubt the inclusion of said good to begin with (and vice versa). This was, in part, the reason for discussing Murphy’s list, in that it includes at least one interesting case study: religion. We might doubt its inclusion on independent grounds, but the fact that it seems hard to pinpoint a plausible, corresponding ill would shed some further doubts on its status as a good; or, at least, such a consideration might motivate us to reconsider its characterisation.

A similar observation is made by Kagan (2014) in his discussion of Parfit’s (1984) list of goods and ills: (goods) moral goodness, rational activity, developing abilities, having children, being a good parent, knowledge, awareness of beauty; (ills) sadistic pleasure, being deceived, being betrayed and manipulated, aesthetic pleasure in the ugly, being slandered, lacking liberty, lacking dignity. This is a less systematic list, which Kagan takes to have been articulated more to provide plausible examples than a final enumerative account. It should therefore not be surprising that the listed goods and ills mostly do not find a correspondent in the other list (with some potential exceptions, such as moral goodness and sadistic pleasure, though one or both might have to be characterised differently). That being said, Kagan also notes that we can formulate plausible correspondents for most of those that miss one: e.g. being deceived vs being treated honestly, lacking liberty vs being free.

There are some exceptions though. Having children, more than any other, resists the generation of a plausible corresponding ill. Not having children, after all, is not a plausible ill, both because it does not appear to be robustly bad for us and because, even formally, it does not seem to be able to play such a role, being a
mere absence of a good. This might be taken as evidence that not all goods or ills must have a corresponding ill or good (this will be discussed at greater length below). On the other hand, Kagan also discusses how the realisation that there is no candidate opposing ill might instead prompt us to reconsider whether we did in fact specify the relevant good in the best way. On reflection, he suggests, perhaps merely having children is not good for us. After all, there are many ways in which we can imagine that having children might be a bad thing for us, even non-instrumentally. He suggests then that a better characterisation of what we might think is non-instrumentally good about being a parent is being a good parent (which will involve particular other- and self-regarding attitudes, as well as particular actions). Consider then being a bad parent. This is not a mere absence of being a parent or a good parent, but rather the wrong way of relating to our children. If we don't have children, on the other hand, we are simply neither benefited nor harmed by our state qua not-being-parents (a neutral state). Thus, the former but not the latter can, formally, be a robust ill.

Of course, after having reformulated the relevant good (or ill) and found a plausible corresponding ill (or good) we must return to consider whether the resulting good and ill should be included in our lists. We might, instead, find that they do not, after all, appear to be non-instrumentally good and bad for us when spelled out in these terms. This should prompt us to do either of two things: return to the original formulation and accept that the relevant good (or ill) has no paired ill (or good); or remove the original good (or ill) from our list after either rejecting the reasons in virtue of which we included it originally or attempting to account for its value (or disvalue) in terms of its being instrumentally valuable (or disvaluable).

The claims I wish to draw so far from this discussion are quite modest: (1) that plausible goods (or ills) that are in fact identified in existing lists have plausible ills (or goods) that correspond to them, and (2) that if we cannot find a corresponding good or ill for each ill or good we have identified, then we should at least try to
reformulate our candidate such that a correspondent can be articulated, at least before accepting that there is none. Though this does not (yet) establish any particular claims about the prevalence or necessity of pairing, it does suggest that the notion of a good-ill pair is a significant, implicit feature of pluralist OLTS which must be investigated further.

Section 3.2 – The concept of good-ill pairs and its place in OLTS.

To begin with, we need to note that discussing this issue involves introducing in our theory the new notion of a good-ill pair and of the pairing relation which grounds this (i.e., the relation holding between a paired good and ill). At this stage, this is not meant to be a claim about what kind of relationship this is. It will be the concern of Chapter 2 to discuss the possible nature of such a relationship and whether this may be problematic for certain conceptions of OLTS. Here, I will limit our discussion to specifying some of its most notable features.

For simplicity, I will assume that this relation is unique, holding only between a particular good and a particular ill. Thus, pleasure can only be paired with pain, and vice versa, and not also with some other ill. However, as I said, this is a simplification. This is because what seems more significant about the relation is not that it is unique (paired goods and ills are not paired with any other ill or good). Rather, what is more significant is that goods that are specially related with an ill (i.e., paired) are not related to at least some other ills (ceteris paribus for ills). Thus, perhaps ignorance is not only paired with understanding or knowledge, but also with intellectual virtue. What matters, though, is that other goods, such as pleasure, are not related with it in the same way. I will leave this point to a side here and assume that the pairing relation is unique, but this clarification should be borne in mind as it will be relevant to the discussion in Chapter 2.
In coming to grips with this concept, then, there are two further, key aspects of these pairs which must be discussed: what accounts for the pairing relation and its place in an OLT. I will discuss the former in the next chapter, while the latter will be the focus of the rest this chapter, focusing on the *prevalence* of paired goods and ills in our theory. This order is in part dictated by the fact that establishing the place and significance of pairs within a theory of well-being will determine how important accounting for them really is. After all, if pairing is a minor phenomenon, there might be little need to in fact explain it: e.g. if only a few goods and ills were paired, we could dismiss pairing as a coincidence (or explain it very differently than we otherwise might).

Of course, given the fact that we are talking about pluralist OLTs *in general*, the proportion of paired goods and ills will depend on the specific list. Thus, in Fletcher’s (2013) theory we might expect these to be widespread, while if we take Parfit’s (1984) list above at face value (rather than as a first approximation), we might think that this is a minor phenomenon. Therefore, in talking about the prevalence of pairs in an OLT we must be talking about something different: we must be talking about a requirement on pluralist OLTs regarding how many of their goods and ills we should expect to be members of a pair. Thus, if we find that pluralist OLTs *must* have a high proportion of paired goods and ills, a list such as Parfit’s which does not have such a proportion may well be rejected on this basis (though this would likely not constitute a conclusive rejection of the OLT).

Theses about the prevalence of good-ill pairs in an OLT can range in strength from the very weakest pairing claim – no goods and ills are paired – to the strongest pairing claim – all are paired. To simplify, I will group them according to broad proportions of paired to unpaired goods and ills in the theory. Thus, we might call *weak* a thesis that holds that all but one or two of a long list of goods and ills are *unpaired*. For example, perhaps only pleasure and pain are paired. By contrast, a *moderate* thesis would hold that there is a balanced distribution of
paired and unpaired goods and ills, while a *strong* thesis will hold that all but perhaps one or two goods and ills are paired. In what follows I will argue that it is only *strong* that, out of these three theses, is a viable candidate, given the kind of goods and ills usually and plausibly included on lists.

Indeed, *weak*, at the very least, seems to be ruled out by the preceding discussion. In particular, (1) from the end of 3.1 appears to imply that stronger claims are needed: i.e. if all the goods and ills we have identified are paired, at the very least this suggests that a significant proportion of goods and ills on an accurate list will be paired. Of course, current lists may be wrong, at least in the sense of being incomplete, and the correct list might include completely unpairable goods and ills, except perhaps for a limited few. For instance, it may explain the apparent badness of ignorance in terms of further ills that are not plausible counterparts of either knowledge or any other good. The badness of ignorance, then, could be reduced to the badness of these ills (i.e. ignorance is instrumentally bad), while also remaining the absence of the good of knowledge (and thus worse for us than having said good). However, given that our most plausible goods, which are shared across most current theories, do indeed seem to imply a robustly bad counterpart ill, this possibility should be, defeasibly, rejected. Moreover, though in the next chapter I will argue that traditional conceptions of OLTs have trouble accounting for pairing, at this stage there seems to be very little theoretical pressure on rejecting the existence or prevalence of good-ill pairs. After all, we have not yet specified what this pairing relation consists in and therefore the concept is as yet unproblematic.

Turning now to the stronger claims, there seems to be good reasons to hold a stronger thesis than *moderate*. Indeed, we may go so far as to defend what Kagan (2014) refers to as the *symmetry thesis* (henceforth *symmetry*): the thesis that goods and ills *must* be paired, which of course implies that no good (or ill) can be included on our list if we cannot also include a corresponding ill (or good). This
claim is, according to Kagan (2014, pg 275), highly intuitive and likely implicitly assumed in many discussions of well-being. However, it is also provisionally supported by claims (1) and (2) from 3.1. (1) would support it inductively insofar as (a) our most plausible candidate goods or ills can be paired to a plausible ill or good, and (b) no candidate good or ill, properly specified, fails to have a counterpart ill or good. This then leads us to the twofold importance of (2). First, that unpaired goods or ills may well turn out to be better-specified in such a way that they can be paired with an ill or good; second, it suggests a strong presumption in favour of particular goods and ills being paired: i.e. the presumption is strong enough that the appearance of an apparently unpaired one warrants careful consideration of whether it has been specified accurately. This, in turn, suggests that there is a more general presumption in favour of the necessity of goods and ills being paired (i.e. symmetry).

That being said, Kagan notes that our presumption in favour of symmetry may merely be the consequence of how we have approached the topic of well-being up to the development of OLTs. That is, these have been developed in response and alongside theories that do imply symmetry, albeit in a trivial way: i.e. DS and hedonism. In the case of the former, this is because DS, qua explanatory theory, must develop an account of both well-being and ill-being. Thus, what it determines as the good-maker in its account must have a corresponding bad-maker. Similarly, hedonism, a monist OLT, must supply a single good and ill. Thus, under it, pleasure and pain are trivially paired insofar as being the only bearers of value – one of positive and the other of negative – makes them counterparts of each other. However, this is not necessarily the case for OLTs, as has been acknowledged. Thus, though symmetry seems intuitive and supported by the lists that have in fact been developed, we should be cautious in taking it to be true.

But, this criticism is similarly limited. Though the presumption in favour of symmetry may be influenced by theories of well-being where something like
pairing is trivially true, this does not explain why OLT lists of goods in fact seem to exemplify the prevalence of pairs. In particular, it does not explain why for OLTs that only presented a list of goods, said goods seem to generate a corresponding list of ills that pair up with them. Therefore, even if the evidence discussed does not conclusively support symmetry, it at least supports a weaker, but still strong thesis: strong. That is, it seems safe to assert that the majority of the goods and ills listed by a pluralist OLT must be paired (strong).

Thus, we can assert a disjunctive conclusion: either strong or symmetry is true about pluralist OLTs. In the next section I will support this by arguing for a particular list of goods and ills, all of which are in fact paired. This will mean that symmetry is true if the list is complete (or if additional goods and ills are also paired), but that if additional goods or ills are unpaired, then strong is true.
Section 4 – Formulating an OLT with Paired Goods and Ills.

In this section I will present a limited list of goods and ills that are paired with one another, arguing for their robust goodness and badness. I will also provide a more detailed characterisation of these states such as to allay fears that some of them may be mere absences of their putative counterpart (and thus neutral), rather than robust goods and ills in their own right. Where needed, I will moreover formulate an alternative description of the relevant good to avoid potential concerns. The purpose of developing this list is to provide support for symmetry and, at least, strong. That is, if successful, we will have a clear and defensible list of four robust goods and of four robust ills, each of which will form a pair with an item on the opposing quadruplet. This would show, first of all, that there is a substantial amount of good-ill pairs – i.e. strong – while also providing strong, albeit inconclusive, support for symmetry.

Section 4.1 – The list.

We can begin with a list of plausible goods: pleasure, knowledge or understanding, achievement, and friendship. The items of this list are chosen for a couple of reasons. First, they are present, at least in some form, on a number of current lists: pleasure – or happiness – on Fletcher (2013), Murphy (2001), and Parfit (1984); knowledge on Finnis (1980), Murphy (2001), and Parfit (1984); achievement – or some kind of excellence in activity – on Fletcher (2013), Murphy (2001), and Parfit (1984); friendship – or community or sociability – on Finnis (1980), Fletcher (2013), and Murphy (2001). Second, they are highly plausible, at least under certain characterisations. The following discussion will briefly argue for their non-instrumental goodness, but this case has been made at length elsewhere (e.g. Hooker 2015, Fletcher 2013 etc.). Third, unlike other candidates, they resist reduction in terms of non-prudential value or in terms of other
prudential goods. For example, other goods that are often included, such as virtue (e.g. Fletcher 2013, Parfit 1984) and aesthetic experience (e.g. Finnis 1980, Murphy 2001, and Parfit 1984), might be objected to on the grounds that their value is better accounted for in terms of, respectively, moral and aesthetic value. Similarly, happiness (e.g. on Fletcher 2013 and Murphy 2001) might be accounted for in terms of pleasure – i.e. happiness is good for us only insofar as it reliably causes pleasure. Finally, though most of these goods lend themselves to formulating a list of corresponding ills, which are independently plausible as non-instrumentally, robustly bad for us, at least for one of them there are issue in doing so. This is because the clearest candidate ill resists initial characterisation as something more than a mere absence of the good. However, I will argue, this is only true under a flawed articulation of either the relevant ill or of the good in question. This will serve to respond to objections from counterexamples (i.e., from unpaired goods or ills) by providing a possible instance of such a counterexample and showing how it is susceptible to being analysed away.

This neatly transitions into the next step of the argument: the list of corresponding ills. These, then will be pain, ignorance, failure, and isolation. In what follows I will briefly argue that these are independently intuitive, robust ills – that is, kinds of things that are the bearers of negative prudential value, rather than bad for us in the sense of being “worse for us” qua absence of the relevant good (ignorance, for instance, is liable to being interpreted in such a way). To do this I will endeavour to characterise what these consist in such that they do not appear as a mere absence of the relevant good, and then argue that they are bad for us. This will also necessitate characterising the opposing goods in some detail.

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6I do not mean to claim by this that the value of the putative goods is in fact reducible to other kinds of value or to that of other prudential goods. Rather, I take these goods to be more controversial on the grounds that they might be. Moreover, it should be noted that, insofar as this list is meant to show how symmetry and strong stand on good grounds, the putative goods excluded also seem to suggest counterpart ills with which they could be paired: vice, aesthetic disgust, and unhappiness, for instance. Thus, if it were shown that they should be included after all, this would not undermine my overall argument.
Section 4.2 – Pleasure and pain.

In the case of the first pair – pleasure and pain – little argument is likely needed. In some form, they are ills explicitly or implicitly included in every list, and, if an account or list fails to do so, this is usually considered a serious flaw for said account (e.g. Haybron 2008a against perfectionism), rather than evidence that these are not good (and bad) for us. In the next chapter, discussion of the nature of the pairing relationship will require a more detailed treatment of what these states actually are, but for the time being the following should suffice: I will take pleasure and pain to both be affective experiences that differ precisely with regards to their affectivity. This is characterised in terms of painfulness or unpleasantness in the case of pain and of pleasantness in the case of pleasure. Chapter 2 will discuss different ways in which we can understand pleasantness and unpleasantness.

Something that should be noted, though, is that some OLTs may specify a slightly different good instead of pleasure. For example, Sumner (1996) identifies authentic happiness as his one good. Though what kind of affective states or in what guise should be identified as bearers of prudential value is of course an important issue, it does not bear on the present question. This is because any of these candidates also involve a relevant counterpart ill (e.g. unhappiness). Thus, if replacing pleasure with any such alternative is preferable, said alternative can substitute pleasure in what follows without this bearing on the present or later argument.

7I here use “pain” and “pleasure” in a non-technical way, and instead as umbrella terms to refer, respectively, to all unpleasant and pleasant experiences. It should be noted, though, that there is a case to be made for restricting the use at least of “pain” to merely physical unpleasant experiences (e.g. Bain & Brady 2014; Corns 2015). However, here the term is retained in this non-technical use in order to conform to the well-being literature. Chapter 2 will discuss this issue in more detail.
Section 4.3 – Knowledge, understanding and ignorance.

Knowledge also has an intuitive counterpart ill – ignorance – as Kagan (2014) notes. I will assume the standard justified true belief analysis of knowledge for simplicity. Ignorance, under this account, would be a failure by a belief to count as knowledge: i.e. it is either false, unjustified, or both. However there are good reasons to think that the relevant good is not best specified in terms of “knowledge”, but rather, in terms of “understanding”.

This is because there are a number of cases of knowledge that do not appear to be good for us. In fact, knowledge that does not benefit us is often cited in alienation arguments against OLTs and Objectivism in general (Kagan 2009). For instance, knowing what the first word is on page 156 of *The Goblet of Fire* does not seem, excluding perhaps some very peculiar circumstances, good for us. Moreover, having a false belief about it does not seem to make us worse off either.

By contrast, specifying the relevant good in terms of understanding avoids such objections. Let’s somewhat simplify matters and take the difference between knowledge and understanding as the following: knowledge consists in a particular (justified and true) belief, while understanding also appears to be a matter of grasping how our beliefs concerning a subject or thing “fit together” to provide an accurate comprehensive picture – i.e. understanding requires that we grasp how our beliefs (or the propositions we believe in) cohere with other relevant ones (e.g. Kvanvig 2003). This would make both sense of cases of knowledge that are intuitively valuable while also accounting for non-valuable ones. The value of an instance of knowledge would be derived from its contribution to understanding: as

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8The reason for beginning the discussion in terms of knowledge is to relate the present discussion to related ones in the literature, seeing as most lists that include an epistemic good appeal to knowledge and because Kagan’s own discussion of OLT goods and ills is conducted in terms of it.
an accurate picture of a subject matter, understanding requires (a) beliefs (note, plural), (b) their truth, and (c) their correct interconnection. If we take (c) to supply a picture of justification, one that might avoid Gettier cases and contextualist counterexamples, then at least many of the beliefs that constitute understanding would also be instances of knowledge.

Thus, take the example of knowing that the Earth is round. This does, I think, strike us as good for us. However, if all we know is this one fact about the subject (whether this be astronomy, geology etc.),9 perhaps only justified by the fact that we heard this from a reliable source, this might no longer strike us as particularly valuable. On the other hand, if this item of knowledge were to fit into a more general field of beliefs, which is overall accurate, and which allows us to grasp facts about our world and our place in it, then *this* would strike us as good for us. Therefore, understanding appears to be an appropriate good to include on our list which both accounts for intuitively good cases of knowledge and rules out those which do not.

If, from this, we take the difference between knowledge and understanding to essentially be one between parts and whole – whereas knowledge is a matter of individual beliefs, understanding is a matter of how these beliefs fit together – we can derive from this a resulting account of ignorance as a severely flawed overall picture (misunderstanding). This can first of all be a failure with regards to the beliefs involved – i.e. if false or unjustified. If a belief that is meant to form our picture of a matter is false, then this picture will, to some degree, be flawed. A second way in which our understanding of a topic can fail, though, is with regards to how we take the relevant beliefs to cohere: i.e. the parts (the beliefs) may be fine (true and justified) but the way we take them to fit together may be flawed.

9That is, if this belief does not fit in a broader understanding of the Earth, our solar system etc. For example, if we think that it is round and, therefore, we can only live on its “top” or we would fall off of it.
Call this “unity” for simplicity. Thus a case of ignorance qua misunderstanding can come as a result of false constituent beliefs or a failure in their unity.\(^\text{10}\)

Turning to the issue of whether ignorance so-construed is harmful to us, we can consider a couple of scenarios. First, it retains what might have been attractive about ignorance qua false or unjustified belief as an ill. For instance, if we thought that the Earth was flat, this seems bad for us. However, ignorance qua misunderstanding also takes this to be a case of an ill: this false belief contributes to a mistaken picture of our world. Indeed, it is likely going to jeopardise our understanding further by forcing us to accept other false beliefs (e.g. if the Earth is flat, then there must be a government conspiracy behind the push to portray it as round; but for what purpose? Perhaps the government is run by reptilian aliens trying to stop us from competing with them in the galaxy, and so on). Moreover, cases of a failure in how beliefs come together (i.e. their unity) also seem to be bad for us. For instance, if we knew that the Earth was round, and that the sun and moon were round, as well as that these orbited each other, but inferred from these and other observations that the sun and moon orbited the Earth, we would have misunderstood how the solar system works. Intuitively, this seems like a kind of ignorance that is at least to some extent harmful.

Section 4.4 – Achievement and failure.

Moving on to achievement, I will broadly base the discussion on Bradford’s (2015, 2016a, 2016b) analysis of these notions. Her claim is that achievements have “a certain structure – a process that culminates in a product, that is, an outcome or a goal” (Bradford 2016a, pg 796). Thus, we can understand them as a complex

\(^{10}\text{It should be noted though that a failure in coherence may well be caused by the absence of a belief – i.e. one that would lead to a different overall picture of a topic or thing. This would mean that some absences of belief could be harmful, but still only insofar as they constitute a failure in understanding.}
process involving (a) the (intentional) pursuit of a goal, and (b) the accomplishment of said goal. Moreover, Bradford identifies two important features of valuable achievements, whose variance affects the value of said achievement: the value of the achievement – qua achievement – seems to be proportional to (1) the difficulty of achieving its goal and (2) the significance of its goal. Regarding (1), we might think that running a marathon (at an amateur, sub-four-hour, level) is less of an accomplishment and, qua achievement, less valuable for the subject if it was easy for them (relatively little training) than for someone who had to work very hard for it. Turning to (2), the value of the goal also seems relevant to the value of the achievement. For example, writing an interesting but ultimately mundane novel seems less valuable qua achievement than writing a great novel (i.e. genre- or culture-defining). However, Bradford (2015 and 2016a) notes, this need not be an independent value, as the case of the marathon shows. Rather, we may perhaps instead capture this in terms of the significance of the goal for the subject or their life – we can then cash this “significance” in objective, subjective terms (or both) depending on what appears on reflection to best capture this criterion.11

As appears already in the presentation of Bradford’s analysis of achievement, this seems to be a worthy candidate for a good: writing a great novel, qua achievement, seems good for us, as does reaching the point of being able to run a marathon, though perhaps the latter is less valuable. In each case, a subject that does accomplish these goals, while also meeting Bradford’s other criteria for achievement, appears to be better off than one that does not, other things being equal.

11Bradford’s analysis is richer and more nuanced than can be be done justice here. For reasons of space, certain aspects have been cut, as they were considered less relevant to the present discussion. For instance, her inclusion of a third feature of achievements – the credit condition (that the achiever must be able to claim credit for the achievement, with regards to both (a) and (b)).
Let us now turn to the relevant ill: failure. This cannot merely be the absence of achievement. Other things being equal, a life without achievement may not be a great one, but it is not necessarily a bad one. So it must be some other way in which we fail with regards to achievement. A failure with regards to (1) or (2) also will not do: this would be an easy accomplishment or that of an insignificant goal (or both), such as the peeling and eating of a banana. Though this may not be something beneficial \textit{qua} achievement, failing to accomplish such goals also doesn’t seem harmful.\textsuperscript{12} Our ill must then be a failure with regards to (a) or (b). The former must also be dismissed though: the unintentional pursuit, or failure to do so, of a goal (aside from “unintentional pursuit” verging on incoherence) also does not, in itself, appear to be something harmful. The failure must therefore be with regards to (b). Thus, frustration must consist in our failure to achieve our goal. Furthermore, this must be a significant goal that has been pursued intentionally and with some difficulty: a failure to accomplish an easy and insignificant goal, though perhaps humiliating under certain circumstances (e.g. somehow failing to peel a banana), does not seem to consist in a serious harm; neither would one we fail to actually pursue (after all, this does not seem to be a goal we have actually taken on as our own, if we fail to even pursue it). Therefore, failure as an ill will here be taken to consist in a failure to accomplish a \textit{significant} goal we have \textit{intentionally pursued} through the \textit{difficulties} that attend this enterprise.

Indeed, such a failure does appear to be bad for us. For example, setting out to write a great novel and, despite taking “all the right steps”, working thoroughly and with difficulty towards this goal, but failing to accomplish it, seems to be genuinely harmful to us. Moreover, we can contrast this with the case of missing out on something we would have wanted (but which otherwise does not constitute failure in the present sense), such as a nice vacation. Other things being equal, the latter

\textsuperscript{12}Indeed, if we were to question any of this, it would be whether or not these would still be good for us.
is merely neutral, not harmful, as it is only the absence of something potentially beneficial.

Of course, this could be interpreted as a matter of “failed opportunity” or “meaningless suffering”. However, the former appears to be more of a lack of the goods we might have otherwise gained. But this would mean that, in itself, the time spent was merely unproductive, and thus neutral rather than something bad in itself. Also, the badness of this failure seems to go beyond the badness of the unpleasantness involved in the pursuit. To see this, we can imagine that the process of writing also included a number of pleasures, that might go some way in balancing any unpleasantness. Still, the failure to accomplish the goal seems to remain bad for us.

Section 4.5 – Friendship, isolation and enmity.

Finally, we should move on to the case of friendship and isolation. A word of caution first though: “isolation” here is taken as a placeholder for any relevant ill that is plausibly opposed to friendship. It is sufficient for our purposes that something is opposed to friendship in the requisite way, even though “isolation” may not be the best way to refer to it. Shortly, I will outline two possible, general ways of doing so.

Let us begin with an account of what friendship consists in taken from Cocking and Kennett’s (2000) analysis in terms of an interpersonal relationship marked by five distinctive features. The first three are relatively uncontroversial, and include mutual affection, a disposition to promote the other’s interests and/or well-being, and a desire to share experiences. On top of these, Cocking and Kennett include a receptivity to be directed by what are the other’s interests (i.e. not just in pursuing their interests, in the sense of their welfare, but of becoming interested
in the things in which they are interested), and mutual drawing, that is the
tendency to have our self-conception shaped by how our friends see us. The
degree of value of the friendship, then, can be understood in terms of the strength
of the friendship, which in turn can be accounted for in terms of the varying
degrees of each aspect.

The variance in the value of a friendship can be taken as a matter of the deepness
or strength of the relationship, as accounted for by the strength or deepness of
the features discussed. Intuitively, this is what makes a friendship good for us: it
is the fact that we are deeply connected to someone else in a way that is
significant in a particular way and which is mutual. To show the intuitiveness of
the value of friendship, we should turn to an example. Take someone who has a
good number of deep friendships. They care about their friends, a sentiment that
is reciprocated, share meaningful experiences they both cherish etc. This,
intuitively, is a situation that is good for the subject.

We can, moreover, eliminate the possibility that it is the likely goods attendant to
such a friendship, especially pleasure, that explain its prudential goodness. After
all, we can imagine that some of these friendships might turn out to, overall,
involve more suffering than pleasure. As the pleasure or pain attending a
friendship depends on the circumstances in which the friends find themselves, it
may be that the overall balance of pleasure and pain over the friendship (and
attributable to it) is negative (i.e. overall painful). Of course, we might think that,
in such a case a similar friendship that involved more pleasure than pain would
be better for the subject. But the question is whether the first, overall painful
friendship is still good for them. Unless the pain involved in the friendship is
notably significant, I think it safe to say that such friendships are still good for us.
If so, there is good reason to take friendship as a non-instrumental good.
However, once we turn to isolation, we immediately encounter a problem. This is that, the most intuitive way of characterising isolation is precisely as a lack of friendship. But, we are assuming, a mere lack of a good cannot be robustly bad for us. This might suggest that we have, after all, found a counterexample to the stronger pairing theses: a plausible good with no viable, robust ill as a counterpart. However, this is premature for two reasons. The first is that we may look for a different kind of ill to oppose friendship. One such candidate I will briefly discuss is enmity. The second is that, even as an apparent mere absence, isolation is intuitively bad for us. It therefore warrants further examination.

Starting with the first of these, we might specify the ill opposing friendship in terms of a different, and opposite, robust relationship we might hold towards others: enmity. We can understand this not as the mere absence of Cocking and Kennett’s (2000) five features of friendship in our interpersonal relations (or the absence of these very relationships), but rather as the presence of relationships expressing opposite features. Thus, for instance, these may be relationships of mutual hatred – i.e. where we wish ill upon each other – and where we resist mutual drawing (or where we draw ourselves in opposition to the enemy’s picture of us). This is not meant to be a full articulation of the relationship of enmity. However, this partial characterisation appears sufficient to me to show that it does appear non-instrumentally bad for us. That is, it seems bad for us to stand in these kinds of relationships with other human beings (other things being equal) on top of the potential instrumental harms that might attend the fact that someone might pursue hurting us.

Alternatively, we might try to redefine what friendship qua prudential good is (as observation (2) from the end of section 3 recommends). Moreover, as already noted, isolation still seems intuitively bad for us, even especially so, and including in cases where we have no enemies. An unwilling hermit-like existence, for instance, seems quite miserable. Of course, this may be merely a matter of
attendant ills, such as suffering. Still, this attempt at diffusing the intuition of the badness of isolation is ultimately unconvincing. For example, let us return to our unwilling hermit. Let us imagine that they have, over time, gotten used to their situation and thus no longer experience much pain as a consequence of their isolation. That is not to say that they do not dislike their condition or that they have come to accept it, but rather that, having come used to it, the painfulness of it is greatly diminished. A castaway, for instance, living on an island for years, may no longer experience any pain directed at being isolated from others. But, they would still seem to be poorly off precisely because they are isolated. Thus, I take this to be enough of a reason to warrant reconsidering where we stand. However, I take it that (a) Cocking and Kennett’s characterisation of friendship itself is quite plausible and (b) there are strong reasons to think that something like friendship is non-instrumentally good for us. Hence, I will first of all not question the present picture of the nature of friendship, and second I will still take friendship thus-specified to realise the relevant good.

The way we might approach this task, given the restrictions that were just highlighted, is by specifying a different kind of state that is realised by friendships. A candidate for this might be “social integration”: subjects are better off by being involved with other people. I take this to be a structured good involving (a) a social group, (b) a social subject (one that strives or requires for social inclusion), and (c) conditions for the subject to be “in” the social group. Thus, friendship could be our account of (c), where if a social subject – i.e. (b) – has a sufficient degree of friendship – i.e. (c) – then they are said to be “in” or “integrated” into the social group – i.e. (a).13 This integration, then, is what is good for the subject in question. This is a picture of sociality or social integration that is merely constituted by particular inter-personal relations.

13 However, we should note that this is a simplification. Friendship may be one of a plurality of realisers of this social integration, even if an important one.
This is a highly programmatic sketch, but my purpose here is merely to show the general viability of such a strategy, and not to argue for a specific account of it. What it does suggest, though, is how we might then be able to account for an opposing ill. Initially, it might look like we are again stuck with a mere absence as our only candidate – i.e. the absence of social integration. However, this is not necessarily the case. For instance, we can understand a failure of a social subject to be integrated into a group as a genuine state: that of being “ostracised” from the group, or “outside”. Of course, for simplicity, we can understand this to be realised by the absence of friendship, but this does not mean that the state that is realised by it is itself an absence. This likely requires a more detailed characterisation of the subject qua social, but an initial sketch can be provided with reference to our picture of achievement as a structured good. That is, we can think of the social subject as one that strives towards or requires social integration and thus already stands in a particular relation towards other people: that of striving towards or requiring an inter-personal relation with them. Lacking friendships, then, is a state where this requirement is not met while the requirement persists, hence not being a mere absence of social integration.

Finally, I take it that our original intuitions still apply when the ill is couched in these terms. For example, the subject that is socially integrated via their numerous friendship strikes us as well-off, in this respect at least; the subject that, though somewhat integrated, lacks true interpersonal involvement with others, or only in a shallow way, on the other hand, does not seem either well off or harmed in virtue of this; by contrast, the completely (or nearly) ostracised subject – i.e. “outside” the social because they have no interpersonal relationships of the requisite kind – seems to be harmed as a consequence.

Of course, this account is only a sketch, but I take it that it can be a programmatic approach to conceptualising what is prudentially good about friendship such that we can define a plausible corresponding ill. A number of issues would have to be
addressed, though, in order for it to be truly viable, such as a more detailed characterisation of the subject qua social, of what the relevant social group must be, and also of what the conditions or realisers of this good would be. However, spelling these out falls outside of the scope of our present interests, so I will leave these to a side.

Therefore, it seems to be both true that friendship is a plausible good and that there is a corresponding ill, whether this is enmity or isolation (in later chapters I will assume the latter for simplicity). Indeed, both enmity and isolation are intuitively robustly bad for us. Thus, either enmity is another realiser, on top of a lack of friendship, of social isolation, or this may be an instance of a pairing relation which holds between one good and a plurality of ills. Given that, as we saw earlier, this is not itself problematic, I will leave this as a possibility but will not discuss it further, instead, as I noted, focussing on isolation as the sole ill corresponding to friendship.

Section 4.6 – Asserting symmetry and strong.

What the above discussion shows is that of four widely accepted and very plausible goods, all four can be paired with four equally plausible ills. This is even true for goods such as friendship which are sometimes taken to be resistant to this conclusion. This, then, provides partial confirmation for both of the stronger theses about the place of pairs in an OLT: strong and symmetry. First, assuming there are either no or only a few more goods and ills that we may include in our list, we have guaranteed the truth of the strong. Second, the same assumption provides solid support for symmetry. That is, there does not, currently, seem to be a good case to make that there are any unpaired goods or ills as all of our best candidates appear to be paired. However, this does not show that there cannot be other unpaired goods and ills we simply have not considered yet. Therefore,
though we can assert symmetry with some confidence, this is not conclusive evidence. By contrast, strong is just weak enough to permit precisely such a possibility and still be true. Hence, we can conclude, with a reasonable degree of confidence, that strong is true.
Conclusion.

This chapter has explored both what an OLT theory is necessarily and plausibly committed to as part of its theory of ill-being, as well as the important substantive thesis concerning the fact that items on our list of goods and of ills should form individual pairs. For now, this claim is hard to question given supporting intuitions and the fact that candidate goods and ills in fact seemed to be paired in this way (or at least, that candidate goods lend themselves to generating candidate ills, and vice versa). However, as we will see, once we begin to investigate what this relationship might consist in, we encounter some problems. Thus, the following chapter will argue that a naive conception of pluralist OLTs cannot provide such an account of good-ill pairs. To survive, I will argue, it is necessary to appeal to the kind of explanatory account that is unavailable to OLTs. Ultimately, it will be maintained that the naive conception of an OLT’s pluralism is what is at the root of the issue, and that, instead, we ought to appeal to a more radical form of pluralism.
Chapter 2. Pairs as a Problem for OLTs.

In the previous chapter, the nature of a pluralist objective list theory (OLT) of ill-being was discussed, and the notion of a good-ill pair was introduced as an important feature of pluralist OLTs. That is, most or all goods and ills identified by plausible pluralist OLTs stand in a special and exclusive relationship to one another. For example, pleasure stands in a special relationship to pain, as opposed to other ills, such as ignorance. In this chapter, I argue that (1) pluralist OLTs cannot make sense of this pairing relationship, and (2) that therefore OLTs are not adequate theories of well-being. The first section presents the relevant argument – the Problem from Pairs – in more detail.

In response, OLTs can attempt to undermine (1) by articulating an OLT-compatible account of pairing. There are three ways of doing so, namely, in terms of the evaluative properties of the relata, in terms of their non-evaluative properties, and in terms of a unifying account of the grounds of prudential value. In Section 2 I argue that the first explanation is not available to OLTs. Section 3 then presents possible OLT explanation of pairs in terms of the non-evaluative properties of paired goods and ills. Section 4 will focus on what I take to be the strongest candidate of these possibilities – that paired goods and ills are mutually exclusive – and show how this would apply in the case of each of our candidate goods and ills from Chapter 1. Section 5 will critique this Mutual Exclusion account and note the explanatory limitations of this approach. Finally, Section 6 will argue that the explanatory lacuna identified in Section 5 constitutes a serious problem for the OLT account of pairing, given the proliferation of said pairs. As such, even the strongest non-evaluative explanation available to OLTs cannot be supported, clearing the way for the next chapter which will present a unified account of good-ill pairs through prudential value.
To clarify, this chapter attempts to formulate a problem from within pluralist OLTs. That is, the argument entails that the problem arises as a consequence of the theory’s own approach to explaining well-being. Thus, OLT theorists cannot simply respond to this challenge as they might in response to counter examples: by biting the bullet and accepting that our intuitions are wrong about a particular case, as they would for, for example, problems with alienation and subject-dependence (e.g. Railton 1986; Sumner 1996; Hall & Tiberius 2016).
Section 1 – The Problem from Good-Ill Pairs.

As noted in the introduction, this chapter aims to show that OLTs cannot account for the notion of a good-ill pair. In particular, OLTs have trouble making sense of the notion of good-ill pairs introduced in the previous chapter. To recapitulate, this was the idea that particular goods and ills are paired, such that they seem to stand in an exclusive and special relationship with an ill or good, respectively. For example, pleasure and pain seem to stand in a special relationship to one another as opposed to, say, pleasure and ignorance or understanding and pain. In Chapter 1, it was argued at length both that (a) there are such pairs and (b) that a significant number of plausible goods and ills are paired in this way. (b) led to two strong claims about the proportion of paired goods and ills in our enumerative theory: the Strong Thesis (henceforth *strong*)—most of our goods and ills are paired—and the Symmetry Thesis (henceforth *symmetry*)—all of our goods and ills are paired.

Section 1.1 – The aims and target of the argument.

What was left out of this picture was an account of the relationship that stands between a paired good and ill: the pairing relationship. My contention in this chapter is that OLTs cannot provide an account of such a relationship as they lack the necessary conceptual tools to do so (see section 6 for a diagnosis). To see this, it is worth articulate in more detail what I take to be the defining characteristics of OLTs.

Standard interpretations of OLTs not only subscribe to a characterisation in terms of a list of goods and ills, but also strictly identify with it. This implies that they maintain the explanatory adequacy of this simple characterisation, such that any
additional thesis (e.g. a further explanatory claim) is unnecessary.¹ This means that, either OLTs must deny the need for an explanatory claim (i.e. a claim about why bearers of value and disvalue are good and bad for us) or they must assert a distinctly OLT explanatory claim. The latter kind of explanatory claim has been articulated as follows: that instances of a good are good for us because they are instances of said good (e.g. Lin 2017). Thus, an instance of pleasure p is good for us because it is an instance of pleasure, such that being-an-instance-of-pleasure is a good-making property. The same goes not only for other goods, but also ills. Thus, being-an-instance-of-pain or -of-ignorance will be a bad-making property, such that anything that is an instance of pain is bad for us (i.e. bearer of negative prudential value).

The former option is implausible, absent important theoretical considerations (e.g., the epistemic inaccessibility of an adequate explanatory claim), if taken to mean a denial of even this kind of limited explanatory claim (of course, we might prefer other explanatory claims, but this still means rejecting this first option). Though Fletcher (2013), for example, classes OLTs as enumerative theories, it is generally accepted in the literature that such theories can make explanatory claims of this sort and that all theories must make some explanatory claim (Frankena 1973; Crisp, 2006a, 2006b; Woodard 2013; Lin 2017).² In fact, it seems plausible to read Fletcher’s (2013) understanding of enumerative theories as allowing this kind of explanatory claim. Take his example of an enumerative and of an explanatory moral theory: the Ten Commandments and the Divine Command Theory (2013, p208). Insofar as the former is enumerative, it is so

¹Note, that a perfectionist may also agree that there is a list of things that are good for us and a list of things that are bad for us, but will make a further explanatory claim – i.e. that these goods are constitutive of the fulfilment of a core capacity (e.g. Bradford 2021). Thus, perfectionists can subscribe to OLT enumerative claims while also making a perfectionist explanatory claim.

²Later in this chapter I will identify an ambiguity between different senses of good-maker (and bad-maker) which I think best accounts for the apparent denial of the need for explanatory claims in Fletcher (2013) (see sections 5.2 and 6.2).
because it lists the *kinds* of actions which are wrong. But this still explains *why* particular actions are wrong – i.e. because they are an instance of a listed action.

It is worth making a brief aside here about the correct way of individuating good- and bad-makers. There are two ways we might do so. The first is the more fine-grained way I have suggested above, while the second is a more coarse-grained one: i.e., it individuates the single good-maker *being-an-instance-of-a-good* and the single bad-maker *being-an-instance-of-an-ill* irrespective of the number of goods and ills a particular OLT identifies. However, this second approach should be dismissed, as it would make the OLT explanatory claim amount to very little: different OLTs would not just propose the same *kind* of explanatory claim, but the *exact same one*.

To see this, consider the following. If we took this interpretation of the OLT explanatory claim, then an *x* that is good for us would be so *because it was an instance of a good*. But this is trivial *if we assume an OLT*. That is, under an OLT, it is of course because something is an instance of some good that it is good for us and an instance of some ill that it is bad for us. If OLTs are to explain anything through their explanatory claims, they must say something more specific: they must tell us of which good a valuable thing is an instance. Otherwise, OLTs with different lists would be giving the same answer to why some *x* is good for us. Thus, consider an OLT *T₁* which has on its goods list, for simplicity, only pleasure, and an OLT *T₂* which only has understanding. Let us assume that there is a beneficial *x* which is an instance of understanding *and* an instance of pleasure. If the general interpretation of the OLT explanatory claim were true, then under both *T₁* and *T₂* *x* would be good for us for the same reason – i.e. because it is an instance of a good. Both theories, then, would give the same answer to the question of why *x* is good for us, even though their claims about why it *x* is good for us are very different: *T₁* claims that it is because *x* is an instance of pleasure, while *T₂* claims that it is because it is an instance of understanding. Indeed, this interpretation
might even undermine the distinction between OLTs and theories such as desire-satisfactionism (DS). That is, if following Lin (2018) we understand DS as positing a single good-making property of *being-an-instance-of-desire-satisfaction*, then under this understanding of explanatory claims, a desired \( x \) would be good for us *because it is an instance of a good*. I take it that any interpretation which would undermine the distinction between OLTs and DS in this way is unacceptable.

Finally, as we will see in Chapter 4, it is more accurate to characterise weak monism and pluralism in terms of the number of good- and bad-makers we posit. Therefore, as the coarse-grained characterisation of the OLT good- and bad-makers identifies a single good-maker and a single bad-maker irrespective of the number of goods and ills listed by the theory, it would make OLTs monist by definition. Given the preponderance of pluralist OLTs and the important distinctions between them and monist OLTs such as Hedonism, I take this outcome to be deeply implausible.

Therefore, in what follows, I will take OLT explanatory claims to be specified in terms of the particular basic good involved (e.g. *being-an-instance-of-pleasure*).

*Section 1.2 – The argument.*

I will begin with an initial presentation of the problem that I claim OLTs face, followed by a formal articulation of the argument. I will then analyse and evaluate the argument, before, in later sections, moving on to explore some possible OLT responses.

The core worry can be understood as follows. If goods just the bearers of *positive* prudential value, and ills are just the bearers of *negative* prudential value, then it is unclear what makes the opposition between any particular good-ill pair special.
That is, as mentioned, if their opposition is merely that between something with positive value and something with negative value, then there is nothing special about their relation, as it will hold between any two kinds of things with opposite value. With reference to pleasure-pain and understanding-ignorance, if we were to base the pairing relation on the opposite value these have, then pleasure and ignorance would also form a pair, as would understanding and pain. But this would not be an account of the pairing relation, as this is not supposed to hold between any good and any ill.

The problem then is that OLTs do not have any remaining resources we might appeal to in order to explain said special relationship. But if this is true, then it would also seem that they cannot account for good-ill pairs. Given the strong evidence for the existence, in some sense, of such pairings, this would mean that OLTs are explanatorily inadequate, at least insofar as they cannot make sense of what appears to be a significant feature of the discourse.

Now, there are likely concerns with this line of reasoning. I will discuss these at length in what follows, but it is worth first articulating this argument formally.

(P1) If a theory of well-being cannot account for an important phenomenon of prudential discourse, then it is explanatorily inadequate.
(P2) The fact that many or all goods and ills are paired is an important phenomenon of prudential discourse. Therefore, (C1) if a theory cannot account for the pairing of goods and ills, then it is explanatorily inadequate. (P1, P2, universal instantiation)
(P3) If a theory is to account for the pairing of goods and ills, then it must provide an analysis of the pairing relation.
(P4) OLTs cannot provide an analysis of the pairing relation. Therefore, (C2) OLTs cannot account for the pairing of goods and ills. (P3, P4, modus tollens)
Therefore, (C3) OLTs are explanatorily inadequate. (*C1, C2, modus ponens*)

Section 1.3 – Initial evaluation of the argument.

The formal presentation of this argument helps focus OLT efforts to answer this challenge. For instance, attention should be on the truth-value of the premises as the argument is formally valid. (C1) is derived via *universal instantiation* from (P1) and (P2) as the latter claims that something – that there are many paired goods and ills – is a particular instance of a kind present in (P1) – an important phenomenon of prudential discourse. (C1) is then merely a restatement of (P1) in terms of a particular instance of a general kind present in the latter. (C2) moves via *modus tollens* from (P3) and (P4), as (P4) is equivalent to the negation of the consequent of (P3) (i.e. it is necessary that a theory provide… and it is necessarily not the case that a (particular) theory provide…[^3]). (C3) then is a simple application of *modus ponens* from (C1) and (C2).[^4] To respond to this argument, then, one of the premises must be questioned. Therefore, OLT responses must focus on how to reject at least one of (P1)-(P4).

Here, I will provide a brief defence of the premises above. This is merely meant to be a preliminary explanation of their rationale and not (yet) a full-fledged defence.

(P1) seems like a relatively uncontroversial claim about theories in a discourse: the purpose of a theory *t* of discourse *d* is to explain the features and phenomena of *d*; therefore, if *t* cannot explain a feature *f* or phenomenon *p* of *d*, it is not an

[^3]: I have simplified this somewhat by skipping a trivial step of carrying out a universal instantiation presenting OLTs as an instance of a theory of well-being.

[^4]: Again skipping the trivial universal instantiation step of substituting OLTs as an instance of theories of well-being from C1.
adequate theory of d. As OLTS are a theory of well-being, it is also true of them that they must explain features and phenomena of prudential discourse. Turning to (P2), this is relatively uncontroversial given the discussion in Chapter 1, where the truth of either strong or symmetry was asserted. That being said, in the next section (P2) will be questioned before being accepted for good.⁵

(P3), on the other hand, may initially seem to be more controversial than the first two. This is because it restricts our possibilities of accounting for good-ill pairs to the articulation of a pairing relationship. However, it is not clear to me whether there really are any alternatives to this approach of accounting for pairing. This is particularly true given that, as was mentioned in Chapter 1, there are so far no restrictions on what kind of relation this must be. That is, the relation could be based on non-prudential grounds, such as the mutual exclusion analysis discussed in section 3.

Finally, (P4) is the main sticking point of the argument. Most of the preceding premises are more or less uncontroversial, so whether OLTS can indeed make sense of the pairing relation or not is what would determine whether the argument is in fact effective. So far, we have seen that there are doubts whether they have the tools necessary for doing so, and thus the following discussion will turn on whether OLTS can find alternative explanations which we have not considered. In particular, the focus is on whether we can articulate plausible accounts of the pairing relation which are compatible with OLTS.

⁵It should be noted though that the best OLTS strategy discussed at length below may in fact be understood as a way denying (P2) in a different way: i.e. by claiming that good-ill pairs are not, when properly construed, features of a prudential discourse, or, at least, that the pairing relation has nothing to do with goods and ills qua goods and ills, but is instead a non-prudential matter.
Section 2 – Initial Responses: What OLTs Cannot Say.

This section will look at some preliminary responses open to OLTs.

Section 2.1 – deny premise 2.

The first approach tries to reject (P2) by denying that the pairing relation is a significant phenomenon. I will take the simplest and most viable way of doing so to be the denial of symmetry – the thesis that all goods and ills are paired. After all, as has already been noted, it can be reasonably questioned whether there is enough evidence to support the claim that all goods and ills are paired (as seen in Chapter 1) or that they must be. If so, then we might put (P2) into question.

While showing the necessity of pairs certainly seems a tall order, this move is nevertheless not sufficient to deny (P2). First, the evidence we have, as seen in the previous chapter, does seem to strongly suggest the truth of symmetry: after all, all plausible goods on major lists can be paired with an opposing ill, and the most plausible goods and ills are all paired; there also seems to be a strong, intuitive presumption in its favour given that candidate counterexamples – i.e. unpaired goods or ills – seem to warrant the reconsideration of their formulation. Of course, this cannot be taken to be conclusive evidence that no unpaired goods or ills exist. We may indeed find some very convincing examples of these. But it is still notable that, so far, we have not. Second, strong is sufficient to assert (P2). If most goods and ills are paired, pairing is a significant feature of the discourse. And as there is sufficient evidence to assert strong, so is there sufficient evidence to assert (P2).

Therefore, denying (P2) is not a viable strategy for OLTs to respond to the argument presented against them.
Section 2.2 – Basing the relation on evaluative grounds.

OLTs, then, must respond to the argument by denying (P4) by showing how they can account for the pairing relation. There are two broad ways by which they might try to do so. The first is on evaluative grounds, and the second is on non-evaluative ones. As we will see shortly, the former option is far too problematic to be a serious candidate. The latter, then, will be the more productive route. To begin with, though, I will explain why OLTs should not try basing the pairing relationship on evaluative grounds.

The first way we might try to base the pairing relation on evaluative grounds has already been mentioned. Namely, by appealing to the opposing values of the paired goods. Thus, the suggestion goes, paired goods and ills are paired in virtue of being the bearers of opposing (positive and negative respectively) prudential values. However, this proposal cannot work as it would pair every good with every ill, which would not make the relation an exclusive one – a key feature of the relation, as identified in Chapter 1. There, however, I did note that each good (or ill) might not be paired solely with one other ill (or good). For instance, ignorance may be paired with understanding and with intellectual virtue (if we included it on our list). This might suggest that this way of basing pairing on evaluative grounds is, after all, viable. But this would be a mistake as it is still key to pairing that, even if each good or ill could be paired with more than one ill or good, it cannot be paired with all ills or goods. That is, goods are not paired with at least some ills (and vice versa). The relation is then still exclusive in the sense that it excludes some things from entering into the relation with certain others. That at least this sense of exclusivity is necessary should be clear from the discussion of the features of pairing from the previous chapter. Thus, even if ignorance is paired with goods other than understanding, it certainly is not paired with pleasure or with
friendship. But if pairing really were just a matter of evaluative opposition, this would still be true as ignorance and pleasure still have opposing values. Thus, this approach must be dismissed after all.

To avoid this problem, we might then try to make the evaluative grounds for the relationship “special” ones. This would mean making the opposition, or its evaluative grounds, between a paired good and ill one that is at least in some sense different from that between the good and ill of another pair. Thus, this evaluative opposition would be one holding only between the members of the pair.

This, however, faces a serious issue. That is, it risks collapsing into a different and much stronger form of pluralism than the one assumed by pluralist OLTs. This has been variously referred to as strong (Tucker 2016), foundational (Mason 2018), and radical or value property (Heathwood 2015) pluralism. I will discuss these positions at length in Chapter 4, but a brief definition is required here. A strong form of pluralism does not merely imply, as pluralist OLTs do, that there is an irreducible plurality of different kinds of bearers of value, but that there is an irreducible plurality of different kinds of values (even within the relevant domain). For our purposes, it should suffice that this would imply a serious departure from our current understanding of OLTs.

The reason why the present approach appears to rely on a stronger form of pluralism is that a special evaluative opposition implies that paired goods and ills are opposed to each other in a different way from how other paired goods and ills are opposed to each other. That is, if pleasure is evaluatively opposed to pain in a different way than to ignorance, this would imply that pleasure and pain are good

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6 Chang (2015) also discusses a similar form of pluralism but questions some of the assumptions upon which these views are formulated.

7 I take this statement of pluralist OLTs to make them an instance of Tucker’s (2016) weak pluralism and Heathwood’s (2015) substantive pluralism.
and bad in *one kind of way* and that understanding and ignorance are in *another kind of way*. Otherwise, if they were based on the same kind of opposition, the same problem as before would present itself once more: we would not be able to stop the pairing relation from holding between any good and any ill. This possibility, however, is not viable for OLTs as currently conceived, as they embrace a weaker kind of pluralism: they are expressly formulated in terms of the plurality of kinds of bearers (e.g. Fletcher 2016, Lin 2014) of the *same kind* of value (i.e. prudential value is implicitly interpreted as a unitary value, and thus theories are strong monist, in Tucker's terminology, even when they are weak pluralist).

Before concluding the discussion of this approach, we should briefly note a notion introduced and discussed by Chang (2015) which might help revive this proposal: that of a value *quality*. A distinction between different value qualities, unlike one between different value properties, is a superficial distinction in values which would not lead to the kind of strong pluralism into which the previous suggestion collapses. Thus, the claim might go, what relates members of a pair is the fact that they have the same *value quality*: pleasure-pain would have quality $q_1$ and understanding-ignorance quality $q_2$. This is in contrast to goods and ills which are not paired, which do not bear the same value quality.

However, this notion cannot fulfil this role for two reasons, where the second follows from the first. To begin with, we would have to provide an account of value qualities which does not collapse into the notion of a genuine value while also being able to have similar implications and features as genuine values (e.g. grounding genuine conflict). Otherwise it would appear to be an empty and *ad hoc* postulate that ought not to be treated seriously. Thus, we must identify a differentiating feature between bearers of different qualities which does not make different value *properties*. This must mean that, if we took the bearers of different value qualities, we could still reduce *their value* in terms of a common kind of value (a super-value). In the case of well-being, this super-value would then be a single,
unified prudential value. Appealing to Tucker's (2016) account of the reducibility of values in terms of the analysability of their goodness, this means that their values would be analysable in terms of a common one. But if value qualities really are to stand for a genuine feature, something about them must remain unanalysable in terms of a common property. Therefore, the distinction between different value qualities must be based on different non-evaluative properties.

This leads to the second point. If we base value qualities on non-evaluative properties, then there is no reason to appeal to value qualities in accounting for pairing. After all, we can instead appeal directly to the non-evaluative properties that are supposed to underpin value qualities. In any case, an appeal to value qualities, whether in themselves or to their non-evaluative grounds, does not constitute a true evaluative approach. Therefore, we can conclude that this way of accounting for pairing is not open to OLTs. I will, then, focus on non-evaluative accounts in the rest of this chapter.
Section 3 – Non-Evaluative Account.

There are two promising approaches to this strategy. One of these is more plausible, but the other cannot be entirely dismissed. I will develop both and show how they can help ground the pairing relationship. First, though, a few words must be spent on the nature of the approach in general and on how it relates to the argument from Section 1, as well as on quickly dismissing a proposal which is, I will maintain, completely implausible.

Section 3.1 – The approach in general and its relation to the argument.

There are two issues I wish to discuss here. The first is how we are to understand the non-evaluative approach in itself, and the second is how this is to be taken to relate back to the argument against OLTs from Section 1. Beginning with the former, the approach must provide an account of the relationship between the paired goods and ills in terms of their non-evaluative properties. If the pairing relationship is a relationship based on non-evaluative grounds, we must look at how the non-evaluative properties of paired goods and ills relate to one another. Therefore, we must look to a relationship which holds between the non-evaluative properties of paired goods and ills. Moreover, there are two plausible features of the pairing relationship. The first is that, as already mentioned, the relationship must be an exclusive one that holds only between the members of a pair. The second, as we will see in section 3.2, is more controversial. This is that the relationship in question must be, in some sense, one of opposition. The rationale for this is that the items of the good-ill pairs seem to stand in a special opposition to one another – i.e. pleasure is specially opposed to pain as compared with ignorance. Thus, it would follow, the special pairing relationship grounding the pair must also be one of opposition. As we will see though, there are other ways of construing the intuitions behind this assumption.
In what follows I will take this to, like earlier approaches, undermine the argument from section 1 by rejecting (P4): we can interpret this as an OLT account of pairing, or, at least, an OLT-compatible analysis. However, we should briefly note that there is an alternative interpretation of this proposal where it instead undermines (P2). That is, the proposed grounds of the relationship seem to be unrelated to OLTs as a theory of well-being, as they appeal to properties of the paired goods and ills that may well be unrelated to their value or even their good- and ill-making properties. Thus, the non-evaluative grounds for the pairing relationship between pleasure and pain may have little or nothing, in themselves, to do with either prudential discourse or the concerns of a theory of well-being. We could then interpret it as denying that good-ill pairs are a feature of prudential discourse qua prudential. That being said, I don't find this proposal entirely convincing, so I will leave it to a side. What follows, though, seems to me to remain neutral between the interpretations.

Section 3.2 – Dismissing a first proposal.

To set out the issue, what we are after is an account of what exclusively relates good $g_1$ and ill $b_1$ in terms of the relation holding between their non-evaluative properties $pg_1$ and $pb_1$. This must be a relation $R$ that, though it may hold between $pg_2$ and $pb_2$ of good $g_2$ and ill $b_2$, it cannot hold between, for example, $pg_2$ of $g_2$ and $pb_1$ of $b_1$, or between $pg_1$ of $g_1$ and $pb_2$ of $b_2$.

There is a possibility implicit here which is worth highlighting. This is that the relation in question may be a different one for each pair. However, I take this possibility to be highly implausible for one important reason. This is that we would have to maintain not only that most (or all) goods and ills happen to be paired in virtue of their non-evaluative properties (we will see that there are some concerns that
this is a suspicious coincidence), but that they all happen to be so in different kinds of ways. While we might be able to find some rationale for why all or most goods stand in a particular relationship $R$ with a corresponding ill (and vice versa), it is unlikely that there would be a rationale for why each good stands in such a relation to a corresponding ill and that each such relation is of a different kind from that holding between the other pairs.

For example, if the relation holding between pleasure and pain and between knowledge and ignorance is the same – i.e. $R$ – we might be able to find a rationale for why this is the case – i.e. why $R$ holds between each member of the good-ill pairs (note that R holding is what accounts for the members being paired); but if the relation holding between pleasure and pain is different in kind from that between knowledge and ignorance – i.e. $R_1$ and $R_2$ respectively – then it is hard to see how we could come up with such a rationale: either it would be a rationale explaining why each good-ill pair is related in terms of a different relation, or different rationales for each pair which dispels the apparent and suspicious coincidence of this proliferation of special relations. For these reasons, I will ignore this possible approach to explaining pairing (i.e., in terms of different pairing relations) in what follows.

Section 3.3 – The Sameness and the Mutual Exclusion Analyses.

As already noted, the relation $R$ we must appeal to is one that must hold between all and only paired goods and ills. But as this is to be accounted for in terms of the non-evaluative properties of paired goods and ills, we can expect this property to be one that holds between said non-evaluative properties, as it is in virtue of these that paired goods and ills are supposed to be mutually exclusive. I will thus express the following two candidates in terms of inter-property relations.
The first candidate is *mutual exclusion*. That is, the relation $R$ that holds between the property $pg_1$ of good $g_1$ and property $pb_1$ of ill $b_1$ when $g_1$ and $b_1$ are paired is that of mutual exclusion: $pg_1$ obtains if and only if $pb_1$ does not. It should be noted, though, that the mutual exclusivity of these paired goods and ills must be qualified, primarily with regards to *time* and whatever individuates the relevant instance. Thus, *mutual exclusion* allows us, for example, (a) to have both ignorance and understanding of *different* domains, and (b) to have ignorance and understanding of the same domain *at different times* (e.g. at $T_1$ we are ignorant about $x$ and later, at $T_2$, we gain enough understanding about $x$ that we can be said to understand it). This is a promising candidate for three reasons. First, as we will see shortly, it seems to apply in a straightforward way to most of our good-ill pairs. Second, it would likely make the pairing relation an exclusive relation: it is unlikely that any of our goods or ills would be mutually exclusive with ills or goods other than their paired one (and, as we will see, they in fact are not). Third, mutual exclusion is a relation which can be characterised as one of opposition, thereby confirming our original intuitions about the pairing relation.

The second possible account is *sameness*. That is, good $g_1$ and ill $b_1$ are paired in virtue of their bearing the same non-evaluative property $p_1$ (i.e. related in terms of a relation of sameness). Thus, pleasure and pain would be paired in virtue of being instances of the same non-evaluative kind. However, this would have to be a kind of which other goods and ills are not also instances. This suggestion is certainly plausible. After all, we can quickly see what this common property might be for at least some of these. Pleasure and pain, for instance, are instances of a

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8Note that Kagan (2014) makes a similar suggestion with regards to the relation between the attitudes accounting for positive and negative value under DS. That is, said attitudes are conflicting ones and thus must be *rationally* mutually exclusive with regards to their objects. Of course, as the account we are discussing is an objectivist one, the kind of mutual exclusion we are interested in is not a merely rational one, but a conceptual one.

9Note that if the pairing relation is indeed more complex than we are assuming insofar as some goods (or ills) are paired to more than one ill (or good), then these analyses can still accommodate this. All that is necessary is that all the paired goods and ills are mutually exclusive properties.
number of plausible common kinds: experiential stats, affective states etc. However, there are a couple of concerns with the proposal. Each can be answered but not entirely convincingly. I will discuss these in section 3.4.

Before continuing, we should note that both proposals permit an interesting possibility: a neutral state between the paired goods and ills which is not a mere absence of them. It may be possible, for instance, that there are some epistemic states which are neither clearly fully-fledged understanding nor genuine ignorance. They are middle states where our picture of the relevant domain is neither quite accurate enough to be beneficial, but also not inaccurate enough to be harmful. This would be a state that is evaluatively neutral (i.e. zero prudential value), but not in the sense of being a mere absence of the kinds of states that are significant to our well-being. I do not wish to enter into the merits of this possibility. However, if we do think that such states are possible, both sameness and mutual exclusion can account for them. That is, such a neutral state would be the bearer of, in the case of sameness, the same non-evaluative property as the paired goods and ills, and of a non-evaluative property $p_n$, which, was mutually exclusive with both $pg_1$ and $pb_1$ above, in the case of mutual exclusion.

Section 3.4 – Against Sameness.

Here, I will briefly indicate why we ought to focus on mutual exclusion over sameness by pointing out some of the flaws in the latter proposal. However, these are not conclusive, and the purpose of this is more for the sake of simplicity – i.e. to limit conversation to one analysis – than due to any deep-rooted problem with sameness. Moreover, the central objection to mutual exclusion (see section 5 onwards) also applies, mutatis mutandi, to sameness.
The first issue we will consider is that the pairing relationship, as was noted in section 3.1, appeared to be one of opposition. Yet, if the pairing relation is based on *sameness*, it would mean that the former is not a relation of opposition. However, the approach can respond by accounting for the opposition of the members of the pair in terms other than the pair. This can be done quite easily by appealing to the opposing prudential value of the two. Thus, the relation of sameness would account for the special relationship between the paired goods and ills, and their opposition would be a matter of their opposing values. Nonetheless, by explaining their opposition in these terms we do lose some of the original intuitive sense of pairing, especially as we can no longer properly characterise paired goods and ills as *counterparts*: paired goods and ills are now opposed in the same sense as they are to any other ills or good (and thus not counterparts).

The second worry is that it may be difficult to apply to some of the pairs. There may be some concerns in relation to understanding-ignorance and achievement-failure, but the pair to which it is hardest to apply *sameness* is friendship-isolation: they each seem to involve, respectively, the presence and lack of a friendship, and do not seem to share a common property.

The Sameness approach, then, presents a plausible but not fully convincing account of the pairing relation. However, as noted earlier, the same arguments facing *mutual exclusion* (see section 6) can also be raised against *sameness*. Therefore, whether or not *mutual exclusion* is at this stage in fact preferable to *sameness* does not ultimately matter for the final conclusion of this chapter.

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10 For example, ignorance can be variously realised by faulty beliefs – false and/or unjustified – and by a lack of belief that contributes to a flawed overall picture of a topic or object (see Chapter 1), while understanding is always realised by the presence of beliefs. Therefore, there may not be something in common between all instances of understanding and all instances of ignorance.
Section 4 – Mutual Exclusion.

In what follows, I show why the proposed paired goods and ills are in fact mutually exclusive. I begin with understanding and ignorance and end with pleasure and pain, the latter being the most challenging pair for the analysis. To show how the two are mutually exclusive, and in what sense, we will have to delve into current accounts of their nature as described in the philosophy of mind.

Section 4.1 – Achievement-Failure.

I will begin by looking at the case of achievement and failure, as this is the most straightforward pair to analyse in terms of mutual exclusion. To briefly summarise the discussion of achievement-failure from Chapter 1, an achievement consists in the accomplishment of a goal that has been pursued intentionally by the agent (Bradford 2015, 2016, and Bradford & Keller 2016). This has prudential value when its pursuit passes a certain threshold of difficulty and when the goal is significant. Failure, then, is the failure to obtain an intentionally pursued significant goal, despite the agent’s efforts.

These appear to be straightforwardly mutually exclusive. That is, there simply cannot be a case of achievement that is also a failure (i.e. it isn’t just a matter of the irrationality of their co-presence). This is because, given a significant goal we pursue and for which we aim to overcome the difficulties involved, we either accomplish this goal or fail to do so. Therefore, a goal-pursuit of this kind will either be an achievement or a frustration. There may, of course, be vague cases of goals that are only partially achieved – e.g. writing an average novel when we aimed to write a good one – or cases where the achievement of one of our goals involves the failure to achieve another – e.g. in cases where the two come into conflict,
such as a goal to write a novel and a goal to spend more time with one’s family. However, these should not be a concern as we can understand them as complex situations where we aimed at more than one goal at the same time – one of which we achieved but not the other – or where the goal itself was complex and only partially achieved – i.e., the goal of writing a good novel may be composed of the goal of writing a novel and of writing it well.\footnote{Moreover, in cases where, for instance, our goal of writing a good novel was not a complex one, or at least not in the proposed sense, we would also not take this to be a case of partial achievement. The writing of the novel, in this case, would at least be perceived as a genuine failure.}

Section 4.2 – Ignorance-Understanding.

Moving on to understanding and ignorance as mutually exclusive, intuitively, we cannot both understand and misunderstand the same thing (where misunderstanding is the relevant sense of ignorance). This can be supported by the characterisation of understanding from Chapter 1, though this may require a more complex description of the opposition. If we take understanding to be a matter of the accuracy of our representation of a subject matter or object – where said representation is constituted by our relevant beliefs and how they “fit together” and its accuracy is a matter of both constituents – then said representation either adequately reflects the subject, making it qualify as understanding, or it does not, making it an instance of ignorance. If a representation cannot both be accurate and inaccurate, at least in the same respect and at the same time, then understanding and ignorance are mutually exclusive.

However, if understanding can be explained as a representation of a subject matter that can be more or less accurate, then there might be many borderline cases where an agent might have some degree of understanding, but we are not sure.
we would classify the case as one of understanding, at least *qua* good. This understanding can be lacking as it only represents one aspect of its subject, or it can be, in part, mistaken, where some subject-relevant beliefs are false but nevertheless the agent still has rough, functional understanding. If we take these as cases *both* of ignorance and of understanding, the two would not be mutually exclusive. However, this concern is easily dismissed. First, these may be *neutral* cases. As we noted at the end of section 3.3, there may be kinds of states with neutral prudential values which are not mere absences. So, if the examples of partially accurate understanding are accepted as prudentially neutral states that are neither understanding nor ignorance, then understanding and ignorance can still be defined as mutually exclusive.

Second, we can explain these problems with categorisation to *vagueness*. This need not be any kind of radical or metaphysical vagueness. It could, for instance, be a matter of epistemic vagueness, where it is not clear *to us* whether these borderline cases are instances of ignorance or understanding. Alternatively, these may be cases of *linguistic* vagueness of the kind discussed by Lewis (1986, p212). That is, whether our representation of some domain *d* counts as understanding may be unclear insofar as *d*’s boundaries are vague. Domain *d* is likely constituted by a number of distinct concerns and sub-domains. For example, Physics is constituted by a number of further fields, such as quantum and astrophysics. If our understanding of different sub-domains is significantly different – where it is relatively poor about some but quite thorough about others (e.g. poor about astrophysics but thorough about quantum physics) – then to what degree we understand the broader domain may simply be indeterminate. This is particularly true when it comes to more peripheral sub-domains, where we may even legitimately draw the confines of the domain to exclude these concerns. But none of this would deny mutual exclusion: the different sub-topics really cannot be instances of both understanding and ignorance, even if it is not clear how they come together as a
representation of the whole; and, if we accept a particular specification of the do-
main, then the relevant representation may fall one way or the other after all.

Given this explanation of the possible reasons for borderline cases of understand-
ing and ignorance, it seems safe to maintain that the two are mutually exclusive in the necessary sense.

Section 4.3 – Friendship-Isolation.

Turning to friendship and isolation, recall Section 4.5 of Chapter 1, where we es-

tablished an account of what friendship consists in, but not a clear account of what a harmful counterpart to friendship is. This resulted in two possible analyses: iso-

lation and enmity. As we will see, though, for our purposes the lack of a clear candidate ill is not a problem as both exclude, and are excluded by, the possibility of friendship. Moreover, it should be noted that here, in part for the sake of sim-

plicity, I am assuming that one of these two possible ills is the counterpart of friendship. But, as we saw, if we think they both should be separate ills on our list, we could simply maintain that friendship is paired with both. After all, we saw in section 3.2 of the previous chapter and section 2.2 of the present one that goods and ills could be paired with multiple ills and goods (respectively). What matters most is that they are not paired with certain others. I will, though, set this possibility to a side for simplicity.

Turning to isolation, in Chapter 1, an alternative characterisation of friendship qua good (and isolation qua ill) was provided which enabled the amount of friendship in our life to realise the relevant prudential good of social integration and the ill of isolation. As such, the two should be mutually exclusive. I take it to be clear that, insofar as a certain amount of the subject’s relationships are either going to meet
the conditions for amounting to friendship or they will not; and there is either going to be a sufficient amount of these relationships for the subject to be socially integrated or there will not. Of course, if the subject only has a few friendships, she need not be isolated, i.e. poorly off. That is, she may be in a neutral state of the kind discussed above. Nevertheless, the presence of enough friendship relationships for positive prudential value will exclude the possibility of there being too few of these (i.e. too few such that we are poorly off). Therefore, we can conclude that friendship and isolation are mutually exclusive.

Similarly, if we take the ill to be something more like enmity, the criteria for enmity (see Chapter 1 for details) seem to rule out obtaining enough of the criteria for friendship. For example, the hatred or dislike involved in enmity will likely rule out the mutual affection of friendship; the resistance to take on as our own the others’ conception of us excludes the possibility of mutual drawing. Thus, we cannot be both friends and enemies of someone, at least in the sense of these relationships which have been specified here, meaning that the two relationships are mutually exclusive. Moreover, difficult, borderline cases can be explained in terms of Lewis’s (1986) vagueness even more easily than for other good-ill cases. This is because there may be a number of different notions of friendship and enmity, all with different boundaries, that are relevant at any given time. For example, Derrida (1993) discusses a purely pleasure-based notion of friendship – which he attributes, with some humour, mostly to youth – the more Aristotelian notion of friendship – of “another self” (which mostly corresponds to the good of friendship at issue here) – and to a “political” (or public) notion that implies a convergence of interests in the public sphere. But the availability of these different notions are not a concern here. First, in each case the relevant sense of “friendship” and of “enmity” remains mutually exclusive; second, non-aristotelian kinds of friendship

12See Chapter 1 section 4.5 on Cocking and Kennett’s (2000) analysis.
13The picture may be complicated by the fact that a few deep friendships may have a similar value to many more superficial ones – but a similar mutual exclusion account seems to be open here.
are not clearly non-instrumentally good for us (mutatis mutandis for enmity), so the fact that, for instance, political enmity and aristotelian friendship are not mutually exclusive does not bear on our present concerns.

Section 4.4 – Pleasure-Pain.

The application to pleasure and pain requires a more detailed look at the nature of these states. The reason for this is that their mutual exclusivity may appear more dubious. If pleasure and pain are distinct kinds of feelings or experiences (as argued by the felt-quality theory of pleasure, e.g. Bramble 2013), there is no reason why we should not be able to experience them simultaneously.\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, this concern seems to be supported by a number of significant cases in which both pleasure and pain seem to obtain simultaneously: e.g. with bittersweet experiences and masochistic pleasure. Bittersweet memories, for instance, may be ones where a fond recollection (pleasant) is accompanied by a sense of loss (unpleasant) for the people involved in this memory (e.g. if we are no longer in contact with them). I will refer to these cases by Bradford’s term “hurt so good” pleasures (HSG). This also suggests a different kind of mixed case: unpleasant or disliked pleasures. However, I will mostly ignore the latter, as they are not as frequently discussed in the literature as HSGs.

Thus, the pleasure-pain pair appears to be resistant to analysis under \textit{mutual exclusion}. In resolving this issue I will be turning to the discussion of pleasure and pain found in the philosophy of mind, as this model help us understand how we are to account for the pleasure-pain pairing.

\textsuperscript{14}This worry is also noted by Kagan (2014).
First, a preamble is needed regarding the terminology used. In what follows, I will refer to all experiences with negative affect – i.e. all unpleasant or painful experiences – as “pain” and all experiences with positive affect – i.e. all pleasant or pleasurable experiences – as “pleasure”. However, there are reasons why we should reserve the term “pain” only for physically unpleasant experiences (e.g. Bain & Brady 2014; Corns 2015). I am here using “pleasure” and “pain” in their broadest sense for a couple of reasons. First, the well-being literature has tended to talk about all pleasant and unpleasant states as pleasure and pain, and hence formulated accounts (e.g. lists of goods and ills) in these terms. Given the focus of my argument, it is best to maintain a continuity with this use. Second, most authors broadly agree that unpleasantness and pleasantness are what is bad and good for us about these experiences (e.g. Jacobson 2013; Bain 2014, 2019). Thus, insofar as we are primarily concerned with the goodness and badness of these experiences, referring to all of them by the same term should not have any negative consequences.\(^{15}\)

The current objection to establishing the mutual exclusivity of pleasure and pain relies on their analysis in terms of a simple, distinct feeling (e.g. Bramble 2013, and the felt-quality view). However, this conception of hedonic states is not compatible with the best accounts from the philosophy of mind. Instead, these analyse painful pain – the kind of pain that is bad for us – in terms of two distinct components: (i) a representation of a disturbance (an interoceptive state representing a bodily disturbance or damage in the case of physical pain, and a representation of a putatively detrimental state in the case of emotional pain);\(^{16}\) (ii) the unpleasantness component, which makes the pain experience painful and thus bad for

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\(^{15}\)Bradford (2020) makes a similar point.

\(^{16}\)The analyses in question tend to be concerned primarily with physical pain, so this characterisation of (i) for emotional suffering is merely a placeholder for the best available account.
us (e.g. Corns 2013, 2014; Bain 2019). Thus, for example, in the case of the pain of breaking one’s leg, (i) would refer to the interoception (internal perception) of the broken bone itself (though this would also likely include the perception of a number of other damages, e.g. tissue damage), while (ii) would be what renders (i) painful (and thus bad for us) and hence also makes the represented damage appear as bad. From this, we can derive a similar account of pleasure: (i) a representation of a putative beneficial state, and (ii) the pleasantness component, which represents the object of (i) as good and makes the (i)-(ii) complex good for us.

There is broad agreement about (i) in the literature, while how we ought to account for (ii) has been the source of most of the controversy with two broad approaches arising: (a) desire-based and (b) representationalist. The former account does not literally posit a desire state, but rather appeals to the folk psychological conative concept of a desire to give an intuitive characterisation of a process or state that is yet to be accurately specified by scientific research, such as Aydede’s (2014, Aydede & Fulkerson 2014) psychofunctional desire (p-desire henceforth) account. To avoid shooting the messenger objections (see Jacobson 2013), I will assume that the object of the p-desire is the representational state from (i), but it should be noted that there are competing views (see Bain 2019). By contrast, Representationalist views (Tye 1995; Helm 2002; Klein 2007), analyse (ii) in terms of a representation of the object of (i)’s representational state as to-be-avoided under an imperativist interpretation (e.g. Klein 2007) or as being bad under an evaluativist one (e.g. Helm 2002). For simplicity, I will assume the latter. This can be applied mutatis mutandi to pleasure and pleasantness.

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17 Though note that Bradford (2020) disagrees on this point, and instead argues that even if pains are bad for us in virtue of being unpleasant and unpleasantness reduces to some thing r, its badness need not itself reduce to r. Instead, it might arise at a different level.

18 Aydede (2014) takes this to be a “state type with the psychofunctional role of processing incoming sensory information in whatever ways that realize the pleasantness of sensations” (pg129). Aydede goes on to say that “a quick look at affective neuroscience suggests that this role consists of a complex processing of incoming sensory information” (pg130).
Though limited, this summary should be sufficient to articulate how pleasure and pain can be mutually exclusive. The first thing to note is that all of the positions covered above interpret pleasure and pain as intentional states, as both (i) and (ii) are object-directed: (i) has a disturbance as its object, and (ii) the representational state from (i). Second, these views analyse pleasure and pain not as simple feelings, but as themselves evaluative states. Thus, pleasure and pain appraise their objects.\(^{19}\)

We can now explain how pleasure and pain are mutually exclusive. That is, pleasure precludes the possibility of pain, and vice versa, because, whereas pleasure appraises its object as positive, pain does so as negative. Thus, an instance of pleasure and of pain would be in conflict if directed at the same object, as they would give conflicting evaluations of it. This can serve as the basis of an account of the mutual exclusivity of pleasure and pain, which we can interpret in a weak or a strong way. If the attributions of pleasure and pain are in conflict, then, it might seem that we can only achieve rational incompossibility. That is, we can evaluate the same object in conflicting ways by directing pleasure and pain directed towards it at the same time and the same respect, but doing so is irrational.

However, we can achieve a stronger form of mutual exclusion, dependent on which theory we embrace. In the case of desire theories, Aydede (2014) highlights the motivational aspect of a p-desire: it primes to pursue its object, in the case of pleasantness, and to avoid it in the case of unpleasantness. It may then be an

\(^{19}\)One word about “evaluation” and “appraising” here. What is meant here by these terms should be taken in a weak sense, such that a fully-fledged judgement is not needed, but rather simply that the object is presented as positive or as negative. For example, Aydede (2014) argues that hedonic states have the function of “appraisal of incoming sensory information for its significance for the organism” (pg130) and further claims that “the pleasantness, in this sense, is the ‘felt evaluation’ of that taste [or other interoceptive state]” (pg130).
impossibility that the motivational or motor biasings of both pleasantness and unpleasantness are realised at the same time and towards the same object (e.g. because it requires incompossible primings). Similarly, the unpleasant and pleasant modes of representation postulated by Bain (2019) may be impossible to realise towards the same thing at the same time.

This helps explain the case of experiences which appear to involve both pleasure and pain: i.e. both pleasure and pain are present, but their objects are different, such that no conflict obtains. This is the case with our previously mentioned example of bittersweet memories. For example, the constituent pleasure, on the one hand, seems to be directed at the events represented by a cherished memory, while the constituent pain, on the other hand, is directed at the absence of the people involved who made the represented event pleasant in the first place. As the objects of the involved pleasure and pain are different, their conflicting appraisals are not in fact in conflict – they are appraising different things. It should be noted though that, in this sense, bittersweet memories are not proper HSGs. That is, HSGs are understood to be cases where pleasure is taken in the pain itself. But this is not the case for bittersweet memories.

Turning now to masochistic pleasure, I suggest we follow Feldman (2004) and Klein (2014) (the two disagree in a key regard, though, which I will clarify below) in understanding these as cases where the pleasure component is directed at the pain component. Both agree with the basic picture of HSGs where the pleasure component is a higher-order hedonic state, in that it is directed at a different hedonic state – which for simplicity I will assume is a more mundane instance of, in this case, pain. Here, the difference between their accounts becomes relevant. Feldman (2004) takes the higher-order pleasure (which he understands as one of

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20 Note though that there may be alternative ways of accounting for HSGs. For example, if we follow Corns (2014) in separating the affective and motivational (motivational oomph) components of unpleasantness, we could claim that the target pain in HSGs is unpleasant but that there is no aversive motivational oomph.
his attitudinal pleasures) to be directed at the fact that we are experiencing pain. But this makes the object of the higher-order pleasure a state of the world, which cannot be true of at least some masochistic pleasures. As both Klein (2014) and Bradford (2020) point out, pleasures taken in, for example, prodding at one’s loose tooth, eating spicy food, and getting a deep tissue massage, do not seem to be pleasures taken in the fact of being in pain, as much as in the painful feeling itself. Klein (2014) argues that the aspect of this painfulness that we find pleasant is what he calls its penumbral quality. That is, the fact that these pains tend to be on the verge of what we can bear. In either case, though, the objects of the pain and of the pleasure – i.e. what these states appraise – are different, and thus the two are not in conflict.

Hence, HSGs do not contradict the mutual exclusivity of pleasure and pain, allowing the mutual exclusion analysis to account for this good-ill pair as well. It thus promises to offer OLTs a way out of the Problem of Pairs.
Section 5 – The Explanatory Adequacy of Mutual Exclusion.

The mutual exclusion analysis of the pairing relation, then, appears to provide an account of good-ill pairs that is compatible with the standard understanding of OLTs. It therefore offers a way of addressing the problem from section 1 by rejecting (P4) (i.e. by giving an OLT account of pairing).

However, it is not clear that mutual exclusion is explanatorily adequate. In this section I will set the groundwork for understanding what is required by an explanation of the pairing relation to be adequate, while identifying an initial lacuna in the mutual exclusion explanation. In section 6, I will articulate a problem which highlights why said lacuna means that mutual exclusion and OLTs more broadly fail to explain pairing.

Section 5.1 – Explanatory adequacy and ambiguity in the explanandum.

In evaluating the explanatory adequacy of mutual exclusion there are three main considerations: (1) whether it is extensionally successful (it identifies the correct goods and ills as paired), (2) whether it is contentful (that it makes a claim about how the relata are related), (3) whether, perhaps in conjunction with the rest of an OLT account, it explains the pairing of goods and ills.

Briefly, the first two conditions seem to be met. As discussed in the previous section, the paired goods and ills are indeed mutually exclusive, while no unpaired goods and ills appear to be so (e.g. pleasure and ignorance are not mutually exclusive). Moreover, the analysis also provides a contentful claim about the nature of the pairing relation: that it consists in the mutual exclusiveness of the non-evaluative properties of particular goods and ills. Whether this claim is correct or not about the relation in question, it at least succeeds in being a claim about it.
Turning to the third consideration, whether mutual exclusion explains pairing depends on what explanandum we identify, which we individuate in terms of a why question our explanation attempts to answer. With regards to pairing, what our question is, and thus our explanandum, may seem uncontroversial. Intuitively, the only relevant question is “why are good g and ill b paired?” And, to this question, mutual exclusion does provide an answer: i.e. because g and b are mutually exclusive. However, there is an ambiguity in the question as presented. This is between a request for an account of the grounds or nature of the pairing relation and a request for the reason why said relation, including its grounds, sustains at all. We can reformulate the question accordingly into two separate ones, in order to resolve the ambiguity. The first can be expressed in terms of a “how” question: how are the members of a pair related?21 The explanandum here is the relationship itself: its nature and grounds. Mutual exclusion quite clearly does provide such an account: they are related qua goods and ills (i.e. have opposite values) and they are mutually exclusive.22 It is therefore an adequate explanans for this explanandum.

The second can be individuated in terms of a different “why” question: why is it the case that certain goods and ills are paired? This differs from the original question by clearly individuating as an explanandum the fact that there is such a relationship to begin with: i.e. it asks us to explain why the pairing relation holds between particular goods and ills, and not between certain others (e.g. between pleasure and pain, but not between pleasure and ignorance).23 As was mentioned,

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21I take it that the fact that we can formulate this as a “how” question does not mean that it cannot, even as a “why” question, individuate an appropriate explanandum.

22Note that only the latter strictly pertains to their relation qua members of a pair, but, as noted earlier, it is important to bear in mind the more general evaluative relation that sustains between them in virtue of their being a good and an ill.

23Note that, we can now reformulate the second question by substituting the mention of the “pairing relation” with the mutual exclusion account of it: “Why is it the case that certain goods and ills are mutually exclusive?”
mutual exclusion provides an answer to the first question. In proceeding, then, we should begin by establishing whether can answer the second as well.

While mutual exclusion makes the claim that, when a good and an ill are mutually exclusive, the pairing relation is instantiated, it does not make a claim as to why such conditions sustain to begin with. In other words, it does not tell us why certain goods and ills are mutually exclusive; it merely takes it as a matter of fact that they are. If mutual exclusion would in fact be applied to explain the link between the positive prudential status of certain kind of things with the negative prudential status of certain others, the resulting explanation cannot be supported by OLTs.

The only resource available to an OLT is its assignment of prudential value (positive and negative) to certain kinds of things. But if we linked prudential value and mutual exclusion directly, we would only be able to claim that things with opposite prudential value are mutually exclusive. This result is not only patently false (pleasure and ignorance are not mutually exclusive in any sense), it also cannot explain pairing: it would relate all goods and all ills to one another, when the pairing relation only relates particular goods with particular ills (and vice versa). In other words, mutual exclusivity would not be able to account for the fact that pleasure-pain and understanding-ignorance are good-ill pairs, while pleasure-ignorance and understanding-pain are not.

Section 5.2 – Is this Limitation Problematic?

However, establishing the inability of mutual exclusion to explain why certain goods are paired with certain ills is not sufficient to reject this account. After all, it is contentious that an account of pairing must answer this question to explain
paring. This is because answering said question can reasonably be expected to require an appeal to an explanation of why these goods are valuable (and why ills are disvaluable): to explain why the mutual exclusion relation instantiates between particular goods and ills we need access to both the grounds of their mutual exclusivity and of their prudential status, as said explanation requires that we posit a connection between these two significant relations. I will explore this point in more detail in section 6, so I will grant it for now.

The problem with regards to OLTS is that these do not provide explanations of this kind. Even if we take OLTS to be beholden to a kind of characteristic explanatory claim about why some particular thing is good for us (i.e. $x$ is good for us because it is an instance of pleasure, and mutatis mutandis for others goods, as seen in section 1.1), it cannot explain why the proposed good-makers make things good for us. We can understand this in terms of Prinzing’s (2020) distinction between first- and second-order theories: first-order theories try “to explain why particular things (e.g. getting a prestigious publication or taking a vacation) are good for a person” (2020, p706) while second-order theories are concerned with explaining first-order accounts: i.e. why does that make something good for us. OLTS are then first-order theories, but not second-order theories. The issue, then, is that, to account for the second explanandum of pairing, we must appeal to a kind of explanation (i.e. second-order theories) to which OLTS do not have access.

Thus, if the second explanandum of pairing requires for its explanation a second-order theory, OLTS cannot explain it, as they are exclusively first-order theories (unlike perfectionism, under Prinzing’s interpretation of the view). But this may not be a serious issue for two, connected reasons. First, this seems like a redundant critique of OLTS. That they are only first-order theories is generally accepted (even if not spelled out in these terms), including by proponents. Hence, objecting to

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24 I am assuming here that the necessity of accounting for the first explanandum is uncontroversial. Thus, the question is whether we should account for both or only the first.
their account of pairing on the basis that it does not provide an explanation of the second *explanandum* is not a new problem for these theories, but just a new formulation of an old one (or the articulation of one of its consequences). Second, and as a consequence of this, OLT theorists are well aware of this concern, but accept OLTs *despite* this – or, rather, they have principled reasons for thinking only first-order theories are necessary. Whether we agree or not, criticising OLTs on the basis that *mutual exclusion* does not account for the second *explanandum* of pairing is, therefore, unlikely to be convincing.

Given these considerations, it is not clear whether the second *explanandum* must be accounted for by an analysis of pairing for it to be successful. In order to present a more convincing case for this, then, we would have to identify the serious and implausible consequences of this limitation of *mutual exclusion*. The next section will propose one such problem.
Section 6 – The Problem from the Proliferation of Pairs.

This section will argue that, though perhaps not a formal failure, the inability of *mutual exclusion* to account for why particular goods and ills are paired has serious and ultimately defeating consequences. Moreover, I will also indicate why these consequences are directly attributable to the underlying limitations of OLTs. This means that developing a different account of the pairing relation is still not a viable response on their part.

Section 6.1 – Proliferation of Pairs and Implausible Coincidence.

The problem I consider here arises in connection to a feature of pairs which was discussed both in the previous chapter and earlier in this one: their prevalence within our lists of goods and ills. That is, *most or all* goods and ills appear to be members of a pair (i.e. *strong* and *symmetry* respectively). This was in itself an interesting phenomenon and one that highlighted the importance of accounting for the pairing relation. However, here it once again becomes salient in evaluating the success of *mutual exclusion*. That is, *given that so many* goods and ills are paired, its inability to explain why such relations obtain is problematic. This is because, as it cannot say why a pairing relation obtains between certain goods and ills, it must be committed to the unexplained *proliferation* of these relations. I will therefore refer to this as the *Problem from the Proliferation of Pairs* (PPP).

It is important to highlight, at this point, that this does not amount to the same, or even a similar, argument as that found in the previous section. That is, the issue identified here is not that there is an *explanandum* – that there are many pairing relations – which our account does not explain. This would, after all, likely land us in a similar predicament as before: an impasse concerning what *explananda* ought to fall within the scope of our theory. Instead, the issue concerns the fact
that there are many pairing relations, as there being so many of these suggests that there is a reason why goods and ills are paired; if there is such a reason, then this would have to link the prudential status of paired good $g$ and ill $b$ (i.e. their status as goods and ills) to their being mutually exclusive. This is because, the fact that most or all goods and ills are members of a pair is not simply a matter of these kinds of things being paired, but of these things being both prudentially valuable (and disvaluable) and their being paired (mutually exclusive). What is presented as an explanandum is the apparent connection between being prudentially good or bad and being mutually exclusive with one and only one other thing that is prudentially bad or good. I will elaborate this in what follows.

To begin with, we can identify the present explanatory limitation of mutual exclusion in how it takes the fact that there is such a relation – i.e. that certain goods and ills stand in a special relationship to each other – as a given. It then looks at said relation and provides an analysis of what this relation consists in. This is not, in itself, a flawed approach. Indeed, if this were a matter of a single relation holding between, say, understanding and ignorance, it would not be defective, as the fact that there is such a relation could be a mere coincidence. That is, the fact that understanding and ignorance are paired (i.e. mutually exclusive) could be a special but shallow phenomenon that did not concern the status of the good and ill qua good and ill; or, at least, this may be an interesting fact about this particular good and ill, but it is not a fact about goods and ills in general. Indeed, the fact that there are no other pairs would suggest precisely this: the mutual exclusivity of understanding and ignorance is not a feature of these qua goods and ills, but just a coincidence that they happen to be related in a way that is irrelevant to their prudential status; if not, if there were a reason connected to their being a good and an ill for their being mutually exclusive, we should expect other goods and ills to be related in the same way.

However, the fact that this is not an isolated incident means that the approach is not viable: the fact that there are so many pairs puts pressure on our theory to
account for why pairing obtains. If we do not, we would not merely have to claim that the fact that a good and ill are mutually exclusive is a coincidence, but also that the fact that this first coincidence proliferates and pervades our theory is itself a coincidence: it just happens that each good is mutually exclusive with some ill (and vice versa). Indeed, given that, under this view, ignorance and understanding being mutually exclusive is unrelated to their being, respectively, an ill and a good – i.e. a coincidence with respect to their being good and bad for us – it would be a further coincidence that the way all these coincidentally specially related goods and ills are related is the same; a way which, under the theory, has nothing to do with their status as goods and ills.

Section 6.2 – Diagnosis and Possible Response.

If the Problem from the Proliferation of Pairs is correct, the reason why mutual exclusion fails is that it divorces the status of paired goods and ills qua goods and ills from the fact that they are mutually exclusive. Thus, the obvious, and only, way of proceeding for OLTs is to find a way of connecting the two salient relations between paired goods and ills: their mutual exclusivity and their evaluative opposition (and thus evaluative status).

There are a few ways we might try drawing this connection. The first has already been discussed and relies on basing the connection on an evaluative relation between paired goods and ills that is different from that holding between other good-ill pairs (section 2.2). However, this not only collapses pluralist OLTs into a stronger form of pluralism, but also makes mutual exclusion redundant (though, if such a strong kind of pluralism is true, bearers of the same kind of value may also be mutually exclusive in the relevant sense). Thus, we must turn to a different way of attempting to draw this connection.
The second and more promising approach aims to link the *grounds* for mutual exclusivity to the good- and ill-making properties of the paired goods and ills: it is in virtue of what the good- and bad-making properties of paired goods and ills are that these are mutually exclusive (or any other way we might characterise the pairing relation). However, I will argue that there is a potential ambiguity in the meaning of “grounds”.

The ambiguity I have in mind is one which can be identified in different apparent uses in the literature, and which can be modelled on Prinzing’s (2020) distinction between first- and second-order theories. Lin (2017) seem to use “good-maker” to refer to properties which make particular states of affairs good for us.25 This is clear, for example, in Lin’s claim that hedonism “purports to explain […] why some facts, and not others, are basically good for you” in terms of these being pleasures (2017, p67). This mirrors the explanatory role performed by Prinzing’s first-order theories, which “purport to explain why particular things are good for a person” (2020, p706). By contrast, Fletcher (2013) seems more charitably taken to understand explanatory theories along the lines of Prinzing’s second-order theories.26 I base this on the non-prudential example he provides of enumerative and explanatory theories: the Ten Commandments (enumerative) and the Divine Command Theory (explanatory) (2013, p208). The Ten Commandments do not merely enumerate the particular actions which we ought to perform, but the (ten) *kinds* of actions we ought or ought not to perform. They thus purport to explain why the particular action of Jack killing John is bad or wrong: because it is an instance of killing, a kind of action listed as wrong. This is a first-order explanation offering *being-an-instance-of-killing* as a bad- or wrong-maker. By contrast, the Divine Command theory is a second-order theory explaining why *being-an-instance-of-

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25 Whether this is the case for Crisp (2006) and Woodard (2013) is less clear.
26 Note that Fletcher (2013) does not use the term “good-maker”, but insofar as explanatory claims are said to identify a good-maker, this should not matter as he is certainly concerned with which explanatory claims theories make.
*killing* is in fact bad or wrong: because God commanded so. Therefore, it is best to interpret Fletcher as claiming that OLTs are not explanatory in this *second* sense, rather than the former.\(^{27}\) This also avoids attributing to him the position that OLTs make no claims whatsoever concerning why, for example, a particular instance of pleasure is good for us. Not providing a first-order good-maker is implausible (though some may well defend doing so, e.g. Scanlon 1998), but not providing a second-order one can at least be justified.

Based on this, we can also identify a different kind of good- and a bad-maker associated with second-order theories: what explains something being a good-maker in the first sense (*mutatis mutandis* for bad-makers). I will refer to the good-makers associated with first-order theories as first-order good-makers, while those associated with second-order theories as second-order good-makers (*mutatis mutandis* for bad-makers). Thus, in the case of the Divine Command theory, the associated second-order good-maker is *God-prescribed-it* and its bad-maker *God-prohibited-it*. An illustrative example should clarify what I mean. The Ten Commandments identify a first-order bad-maker in *being-an-instance-of-killing*, such that action \(x\) is bad because it is an instance of killing; the Divine Command theory, on the other hand, identifies a second-order bad-maker in *being-prohibited-by-God*, such that *being-an-instance-of-killing* makes particular actions bad because God has prohibited killing.

Irrespective of the best interpretation of actual usages of these terms within the literature on well-being, it seems clear to me that we *can* usefully make this distinction, just as much as we can make a distinction between first- and second-order theories. Returning to the proposal, then, if it is the first-order sense of good- and bad-maker that is at stake, then in the case of OLTs this is merely circular. This is because OLT first-order good- and bad-makers are of the form *being-an-

\(^{27}\)I think it is legitimate to understand Crisp’s (2006) original distinction in these terms, though I will not make any claims to that effect.
*instance-of-good-g* and *being-an-instance-of-ill-b* respectively. But if the proposal is that paired goods and ills are mutually exclusive because their good- and bad-making properties are themselves mutually exclusive, we have simply repeated the fact that said goods and ills are mutually exclusive; after all, the relevant good- and bad-makers themselves refer to the specified goods and ills. For example, it would mean saying that pleasure and pain are mutually exclusive because *being-an-instance-of-pleasure* is mutually exclusive with *being-an-instance-of-pain*.

This leads us to the second interpretation of this proposal, which corresponds to the second-order understanding of good- and bad-makers. This suggestion is ultimately promising, and the kind of perfectionist analysis of pairing discussed in the next chapter can be understood in these terms. However, as I noted in section 5.2, OLTs do not make explanatory claims of this kind – i.e. they do not provide good- and bad-makers in this sense. Thus, either they cannot appeal to these to ground the mutual exclusivity of paired goods and ills, or they would collapse the account into a different kind of theory (e.g. perfectionism). Moreover, there do not appear to be fully satisfactory second-order theories (in the next chapter I will argue that the most promising of these, perfectionism, fails in one important regard). Thus, it is unclear what OLTs would have to fall “into” if they were prepared to take this approach. Without a concrete proposal for a second-order theory to which OLTs can appeal, they would not only have to rely on the assumption that such an account is available, even if it has not been formulated yet, but also that it would explain the mutual exclusivity of paired goods and ills.28

A final counter here might be to treat pairing as evidence of the features of such a second-order theory. Thus, the claim would be that a second-order theory *must* exist not because it is needed to explain pairing, but on independent grounds;

28 Also note that such an account may well make mutual exclusion redundant, even if the mutual exclusivity of paired goods and ills remained a feature of pairing.
furthermore, our best first-order theory (i.e. OLTs) appears to indicate that an acceptable second-order theory must organise goods and ills into pairs, which may or may not be mutually exclusive. As we will see in the next chapter, this is essentially correct. However, this cannot help us save OLTs, at least in the guise under which we have been discussing them here. Accepting this last proposal is an admission of the explanatory limitations of OLTs. That is, it shows that they also must provide explanatory claims of this second-order kind, and not merely first-order ones. Moreover, second-order theories tend to come with characteristic first-order ones. For example, perfectionism provides a second-order theory – living up to a human ideal and the identification of this with capacity-fulfilment (Gewirth 2009) – but also a first-order theory in terms of what constitutes this – i.e. the excellent exercise of our core capacities (e.g. Brink 2008). Thus, accepting the need for a second-order theory may well undermine OLTs even as first-order theories. That being said, perhaps this result is not as unwelcome to many defenders of OLTs as we might think. After all, if this other hypothetical first-order theory retains many of the same goods and ills as those on OLTs (at least in some form), as, for instance, perfectionism attempts to do (e.g. Brink 2008; Bradford 2021), the core claims of these OLTs will have been retained within this. As a consequence, in the next chapter I will discuss these perfectionist accounts in some detail to show how they purport to account for pairing.

As a way of concluding this discussion, it seems that the very strategy employed by OLTs to avoid the original Problem from Pairs – i.e. divorcing their account of well-being from their account of pairing and thus appealing to a non-evaluative analysis of the pairing relationship – lands them in a different problem. Now that the prudential status of the paired goods and ills is not connected to their being paired, the fact that such pairs proliferate becomes an unexplainable fact. This explanatory lacuna, as we have seen, is a serious one which undermines the proposed account of pairing: it posits the untenable coincidence that all the kinds of things which happen to be good for us according to an OLT also happen to
mutually exclude one (and only one) of those things which are bad for us (and vice versa).
Conclusion.

To briefly summarise the argument and conclusions discussed here, OLTs have bee shown to face a serious challenge in having to provide an account of pairing – in the form of a pairing relation. Moreover, it has been shown that OLTs cannot supply this, whether in evaluative or non-evaluative terms. The former of these is clearly unavailable, as this explanation would have to arise from the evaluative claims of the theory itself, but these resources cannot form the basis for this relation. By contrast, while there are available non-evaluative accounts of the pairing relation – e.g. sameness and mutual exclusion – these cannot be seen as satisfactory accounts of pairing as their explanation of the relation is limited: i.e. limited to an account of how the relata are related, but not of why they come to stand in this relation. Though I do not reach a conclusion as to whether this latter explanandum is formally required by an explanation of this phenomenon, the failure to explain it is problematic in light of what I have referred to as the “proliferation of pairs”: i.e. without an explanation of how things that are prudentially opposed are paired – where paired is understood in terms of a non-evaluative account (e.g. mutual exclusion) – the co-presence of these significant relations (mutual exclusion and the prudential opposition between the relevant good and ill) is posited as a coincidence; given the proliferation of such pairs, maintaining that the facts that a good and an ill are paired and that they are prudentially opposed are not connected is highly implausible, and, thus, the inability to explain this connection is a serious issue.

In the next chapter, I will follow up on a suggestion discussed at the end of section 6.2. This was to appeal to perfectionism and its second-order theory (and its associated second-order good- and bad-makers) to propose a way of explaining the pairing relation, while also preserving many of the key OLT claims.
In this chapter I will explore how we can explain pairing without appealing to a strong pluralist account of prudential value. In section 1, I will begin by exploring what is required of a second-order theory for it to account for pairing. As a consequence, in section 2 I will turn to perfectionism as the best candidate for an objectivist, second-order theory that can fulfil this role. It thus will serve as a representative of such approaches more broadly. However, perfectionist views run into serious difficulty with explaining all goods and ills. In particular, I will argue that no perfectionist theory, including Bradford’s tripartite account (the best current perfectionist theory for this purpose), can truly account for the prudential value of pleasure and disvalue of pain. The chapter will conclude by highlighting, programmatically, the possibility of appealing to a plurality of kinds of eudaimonist self-fulfilment on top of capacity-fulfilment. In turn, it will be argued that this is suggestive of the stronger kind of pluralism discussed in later chapters. This, together with the more general failure of strong monist views to account for pairing, will motivate exploring strong pluralist accounts of well-being.
Section 1 – Diagnosis of Problems with Pairing and Requirements on Second-Order Theories.

I will start here by very briefly recapitulating the previous chapter’s diagnosis of why objective list theories (OLTs) cannot explain pairing. From there, I postulate what a theory must include in order to explain pairing.

Section 1.1 – Explaining pairing: the need for a second-order theory.

As was noted in the previous chapter, OLTs cannot explain pairing because there are no resources within the theory to account for this special relation: they can only attribute goodness and badness to certain kinds of things, which cannot be the basis of an exclusive relation, as all goods are evaluatively opposed to all ills. Therefore, they must provide an account of pairing that is independent of their account of the paired prudential goods and ills, for instance that paired goods and ills are mutually exclusive. But, as we have seen, doing so ultimately fails because this approach requires OLTs to explain why the posited pairing relation (e.g. mutual exclusivity) holds between particular goods and ills. The Problem from the Proliferation of Pairs argued that this explanation is essential given the fact that good-ill pairs seem to be pervasive in OLTs, such that not explaining this requires leaving the fact that all goods are mutually exclusive with one particular ill as a coincidence. This explanatory lacuna of OLTs was attributed to their divorcing the prudential status of paired goods and ills qua evaluatively opposed from their being paired (e.g. mutually exclusive). Thus, the Problem from the Proliferation of Pairs arose because the OLT approach to pairs posited an implausible coincidence in the pervasive co-presence of both relations.

From this failure, we can derive the key feature of any theory that can make sense of pairing. For a theory to link the prudential opposition of paired goods and the
pairing relation holding between them, the grounds of one must be identified with the grounds of the other. Otherwise, there would always be an explanatory gap between the two. To see this, consider what would happen if we accounted for the grounds of prudential status in terms of a property $P^+$ (positive value) and $P^-$ (negative value) – e.g. being-desired and being-averted – and pairing in terms of a relation $R$ (e.g. mutual exclusion). The question would always remain of why each item that is $P^+$ stand in the $R$ relation to a single item that is $P^-$ but no others (and vice versa). Thus, if each (kind of) thing that is desired is mutually exclusive with one (kind of) thing that is averted, but no others, then the question would remain of why our attitudes take this structure. Of course, subjectivists may well have an explanation for this. But if this appeals to the structure of our value-conferring attitudes, then it must do so in a way which structures the objects of desire and aversion into pairs. Hence, whether these are mutually exclusive or not, it is what about attitudes does this structuring which accounts for pairing; and as this is some fact about the grounds of the prudential value of the paired items, it is to said grounds that we must turn in finding an appropriate account of pairing.

The grounds of prudential value can be understood in either of two terms: a first- or a second-order theory of well-being – and thus the corresponding first- and second-order senses of good- and bad-makers. In the previous chapter we noted that OLTs cannot appeal to the latter, and that the former cannot be appealed to explain pairing. To summarise this, appealing to first-order good- and bad-makers would make any explanation circular, as OLT goods and ills (i.e. the relata of pairing) are themselves the first-order good- and bad-makers identified by OLTs. That is, goods and ills account, in OLTs, for why particular things – e.g. an episode of pleasure – are good or bad for us – e.g. the particular pleasure is good because it is an instance of pleasure (see section 6.2 of the previous chapter for details). Thus, appealing to this sense of the grounds of prudential value in structuring goods and ills into pairs would either be false or circular: false where goods and ills are paired in virtue of being related qua first-order good- and bad-makers,
which would relate all goods to all ills (and *vice versa*); circular, where goods and ills that are paired stand in said relation in virtue of being specially related *qua* first-order good- and bad-makers.

Therefore, the relevant grounds of prudential value we must appeal to are second-order good- and bad-makers. However, an appeal to a second-order theory is not sufficient. Said account must also *structure* first-order good- and bad-makers into pairs. In what follows, I will highlight what is required of such an account.

*Section 1.2 – Requirements for second-order explanatory claims.*

In the case of a second-order explanatory claim, for it to organise goods and ills it must have certain features. That is, its posited second-order good- and bad-maker must be articulated around a central concept which is appealed to in the formulation of *both* of these. Thus, in one instance this central concept accounts for first-order good-makers (i.e. *via* its place in the second-order claim) and in another for bad-makers (*via* second-order bad-makers). The reason for this is that, if first-order good- and bad-makers are to be paired, we need something that unites the two *qua* pair. If good- and bad-makers are paired in virtue of their second-order good- and bad-makers, it is to the nature of the latter two which we must look to organise the formers. This central concept will serve this purpose.

However, this is only one part of what is required of a second-order theory that can explain pairing. This is because, for now, it only unites good-making and bad-making in general via proposing a theory of well- and ill-being centred around the same concept (which we might think is just what it is to give theories of well- and ill-being *of the same kind*). However, to account for pairing, this central concept must also unify the paired goods and ills *contra* others. That is, it must permit of differentiation between different instances of itself. This does not mean that the
second-order theory is committed to pluralism at its level: it is not committed to positing different second-order good-and bad-makers for each first-order good-and bad-makers (though some theories may want to do so). Rather, it is only committed to allowing different instances of this concept. The different instances are then to account for the different goods and ills.

An example should help explain this. As we will see, capacity-fulfilment and -malfilment serve as the perfectionist second-order good- and bad-makers (Gewirth 1998, 2009; Haybron 2016; Prinzing 2020; Bradford 2021). Both are thus centred around the key concept of a capacity. Moreover, this concept can also account for a variety of different constituents of well- and ill-being, and thus pairing, by postulating different capacities. Goods and ills are therefore understood as having their status in virtue of consisting in the fulfilment and the malfilment of a capacity, and are individuated qua different goods and ills in virtue of fulfilling and malfilling different capacities. But this does not imply that there is a plurality of second-order good- and bad-makers, one for each capacity. Rather, it is the fact that there is a plurality of capacities which accounts for the first-order plurality.1

We can now put things more formally. The second-order theory must identify a concept \( C \) which is employed to provide both second-order good- and bad-making properties \( CG \) and \( CB \) (respectively). Hence, goods are first-order good-making in virtue of \( CG \) and ills are first-order bad-making in virtue of \( CB \). However, for each of goods \( g_1 \) and \( g_2 \) it must permit of different instances of \( C, c_1 \) and \( c_2 \), for each good, such that \( cg_1 \) and \( cg_2 \). Similarly for ills \( b_1 \) and \( b_2 \), and \( c_1 \) and \( c_2 \), such that \( cb_1 \) and \( cb_2 \). This then accounts for pairing by organising goods and ills around instances of \( C \), such that \( c_1 \) organises \( g_1 \) and \( b_1 \) into a pair, as does \( c_2 \) for

1Note that this would mean that perfectionism is a pluralist theory just like pluralist OLTs, which runs against its traditional interpretation as monist. However, it remains a theory which posits a unifying account of all of the different goods and ills. It is therefore not liable to the same objections of arbitrariness of which OLTs tend to suffer.
$g_2$ and $b_2$. I will henceforth refer to an analysis that organises goods and ills in this manner a *structuring thesis*. 
I will now turn to consider perfectionism as a candidate theory upon which we can base an explanation of pairing. There are a few reasons for this. First, as I will argue, it does in fact conform to the structure of a second-order theory that is acceptable for this purpose (section 1.2). On this basis alone, it is then worthy of consideration. Second, it is also the most popular instance of the broader eudaimonist approach (Haybron 2016) and can therefore serve as a good exponent of these views, as well as of second-order theories more broadly. This is particularly true given that it is also the most well-developed of these theories. Third, it is often discussed precisely in relation to OLTs, where each serves as a foil for the other on a number of issues. For example, where perfectionism seems to lead to counter-intuitive evaluations of particular cases, OLTs are highlighted as an approach which can more easily avoid such issues; and where OLTs are criticised for their failure to provide an explanatory claim of the second-order kind, perfectionism is presented as a way of addressing this (e.g. Hurka 1993; Brink 2003, 2008; Bradford 2021).

Before continuing, a worry should be briefly addressed. This is that appealing to a monist theory such as perfectionism to explain pairing is somewhat superfluous insofar as this view bypasses the issue by denying the pluralist basis of the phenomenon of pairing. However, this concern is misplaced. First, even if we accept that perfectionism is a monist theory, it (a) involves a plurality of core capacities, and (b) it posits a plurality of kinds of things which fulfil (or malfil) said capacity. Therefore, something like pairing arises in its case as well: understanding and ignorance (or whatever they are analysed as) are specially related capacity-fulfillers and -malfillers (i.e. in virtue of fulfilling and malfilling the same capacity) contra, for instance, achievement and failure. Second, quite in what sense perfectionism is monist can be questioned. It certainly gives a unified second-order account, but, at least under some formulations, its first-order theory
is pluralist. Indeed, even where all perfectionist first-order good- and bad-makers are, respectively, the excellent and poor exercise of a capacity, whether this would constitute a plurality of first-order good- and bad-makers depends on the (often ignored) question of how we are to individuate different good- and bad-makers: if \( x \) and \( y \) are the excellent exercises of different core capacities (and thus constituted by different kinds of activities), are they to be accounted for in terms of the single good-maker (\textit{being-an-excellent-exercise-of-a-core-capacity}) or as different ones (\textit{being-an-excellent-exercise-of-core-capacity-}c_1\textit{ and being-an-excellent-exercise-of-core-capacity-}c_2)? Given the observations \textit{vis-a-vis} the individuation of different OLT good- and bad-makers from section 1.1 of the previous chapter, I would tend towards the second of these. That being said, I will not commit to either, as the relevance of pairing to perfectionism and \textit{vice versa} should hold irrespective of this.

\textit{Section 2.1 – Perfectionism and eudaimonism.}

I will begin by considering what kind of theory perfectionism is, which will be mainly discussed in relation to \textit{well-being}. This is done in part because perfectionists have not been entirely immune to the general lack of attention to ill-being (Kagan 2014; Bradford 2021). As a consequence, most characterisations of the account and of its rationale have been developed with only the former of these components in mind. In section 2.2 I will articulate two accounts of what perfectionist well-being consists in, to then articulate the ill-being counterpart for each, before turning to how these ultimately account for pairing.

To begin with, we should contextualise perfectionism within a broader eudaimonist framework (Haybron 2008b, 2016; Gewirth 2009). Eudaimonist theories account for well-being in terms of \textit{nature}-fulfilment (e.g. Haybron 2016). That is, according to the theory, what things are good for us is a matter of what kind of thing \textit{we} are.
However, there are concerns with this formulation, especially regarding the implied assumptions about nature. For instance, we might be concerned that this relies on a *teleologically* conception of nature — as implying a *telos* (e.g. Annas 1993) or end, the obtaining of which is set as the purpose of said nature and thus fulfils it. Alternatively, we may be concerned more broadly with any theory that makes general claims about what human nature might be.

These worries can be avoided though. As Haybron (2016) points out, (modern) eudaimonists understands claims about our “nature” not in terms of biological or metaphysical claims about the kind of organism or being that we are. Rather, “nature”, as he argues, is meant to identify what defines us *qua* subjects for whom things can go well or poorly. But such claims can be understood in terms of concepts such as the *self*, which need not have any problematic metaphysical baggage (e.g. an immortal soul). For example, self can here refer to the kind of practical identities discussed by Korsgaard (1996, 2009, 2013) or to some aspect of our life which we take to be important (e.g. friendship). For these reasons, most modern eudaimonists formulate their claims in terms of *self*-fulfilment (e.g. Haybron 2008a, 2008b, Yelle 2014), rather than nature-fulfilment. In what follows, I will employ this terminology.

Indeed, though self-fulfilment can be understood in non-teleological terms, it does allow for an unproblematic, or at least less problematic, teleological account. That is, it allows for the kind of subject that we are to not just be a matter of our actual, relevant states (actuality), but also by our possible relevant states (potentiality). For example, conceiving of ourselves *qua* knowers or epistemic agents merely in terms of our current epistemic states and capabilities fails to capture the full scope of this identity. We can, for instance, improve our understanding, spiral into deeper and deeper ignorance, develop our ability to reason or let it atrophy, become more open and intellectually honest, or become dogmatic (i.e. all of these are
potentialities). Qua epistemic agent, some of these seem bad for us and others good.

This characterisation of eudaimonism highlights the variety of possible views that can be understood in these terms. As many, in fact, as there are conceptions of the self. Following Annas (1993), Haybron (2016), for instance, points out that Epicurean hedonism can be understood as a eudaimonist theory of well-being, insofar as it conceives of humans as pleasure-seekers and thus identifies the human telos with the experiencing of pleasure. For this conception of hedonism, pleasure is good for us because it fulfills our pleasure-seeking nature.2

If perfectionism is an instance of eudaimonism, then, it must rely on a particular conception of self-fulfilment. As the term might suggest, these views understand well-being in terms of our living up to a human ideal or excellence. In terms of self-fulfilment, this claim identifies the relevant self as the aspect of a subject which underpins said ideal and permits them to fulfil it. Perfectionists identify this notion with our capacities, such that perfectionist self-fulfilment ought to be understood in terms of capacity-fulfilment (Hurka 1993; Gewirth 1998, 2009; Haybron 2016; Prinzing 2020; Bradford 2021). The relevant human ideal, thus, is not only constituted by the exercise and/or development of our capacities (more on this later), but is also internally aimed towards by these capacities. For example, on the one hand, to be an ideal rational agent is constituted by the development and exercise of our rational capacity, while on the other a rational capacity is essentially a capacity whose function it is to be and operate in the way which constitutes the ideal (see below in relation to Bradford's 2021 discussion).

However, the claim cannot be that fulfilling any capacity is good for us. After all there are many capacities whose exercise seems bad for us. For instance, we

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2Note that we should understand this explanation as a second-order one.
may have a capacity for copious substance abuse, whose fulfilment involves building up our tolerance, dedicating resources to its exercise etc. At least some of these not only do not seem good for us, but bad for us. Thus, perfectionists must make a claim as to which capacities are good for us in their fulfilment (Dorsey 2010; Bradford 2016a). In response, proponents of the view specify that it is only our core capacities whose fulfilment is good for us and proceed to specify what these are. Especially if we are interested in perfectionism as a way of substantiating OLT accounts with a second-order theory, we should expect a core capacity for each of the good-ill pairs discussed (permitting of some changes in this list): e.g. a rational (understanding-ignorance), practical (achievement-failure), social (friendship-isolation), and affective (pleasure-pain – though note that there are issues with articulating such a capacity, see sections 3 to 5) capacities.

That being said, perfectionist rationales for identifying these capacities as core can be questioned (e.g. Dorsey 2010). That is, the risk is that there is no independent rationale for including one capacity rather than another, except our prior sense of what is good or bad. This is problematic under two approaches. Under the first, we tie which capacities are included to human nature, such that these capacities are in some sense constitutive of said nature (e.g. Sher 1997, who claims that these capacities are universal or inevitable to human activity, or at least nearly so). However, as noted by Haybron (2016), this is not a necessary commitment of the view, as, at most, perfectionists are committed to said capacities being constitutive of a self. As we saw earlier, this notion implies no commitment to universality nor to other problematic implications. The second approach is one often associated with Kraut (2007, 2009) and which takes an approach similar to OLTs in selecting and articulating which capacities are to be included as core. That is, it does so based on whether or not their exercise appears to be good for us or not. The issue with this is that, as Bradford (2016a) notes, the resulting account of core capacities “comes at a sacrifice of theoretical structure and substance” (p126), thus risking making the theory suspiciously ad
hoc. We can, however, once again set this concern to rest, at least for the sake of argument, by noting that the resulting list of core capacities can be further subjected to scrutiny. It can be evaluated in light of considerations such as the coherence of the proposed capacities (i.e. are these capacities plausible \textit{qua} capacities?) and whether, for example, they can be understood in terms of some conception of the self (e.g. a rational capacity and being epistemic or rational subjects).

\textit{Section 2.2 – Perfectionist well-being.}

So far, the picture presented is only a second-order theory. That is, as Prinzing (2020) points out, capacity-fulfilment does not directly explain why particular things are good for us. Using his example, if getting a prestigious publication is good for us, accounting for its value directly in terms of capacity-fulfilment – i.e. getting a prestigious publication is good for us \textit{because} it fulfils one or more of our core capacities – is uninformative (2020, p706). We not only need to add a claim about \textit{which} capacity it fulfils (e.g. our \textit{practical} rational capacity – more on this below), but what it is that the fulfilment of said capacity consists in. As we can assume that we can specify the latter in terms of some \textit{kind}, rather than in terms of unconnected particulars (e.g. getting a prestigious publication, running a marathon), \textit{this} is what accounts for the goodness of the particular thing in question. It, therefore, is the \textit{first-order} good-maker of the theory. Thus, getting the publication is good for us \textit{because} it is an instance of/consists in/is constituted by $x$, where $x$ is the first-order good-maker, while the fact that $x$ makes getting the publication good for us is explained in terms of its fulfilling a core capacity. This is not merely a regress of explanations, such that, perhaps, the first is superfluous. After all, to explain why getting a publication is good for us, we still need to provide an account of capacity-fulfilment in terms of which this particular is analysed.
Turning then to the perfectionist first-order theory, the proposed first-order good-maker must both plausibly fulfil our capacities and account for particular beneficial things (e.g. getting the prestigious publication). There are two principal competing views of what constitutes the fulfilment of our capacities (and thus is a first-order good-maker). The first and more straightforward of these identifies this with the excellent exercise of our capacity\(^3\) (e.g. Hurka 1993; Brink 2003, 2008) – henceforth referred to as the bipartite account.\(^4\) A more complex approach is Bradford’s (2021) tripartite account, which also includes an account of the proper outcomes of our capacities.

Starting with the bipartite view, this is the form of perfectionism which has been discussed in previous examples and is also the most prevalent in the literature. It only takes the capacity and the activity which constitutes its excellent exercise as constitutive of the good. Thus, for the bipartite account it does not matter, in itself, whether excellent rational activity in fact produces knowledge. It is the activity itself that is non-instrumentally good for us, and not any of its possible products. Of course, excellent rational activity will at least tend to produce knowledge or understanding. Indeed, the bipartite view may even understand the capacities in question to have as their function the production of some particular outcome or outcomes beyond the activity. That is, it need not deny that our core capacities are capacities to produce some \(x\) (via a distinctive activity). All it need say is that the valuable fulfilment of the capacity only consists in engaging in its characteristic activity (or activities), which has as its formal object the achievement of \(x\). Whether \(x\) is in fact attained by means of this does not necessarily bear on whether we did

\(^3\)Note that this does not include reference to the “development” of these capacities, which is a central notion of related accounts (e.g. Kraut’s 2007 developmentalism) and also an important component of any capacity-based account of achieving an ideal. However, I do not take this to be an issue insofar as some extent of the development of these capacities is necessary for their excellent exercise and an excellent exercise of a capacity which is partially developed seems just as good as that of a fully-developed one if the two are, qua activities, indistinguishable.

\(^4\)This is not the way it has been referred to in the literature, but “bipartite” is a helpful term here for the purpose of contrasting it with Bradford’s view.
engage in the beneficial activity. So it is not that these outcomes are irrelevant to whether an activity is good for us or not, but that they are not constitutive of prudential value. As we will see, this understanding of capacities is also central to Bradford’s view.

By contrast, under Bradford’s tripartite account, for a capacity to be fulfilled it is not sufficient for us to exercise it well. Instead, it also requires that, through said activity, the kind of outcome the capacity aims at is achieved: thus, our capacities are fulfilled when their exercise – a characteristic activity – produces the kind of outcome that it is the capacity’s function to produce (2021, p10). For example, if our rational capacity has as its function the production of understanding, their fulfilment is constituted by a rational activity aiming at understanding, which pursues it excellently and successfully (i.e. understanding in fact obtains). Thus, we can now see why Bradford calls her account “tripartite”: it involves three components, (1) a capacity to a in order to x, (2) the activity of a-ing in order to x, and (3) the outcome x. All of these, under the account, are constitutive of prudential value. If we lack the relevant capacity, we are unable to engage in a-ing and achieve x, while without the latter two, we are not exercising our capacity in a way that is good for us (we have the potential for prudential value, but do not attain it). Similarly, without engaging in a-ing, x appears to be a random outcome that does not involve the proper exercise of the relevant capacity, while without x, the activity of a-ing, though perhaps otherwise excellent, does not in fact fulfil the function of the capacity of which it is an exercise.

The key distinguishing feature between these two perfectionist accounts of prudential value can now be better understood: one values non-instrumentally only the activity that constitutes the excellent exercise of the relevant core capacity, while the other also considers what said activity aims for as non-instrumentally valuable (though still qua fulfilling the capacity, not in the way a traditional OLT might). Thus, under the bipartite view, an investigation or inquiry that does not
lead to knowledge but which was an excellent exercise of the relevant activity is as valuable as if it had led to understanding (keeping the quality of the activity otherwise fixed). By contrast, Bradford’s tripartite account at least says that this is less valuable. Therefore, we might think that the difference between the two is somewhat superficial. However, the significance of their divergence is revealed in their consequent and differing accounts of ill-being.

Section 2.3 – Perfectionist ill-being.

I will start by discussing the second-order perfectionist account of ill-being. As noted above, this has generally been ignored in the literature. However, Bradford (2021) has recently helpfully articulated an explicit perfectionist theory of ill-being, including both a first- and second-order component. Starting with the latter then, she proposes the notion of capacity-*malfilment* as an appropriate bad-making counterpart to capacity-fulfilment. Thus, we can say that things are bad for us, ultimately, because and insofar as they malfil a capacity. Moreover, this relates to the broader perfectionist rationale (i.e. as appealing to an ideal) by specifying the opposite of a human ideal. Unfortunately, there is no clear antonym or opposite for ideal (in this sense of the term) we can use, so I will employ the imperfect term of a human flaw.

Starting with the bipartite account, there has not been a focused interest in the discussion of perfectionist ill-being in these terms and thus there is no consensus regarding what this would look like. What I will discuss here, then, is a possible such account: activity *a* is bad for us insofar as it is (or is constitutive of) a *poor* exercise of a core capacity *c*. Thus, though we can loosely talk of, for instance, ignorance being bad for us, it is more accurately only an activity which is a poor exercise of our rational capacity that is bad for us, even though this may constitute or lead to ignorance. Therefore, under this account, gaining an OLT ill is not bad
for us if resulting from the excellent exercise of the relevant capacity; similarly, when we gain an OLT good, if this resulted from the poor exercise of said capacity, we are not benefited, but, rather, harmed. For example, careful and active reflection and consideration of evidence which unfortunately results in ignorance is good for us under the bipartite account, and understanding which, out of sheer luck, results from inconsiderate and lazy examination of evidence is bad for us.

This may seem counterintuituitive, but there are a couple of things to note in response to such a concern. First, what is the outcome of said activity is not irrelevant, as, given that excellent activities will tend to result in a proper outcome and poor ones will result in the wrong outcome, they at least go hand in hand. Second, at least in the case of some of these outcomes, the future proper exercise of the capacity relies on our actually gaining the intended outcome of the capacity: e.g. ignorance will likely cause future poor exercise of our rational capacity. Third, and finally, on reflection, some of these cases do not seem so implausible. Take again the case of an excellent exercise of the rational capacity which, unfortunately, leads to ignorance. Say that the evidence available is misleading enough that a proper exercise of this rational capacity requires reaching a conclusion which is, in fact, false (ignorance). In such cases, intuitions are not quite so clear cut in my opinion: this may be an unfortunate harm or a benefit impervious to chance. Philosophy may, in fact, be an excellent example of this. While here the right conclusion is the suspension of belief, rather than a false belief, it seems to me that philosophical rational activity is beneficial even absent any gain in beliefs, true or otherwise. Thus, I think there is enough reason to defend this conception of ill-being for it not to be dismissed out of hand.

5 Though note that we could construe philosophical reflection as involving the gain of some true beliefs even when these are not what we set out to discover (e.g. that the common-sense characterisation of some matter is misleading).
Turning now to the tripartite account, just as in the case of her account of capacity-fulfilment, Bradford articulates her account of malfilment in terms of three components: the capacity in question, its poor exercise, and an improper outcome of the capacity. Thus, a poor exercise of our rational capacity which results in ignorance is a malfilment of said capacity and thus bad for us. However, how to interpret cases where these components are “mixed” is less clear. That is, there are cases where we have a proper exercise of the capacity which leads to its improper outcome (bad luck) and cases where the improper exercise of the capacity leads to its proper outcome (good luck). For instance, it is not clear what a poor exercise of our capacities that nonetheless results in the intended outcome of said capacity (e.g. a poor exercise of our rational activity that still results in a true belief) would count as under the analysis – good, bad or neutral. In what follows, I will give a specification of how I will interpret these. However, though this will be based on Bradford’s discussion, in places I will speculate what her intention is. Thus, my articulation of capacity-malfilment should not be taken as authoritative.

In what follows, I will take malfilment to cover any improper functioning of a core capacity. Therefore, it will include any poor exercise of a capacity, whether it results in the proper or improper outcome, as well as any improper outcome, no matter the quality of the underlying activity. For example, only exercising our rational capacity well to produce understanding will be good for us, while exercising it poorly to produce either understanding or ignorance will be bad for us, as well as exercising it well to produce ignorance (though of course, these will be bad for us to different degrees, as Bradford points out – 2021, pp597-598). This does make benefit harder to achieve than we would normally think, and harm easier to incur. In particular, we can only make sense of producing the proper outcome of the capacity via an improper exercise of it as lucky in the sense of being less bad than if it had also produced an improper outcome (i.e. the outcome we’d expect to result from an improper exercise of the activity). However, I do not
take this to be a serious problem. First, if this outcome is implausible, then we can easily specify mal fulfilment differently. Second, as already noted, this still permits of gradations in harm, such that “lucky” cases can still be significantly better than the worst cases, as well as of “unlucky” one. Finally, though this is indeed a demanding conception of welfare, this seems to be in line with the perfectionist rationale, which identifies benefit with our living up to an ideal of human nature.

We now have the perfectionist account of both positive and negative prudential value – and, indeed, two versions of these. We can thus turn to clarifying how this picture explains pairing.

**Section 2.4 – Perfectionism and pairing**

I will here explain how perfectionism forms a structuring thesis (see section 1.2). Under all forms discussed, it will do so, but exactly how will depend on which account (the bipartite or tripartite) is concerned.

Starting with the bipartite account, we should consider how its theories of well- and of ill-being relate to one another. Respectively, positive (prudential) value corresponds to the excellent exercise – constituted by an activity $a_g$ – of a core capacity $c$, while negative value corresponds to the poor exercise – constituted by an activity $a_b$ – of a core capacity $c$. What is implicit here is that the notion of a core capacity structures the bearers of positive and negative value into pairs: the exercises $a_{g_1}$ and $a_{b_1}$ of $c_1$ will be paired together in virtue of being the exercises of the same capacity, contra $a_{g_2}$ and $a_{b_2}$ of $c_2$. I say that this is implicit because it is technically only implied that each core capacity can be exercised both poorly and excellently. Whether this is true or not in general, it seems to be true of paired
goods and ills.\textsuperscript{6} Mutatis mutandis, the same goes for the tripartite account (see below).

This leads to how the bipartite account would explain pairing. That is, it would appeal to the notion of a core capacity to explain the special relationship between the paired goods and ills. Thus, under perfectionism, paired goods and ills would be related in virtue of consisting in the exercise of the same core capacity, albeit different kinds of exercises of the same (i.e. excellent and poor respectively). For example, in the case of understanding and ignorance, under their bipartite analysis these are accounted for in terms of the excellent and poor exercise of our rational capacity. According the view, these are paired in virtue of being the exercise of the same core capacity – i.e. the rational capacity. As a consequence, they do not stand in the same relation to, for example, achievement and failure. Moreover, this account of pairing not only answers the first problem – i.e. providing an analysis of the relation – but also the problem from the proliferation of pairs – i.e. why the relation obtains. This is because the account bases pairing on its second-order theory, as noted briefly in section 1.2. Thus, perfectionism provides a second-order good- and bad-maker in capacity-fulfilment and -malfilment which centres positive and negative value around the concept of a capacity and its function (and whether this is fulfilled or malfilled). Thus, the pairing of first-order good- and bad-makers follows from this, in as much as they are paired in virtue of being what constitutes the capacity-fulfilment and -malfilment for each identified core capacity.

Turning to the tripartite account, it’s characterisation of pairing is very similar to the bipartite one, so I will discuss it briefly. The main difference between the two is in what is related as a pair. This is no longer two distinct kinds of states –

\textsuperscript{6}It should be noted that a perfectionist may consider talk of goods and ills as elliptical for whatever the first-order good- and ill-makers are for a particular perfectionist theory. For the sake of continuity, I will refer to the relevant relata in terms of goods and ills, with the proviso that this may not be the best terminology for all kinds of perfectionism.
excellent and poor activity – but a more complex set of these that are united by their being constitutive of the fulfilment or malfilment of a core capacity. That is, under Bradford’s view, one *relata* is the excellent exercise of a core capacity *and* its proper outcome, while the other it is either a poor exercise of said capacity *or* its improper outcome *or* both. For example, for our rational capacity, what is paired is, on the one hand, excellent rational activity *and* understanding and, on the other hand, any of poor rational activity leading to understanding, excellent rational activity leading to ignorance, *or* poor rational activity leading to ignorance. Despite the added complexity, this still defines a special relationship (i.e. poor exercise of one core capacity are still not paired with the excellent exercise of a different one) and also ties prudential status to membership of a pair, as both attributes are conferred in virtue of this same fact: i.e. constituting the fulfilment and malfilment of the same core capacity.

To conclude, perfectionism provides a successful account of pairing, making a case for the potential of second-order theories conforming to the structure outlined in section 1.2. Moreover, and as a consequence of this, an OLT theorist might be tempted to shift towards a theory of this kind once confronted by the problems OLTs faced with pairing. In the following, I will question this optimistic assessment, given a problem perfectionism faces which, I will argue, not only undermines such views, but is particularly relevant to pairing.
Section 3 – Perfectionism, Pleasure, and Pain: The Bipartite Account.

Despite the apparent attractions of perfectionism, it encounters a problem which, I will argue, is ultimately defeating. This is its inability to explain the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain. In this section I will present the general problem in terms of the bipartite account, the standard understanding of perfectionism. In Section 4, on the other hand, I will apply it to the tripartite Account, which Bradford develops, at least in part, precisely for the purpose of addressing this problem. Ultimately, I will maintain, the tripartite account also presents an unacceptable explanatory claim about pleasure and pain, but it at least gets closer to a solution, and thus must be considered in isolation from the bipartite account.

Section 3.1 – Introduction to the problem.

It is worth beginning by explaining the importance of this problem. After all, it is not the only one faced by perfectionism. However, I take it that it is the most relevant to our purposes (i.e. regarding pairing and pluralism) and, unlike at least some of these other problems, I will contend that there isn’t a viable way of answering it. If true, this is also a particularly concerning problem, because if anything is good for us it is pleasure (at least under some construal – e.g. Haybron’s conception of happiness, 2008) and, even more importantly, if anything is bad for us it is pain. Unlike for other intuitive goods and ills, with regards to which a theory may be prepared to bite the bullet, if it cannot account for pleasure and pain, it is in serious trouble. Even desire-satisfactionism takes care in explaining how pleasure and pain are good and bad for us (i.e. because it is desired and because it is averted).

However, it should be acknowledged that, if we find that perfectionism is false, this does not show that appeals to second-order theories to explain pairing cannot
work. After all, the appeal to second-order theories has been shown to work in principle (section 2.4), and other such views can be offered instead of perfectionism. Nonetheless, a failure in perfectionism can still motivate a search for a different kind of approach altogether for a number of reasons. First, an appeal to a different theory to explain pairing requires an alternative explanatory account which is independently viable. But this is not clearly available, especially given the emphasis that has been placed on perfectionism. This is not to rule out that, for instance, we might develop other, convincing eudaimonist approaches, or indeed other kinds of explanatory accounts. Rather it is that, until these are offered, we cannot rely on their promise. Second, if we instead suggest appealing to a “mixed” eudaimonist theory, one where some goods and ills are explained in terms of capacity-fulfilment while others, such as pleasure and pain, are explained in terms of a different kind of self-fulfilment, then we may still have to rely on some kind of stronger pluralism in order to articulate it (e.g. Tucker 2016). I will discuss this point in more detail in section 6.

Section 3.2 – The bipartite account vs pleasure and pain.

Perfectionism gives an arguably plausible account of achievement, friendship, understanding and other plausible goods in terms of the excellent exercise of different capacities. For example, the value of understanding would be explained in terms of the goodness of the excellent exercise of an epistemic or rational capacity; ignorance, by contrast, would be explained in terms of the poor or flawed exercise of this capacity. However, it notoriously has trouble explaining in this way the goodness and badness of pleasure and pain (e.g. Haybron 2008a). The issue is that there is no obvious candidate core capacity whose excellent exercise can explain the goodness of pleasure or whose poor exercise can explain the badness of pain. Pleasure is of course often involved in the development and exercise of perfectionist excellences (e.g. Aristotle’s conception of virtuous activity as
pleasant in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Broadie 1994), but we should resist reducing its value to the excellent exercise of these capacities. First, there would be no value in pleasure that is not taken in these excellent exercises. Even if we wanted to argue that the value of pleasure taken in the excellent exercise of our capacities is better than that not taken in these, rejecting that the latter kinds of pleasure are valuable to some extent is implausible. Second, some excellent exercises are also painful. For example, the difficulty involved in valuable achievement is likely often unpleasant, as are certain kinds of understanding, or the exercise of courage (e.g. Ward 2001 on the problem of courage in Aristotle). Two responses to this point must be dismissed: denying that unpleasantness and suffering can or sometimes even must be a part of excellent exercises; denying that such unpleasantness is in fact harmful. The former, according to Nussbaum (1986), is highly implausible and commits the mistake of conceiving of humans as self-sufficient subjects (she associates this with Plato and the Stoics). The latter, commits something like the *shooting the messenger* error Jacobson (2013) attributes to certain accounts of unpleasantness, insofar as it would make it irrational to take painkillers when the excellent exercise of a capacity is painful (for the sake of argument, I am ignoring the possibility that the painkillers impede the excellent exercise of the capacity). Indeed, it would make taking painkillers irrational in any situation, unless said pain is impeding our excellently exercising some capacity. Of course, the latter is also a (defeasible) reason to take a painkiller, but many other pains also provides us reasons to do so simply in virtue of being painful.

Other attempts to specify an appropriate capacity also fail. Kraut's (2007) proposal, for instance, is perhaps the most natural for perfectionism: the postulation of “affective capacities”.\(^7\) Thus pleasure would be valuable qua an excellent exercise of our affective capacities. But once we wonder what these affective capacities

\(^7\)Kraut appeals to “affective powers” (2007, p137), and it is Bradford (2017, p348) who characterises his view in terms of “capacities”. However, this reformulation is necessary in order to articulate Kraut’s developmentalist approach (2007, p136) in terms of the bipartite view. In his own developmentalist terms, Kraut’s proposal may well be more plausible.
might be, we realise that the account will often make the wrong kind of evaluation. First, if we understand the capacity as one to have certain affective experiences, we are capable of experiencing a wide range of these, including ones that are harmful (i.e. pain). Second, if, instead, we construe the capacity in terms of the experiencing of affective states which are *appropriate to the situation* (e.g. pleasure in the fortunes of others), then there are plenty of cases where pain is precisely what is the appropriate experience in that situation: e.g. breaking a bone, or facing the loss of a loved one. In such cases, not suffering (or even feeling pleasure) seems to involve the malfunction of any capacity we might call “affective”. Of course, there is a sense in which, this *well-functioning* is good and the corresponding mal-functioning is bad. But it is still true that such pains and pleasures involved are non-instrumentally bad and good for us precisely in the sense that is relevant here.

A more interesting attempt is Sher’s (1997) appeal to a capacity to pursue pleasure and to avoid pain. This suggestion is at least an improvement in that it is *better* at specifying the right kind of things as valuable and disvaluable (it is *more* extensionally adequate): the excellent exercise of the capacity to pursue pleasure (valuable) and the poor exercise of the capacity to avoid pain (disvaluable). Whether we agree with the analysis or not, the former will involve pleasure and the latter pain, meaning that it at least matches cases which, other things being equal, are good and bad for us.

However, it is also problematic. This is because it appeals to a capacity that cannot do the requisite explanatory work. This is because the account appears to specify the wrong kind of thing as good (and bad) for us. It identifies the *activity* in which the excellent exercise of the capacity to pursue pleasure as the bearer of value. But this seems wrong: it is not the pursuit of pleasure that is good for us,

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8Bradford (2017) also considers other objections (p348-9) but her rebuttals *of these* seem successful to me, so I will not discuss them here.
but pleasure itself. Even if we thought that this activity is indeed non-instrumentally good for us, this at least means that the analysis does not attribute value to pleasure itself, such that it does not explain the value of pleasure. Something similar can be said with regards to pain: it is the failure to avoid pain qua poor exercise of the relevant capacity that is bad for us, under the view, not pain itself. Moreover, this has the consequence of evaluating some cases in the wrong way. For instance, under the analysis, an unfortunate excellent pursuit of pleasure which results in pain will count as good for us, as the activity of pursuing pleasure was excellent despite the production of pain. Similarly with a poor exercise of this capacity which still results in pleasure. Much the same can be said with regards to pain: i.e. excellent exercises of the capacity to avoid it which do result in pain would be good for us, and poor exercises which avoid pain bad for us. Finally, this problem is compounded by the fact that there seems to be little reason to individuate capacities of this kind apart from, precisely, the independent worthiness of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. The activity of pursuing pleasure has no plausible value independently of its end (pleasure), unlike the kind of reflection involved in pursuing understanding. Mutatis mutandis for pain.

As a final point, I will provide a suggestion as to why the bipartite account fails in this regard. This is because the goodness of pleasure and badness of pain is not a matter of a subject being or living up to a certain ideal (i.e. the perfectionist rationale). They are good and bad for us in quite a different way. Ultimately, I will argue that this should be understood in terms of the way they feel to the subject, something which cannot be explained in purely perfectionist terms. However, I will first turn to the tripartite account's treatment of this problem which, as we will see, is far more successful than that of the bipartite account.
Section 4 – The Tripartite Account’s Explanation.

Section 4.1 – The tripartite analysis of pleasure and pain.

The tripartite account, on the other hand, escapes many of the problems with the bipartite account. Bradford’s proposal is to analyse the goodness and badness of pleasure and pain in terms of the fulfilment and malfilment of our practical rationality. Note that this capacity is different from the rational capacity referred to earlier which I will henceforth refer to as epistemic rationality. Fulfilment of the capacity for practical rationality is taken to consist in both (a) the activity of “making plans and considering reasons for action” (p11) (i.e. which is shared with the bipartite account of the excellent exercise of the capacity) and (b) the obtaining of our end (i.e. the proper outcome of the capacity). Thus, under the tripartite account, both of these elements are good for us. Similarly, the malfilment of said capacity involves (a) the activity consisting in the poor exercise of the capacity (e.g. being passive, ignoring reasons etc.) and (b) the frustration of our end (i.e. the improper outcome of the capacity). Both of these are themselves bad for us under the analysis.

Turning now to the specifics of how this is to account for pleasure and pain, Bradford takes the presence of the former and absence of the latter to be (near) universal ends. What this means is that (almost) all subjects, at least those with which we are familiar, in (almost) all cases have these as their goal. We can therefore see how she attempts to account for the goodness of pleasure and badness of pain in terms of our practical rational capacity: we have a goal to gain pleasure and avoid pain; when we exercise our practical rational capacity well and attain our goal (i.e. we experience pleasure and avoid experiencing pain), we are fulfilling our practical rational capacity, and therefore are benefited; when we exercise our practical rationality poorly such as to produce the improper outcome...
in this regard (i.e. the failure to experience pleasure and the experiencing of pain) we are malfilling our practical rationality, thus being harmed.⁹

A small clarification is in order here. We can speak of a pleasure as a goal or end of ours. However, the same cannot be said of pain. If it were a goal or end it would imply that its pursuit and attainment would be good for us. It is thus its *avoidance* which is our end.

*Section 4.2 – Improvement on the bipartite account.*

This is not too dissimilar to the bipartite account’s attempt, but its differences are still significant in responding to some of the problems the former faced. To begin with, it does at least a better job in evaluating cases correctly. Unlike the bipartite account, excellent exercises of practical rationality that do not produce pleasure are not evaluated positively (or, at least, as less good than ones that do) as the actual production of the proper outcome of the capacity (pleasure in this case) is still absent here, and hence the capacity is not fulfilled. In fact, it even allows us to say that if the capacity is exercised well but, unfortunately, we experience pain from it, this is bad for us, as this still involves the malfilment of the capacity. This furthermore means that the account identifies the right kind of bearers of value and disvalue: i.e. it is not (only) the excellent and poor exercise of the capacity that constitutes its fulfilment and malfilment (i.e. are good and bad for us), but also its proper and improper outcome. As pleasure and pain are precisely the proper and improper outcome of our practical rationality given our relevant goals, they are themselves correctly identified as bearers of value and disvalue (at least insofar as they constitute the fulfilment and malfilment of the capacity).

⁹For simplicity, I will restrict my discussion to this kind of malfilment. However, as noted in section 2, malfilment is broader than this.
Thus, it is appropriate to see the tripartite account as a step forward towards a perfectionist theory that can explain pleasure and pain. As this was both a central concern facing perfectionism and a particularly damning one in our case (i.e. given the purpose of appealing to perfectionism to explain pairing), it positions Bradford’s version of the view as a good standard-bearer for perfectionism.

Section 4.3 – Initial problems.

Before continuing, I will highlight two problems that do apply to the tripartite account. However, these are either minor or at least acknowledged by Bradford. Therefore, they cannot be considered to constitute conclusive critiques.

To begin with, Bradford acknowledges that her account does not explain the goodness of pleasure and badness of pain in terms of how they feel – i.e. their hedonic tone. Indeed, she maintains that no perfectionist theory can do so (2021, p599). Of course, that the badness of pain, for example, is grounded in the fact that it hurts is a very intuitive one, one which is an important concession for Bradford to make. However, this concern must be substantiated by further considerations in order for it to genuinely count against Bradford’s proposal. The objections presented in section 5 ought to serve this purpose.

Second, the account relies on the claim that pleasure and the absence of pain are universal ends. However, Bradford admits that this is not strictly true: we do not always have pleasure and pain as ends. This is particularly clear if we follow her in understanding “end” here as meaning something more than “desire” or “want”. This must be a goal we take on intentionally. There are hence many cases where people have as an end the avoidance of pleasure (e.g. asceticism) or the experiencing of pain (e.g. masochism). This is why Bradford specifies her account in terms of near-universal ends and attempts to explain pleasure and pain by
appealing not to a distinctive capacity but to our practical rationality. The account must concede, then, that where pleasure and pain are not ends, the presence of the former is not good for us and that of the latter is not bad for us. Bradford, though, takes this to be a potential strength of her account, insofar as it permits us, for instance, to understand masochistic pain as good for the subject (see Chapter 2 on hurt so good pains). As we will see below, the details of this response can be questioned, but it is at least plausible enough to set this aside for the following.
Section 5 – Problems for the Tripartite Account’s Explanation of Pleasure and Pain.

In this section, I argue that Bradford’s account still fails to appropriately explain the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain. The case against the tripartite explanation of the value of pleasure and pain will cover the following objections: it seems to get some attributions of value wrong (5.1); it attributes value (and disvalue) to the wrong kinds of bearers (5.2); the way it specifies the relevant ends is problematic (5.3); its understanding of the value of pleasure and pain in terms of ends is itself problematic (5.4). Based on this, I will conclude that the tripartite account does fail to explain appropriately the goodness and badness of pleasure and pain. Therefore, we cannot rely on perfectionism to supply a structuring thesis.

Section 5.1 – Extensional inadequacy: problems with correct evaluation of cases.

The first concern is that there are still cases which the account has trouble explaining. To begin with, consider instances of pleasure we experience but which we did not have as ends: for instance, the unexpected pleasure of a beautiful sight we happen to walk upon. As it is unexpected, we might not have had it as an end (though some unexpected experiences may still have been ends). But if so, then it could not be good for us under the account. But, there doesn’t seem to be anything good about pleasant experiences qua pleasant which is absent in these unexpected pleasures. If the tripartite account cannot explain the goodness of such pleasures it is not only extensionally inadequate, but we can attribute this issue to its failure to analyse the goodness of pleasure (and badness of pain) in terms of its hedonic tone. Note that similar cases can also be formulated in terms of unexpected pains.
Bradford, though, can respond that the end in question is for pleasure *in general* – i.e. for all or any instance of the kind. Thus, even though we did not pursue this particular pleasure, it was subsumed under our end. This moves us forward slightly, but not much. The reason for this is that in the case of particular pleasures we do not aim at, we cannot be said to have *pursued* them. But if we did not pursue them it must mean that our experiencing them did not employ our practical rationality. Thus, by experiencing these pleasures, we are not fulfilling our capacity for practical rationality. To answer this worry, the tripartite account must appeal to some broader sense in which we might be said to have pursued these unexpected pleasures. One such candidate might be a default strategy of being ready and receptive to such pleasures. After all, not doing so would preclude our experiencing a great number of pleasures. This is perhaps clearer in the case of pain, where we might imagine its avoidance to involve some degree of continuous, default awareness to potential dangers.

However, this response can be circumvented by considering a different kind of case where our poor exercise of practical rationality just happens, out of luck, to still produce pleasure. Under Bradford’s account, this would not be good for us. Indeed, if my interpretation of fulfilment and malfilment is correct (section 2), then it would be *robustly* bad for us. But this seems to make a mistake in how it evaluates the case: *qua* instance of pleasure, the experience is still good for us. In response to this, the tripartite account could elect to interpret malfilment differently to only cover cases of (a) the poor exercise of our capacities resulting in the improper outcome, and (b) the excellent exercise of our capacity which results in the improper outcome, where (a) is, presumably, worse than (b). After this amendment, the poor exercise of our capacity which results in a proper outcome would not be robustly bad for us.

This response encounters two problems, depending on how we should evaluate such lucky poor exercises of practical rationality: as neutral (i.e. neither malfilling
nor fulfilling the capacity) or as good for us (i.e. as fulfilling the capacity). Starting with the former, this would still mischaracterise these cases, insofar as floundering into pleasure does not make the pleasure *neutral*. The pleasure itself is, intuitively, still good for us. On the other hand, the second approach would render the quality of the exercise of our capacities superfluous, except instrumentally or as modifying the degree of value. But sidelining this distinctive perfectionist component of the account to such roles moves us further away from the perfectionist rationale of grounding prudential value in terms of a subject’s living up to a certain human ideal: floundering into something good does not involve living up to an ideal in this sense. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the negative evaluation of such cases of lucky ineptitude is exactly right in terms of this perfectionist rationale: in such cases, we really are failing to live up to an ideal.

This suggests a deep tension between the intuitive basis of the value of pleasure and pain on the one hand and the perfectionist account of prudential value on the other, where the former appear to be good and bad for us independently of our living up to any perfectionist ideal.

*Section 5.2 – Attribution to the wrong kind of things and consequent problems with pairing.*

A second problem concerns whether the tripartite account really does identify the right kind of bearer of value. The first thing to note is that the tripartite account manages to include in its account of fulfilment and malfilment, on top of the exercise of the relevant capacity, the proper and improper outcomes of the relevant activities. This allows us to include as bearers of value and disvalue these outcomes, such as is the case with understanding and ignorance for our rational capacity. This was a promising feature of the approach in our case as it promised
to allow us to identify pleasure and pain themselves as the bearers of value and disvalue.

However, this is not clearly true under the account. This is because the view can be interpreted as identifying the proper and improper outcomes as achievement and failure, rather than pleasure and pain. Of course, given our relevant end, achievement will involve the obtaining of pleasure and failure will involve pain.\textsuperscript{10} The case for this interpretation can be made with reference to other ends. For instance, take someone who has the end of learning how to whittle (well). This is not an entirely trivial goal, and it will take time and practice to accomplish (difficulty), such that doing so will constitute an achievement under Bradford’s account (2015, 2016b – see Chapter 1 and 2 for details). But what is valuable here is precisely achievement, not the skill of whittling. It is the fact that we have applied ourselves to our goal and overcome the difficulties involved that makes our success valuable. Consider, in support of this, a case where our subject fails to learn how to whittle. If we assume that such a failure is harmful, the bearer of this negative value cannot be the fact of not knowing how to whittle, as there is nothing bad about this in itself. It must then be failure itself, which is in this case constituted or realised by not knowing how to whittle (despite our efforts), that is bad for us. If so though, the same must be in the case of pain.

The issue with this is not just that the reduction of pleasure and pain to achievement and failure is counterintuitive. First, and most saliently for the concerns of pairing, this account would pair pleasure and pain \textit{qua} achievement and failure. Though this still organises the two into a pair, it does mean that pleasure stands in the same pairing relation to any instance of failure as it does to pain (and \textit{vice versa} for pain and any instance of achievement). But this just doesn’t seem true about the relationship between pleasure and pain: they are not

\textsuperscript{10}I will later note how this is somewhat more complex with regards to whether we can say that failure here is a matter of pain or the absence of pleasure.
just related in the same way they would be to any other failure or achievement (respectively). Second, if it is true that pleasure is good *qua* achievement, then any pleasure which does not meet the criteria for achievement is not good for us. This returns us to a problem discussed in section 5.1. If we really ought to understand the goodness of pleasure under the tripartite account as that of achievement, then serendipitous pleasures cannot count as achievements, as they are not attained by overcoming any difficulties. This would mean either that such pleasures are not valuable, which is implausible, or that the tripartite account is wrong.

To resist this challenge, the tripartite account must change its position on what the bearer of value is in the exercise of our practical rationality. Given the programmatic status of the view in the original article, this should not be a serious concern. We could, for instance, identify achievement as corresponding to the capacity-fulfilment (and failure to capacity-malfilment) of practical rationality as a whole, rather than as only the proper outcome of the exercise of this capacity. This would allow Bradford to attribute value to the pleasure directly *qua* the proper outcome of the capacity given the end to experience it. It should be noted though that this commitment may have unwelcome consequences in identifying as valuable what accomplishes the end rather than achievement. I will not pursue this line of argument here as it is not clear to me that it is the most productive.

This change in the bearer of value solves the second issue identified above, but not the first. If in our account we make the attained end, and not the achievement of its attainment, as the constituent of the fulfilment of practical rationality, this will apply not only to pleasure and pain, but to all of our ends. Thus, this response does not in fact organise pleasure and pain into a separate good-ill pair, nor does it deny that they are good and bad for us in the same way as the attaining of any other end or the failure to do so (respectively).
Two responses are open to this retort. Ultimately, they are either partial counters or themselves problematic, as we will see later, but they do show that the tripartite view retains some plausibility at this stage. Starting with the first of these, though the tripartite account cannot establish pleasure and pain as members of a distinct pair (i.e. instead reducing them to achievement and failure), it may come close to doing so. This is because it can still maintain that there is a closer relationship between pleasure and pain compared to other proper and improper outcomes of practical rationality: i.e. *qua* realisers and frustrators of *the same* end. They would then stand in an exclusive relationship, hence explaining the intuition that they are a separate good-ill pair.

The second point is that there is a basis for claiming that the end to experience pleasure and avoid pain is different from others. That is, its near-universality (Bradford 2021, pp599-600). Indeed, this does not merely mean that most if not all people take it on in some capacity, but that most or all retain it through all or most of their lives. This, in itself, already distinguishes the relevant end from others, but it is what might underpin this near-universality which helps respond to this concern. After all, if it is a near-universal end, there must be some explanation for this feature. Such explanations, moreover, are certainly available, such as appeals to a biological account of why (a) we are attracted to pleasure and avert pain and (b) such experiences are necessary for our acquiring information about our relation to our environment (e.g. flames harm us).

However, an appeal to near-universality is not a fail-safe response. Indeed, assuming that this near-universality supports the tripartite account is question-begging: if pleasure and pain were good and bad for us independently of our having them as ends, other things being equal, we might expect them to be near-universal ends. In particular, any appeals to cognitive scientific explanations of pleasure and pain, as well as to their ascribed role in appreciation and self-regulation, may be infelicitous, insofar as current accounts explicitly ground the
goodness of pleasure and badness of pain in how they feel – i.e. their pleasantness and painfulness (see Chapter 2 and the end of section 5.3). Thus, pointing to the near-universality of the end as a solution to particular problems is not a safe move, in that it points us precisely to pleasure and pain being good and bad for us independently of our having these as ends and the exercise of our practical rationality.

Section 5.3 – How many ends? The problem with the characterisation of the evaluative status of pleasure and pain in terms of ends.

The third objection to the tripartite account’s treatment of pleasure and pain takes aim at an issue with how we are to interpret the taking of pleasure and pain as ends. There are two ways in which we can understand the relation between the end of experiencing pleasure and the end of avoiding pain: as separate ends or as a single one. Both are problematic, though why is clearer in the case of the former.

Understanding pleasure and pain as separate ends – i.e. the end of experiencing pleasure and the end of avoiding experiencing pain – involves a number of mistaken attributions of value and disvalue. Starting with pleasure, the consequence of failing to experience pleasure will constitute a malfilment under this analysis. This is because the failure to obtain an end of ours will constitute the malfilment of practical rationality under any of the interpretations above. Thus, if experiencing pleasure is our end, then our failure to obtain it will be the improper outcome of practical rationality. Therefore, under this analysis, the absence of pleasure will be robustly bad for us. But this is not the right evaluation of a mere absence of pleasure, which is not bad for us but rather neutral. Something similar is the case with the end of avoiding pain. In this case, the problem is capacity-fulfilment: in cases where we (a) have avoiding pain as an end, (b) exercise our
practical rationality well with respect to this, and (c) successfully avoid pain, then we will have fulfilled our capacity for practical rationality. But this would mean that avoiding pain (in the sense of (a)-(c)) is robustly good for us under the analysis, while it is, instead, merely neutral.

We must therefore turn to the second interpretation of how pleasure and pain are taken on as ends: as the common single end to experience pleasure and avoid pain. Indeed, Bradford appears to endorse this reading when she characterises her target as "a standing end to avoid pain and pursue pleasure" (Bradford 2021, p599, italics in original). Bracketing for the time being the activity component of fulfilment and mal fulfilment, we must understand this interpretation as proposing that the proper outcome of practical rationality (given this end) is the production of pleasure and absence of pain, while its improper outcome is the presence of pain and absence of pleasure. This perhaps permits of grey areas – e.g. mixed cases of pleasure and pain – but these do not seem problematic in themselves (i.e. we can make sense of these as either successful but imperfect realisations of the end or as failed realisation of the end), and it indeed seems right to treat in a nuanced way mixed states of affairs of this kind.

However, this reading faces a first concern regarding the fact that it places the presence of pleasure and absence of pain on the same footing as constitutive of the bearer of prudential value. This is because, under this view, the absence of pain is also constitutive of the realisation of our end, and thus also partly constitutive of the proper outcome. Similarly, the absence of pleasure would then be constitutive of harm in the same way that the presence of pain is. Though, of course, the absence of pain is important for our living a good life and having a net positive level of prudential value, it is so precisely in virtue of the fact that the presence of pain is bad for us. If we had both pleasure and pain we would not have a case where the proper bearer of value is absent, as this interpretation suggests (i.e. because we only have one of its components – the presence of
pleasure – but not the other – the absence of pain), but rather both the bearer of value and the bearer of disvalue. Therefore, interpreting the value of pleasure and disvalue of pain in terms of our taking them on as a single end to obtain pleasure and avoid pain once again identifies the wrong kind of bearers of value and disvalue.

A second objection takes as its starting point the fact that, unlike paradigm exercises of practical rationality, this end is a complex one. Ordinarily, we understand our ends to be simple, in the sense of being couched in terms either of the obtaining of some kind of state or of its failure to obtain. The proposed end, by contrast, is complex in two ways: (1) it involves two different kinds of states, and (2) it directs us towards them in opposing ways (i.e. the obtaining of one and the avoidance of the other). The worry with this is that it may constitute an ad hoc formulation: that we have joined two distinct ends in order to avoid the problems with keeping these separate that were outlined above. After all, why should we not instead take our end as the pursuit of pleasure and the absence of enemies, for example (assuming that the absence of enemies is a potential end in its own right).

To show that it is not ad hoc, perfectionists would have to show that the two outcomes are appropriately related. In other words, they must be able to answer the question of why we are taking as a single end a complex of aiming at the obtaining of some state \(x\) and the not-obtaining of some other state \(y\)? I will assume that, in order to do so, perfectionists must be able to show that the two outcomes are internally related. That is, that the presence of pleasure and the presence of pain stand in opposition to each other in a way akin to the proper and improper outcomes of other perfectionist capacities (e.g. the presence of understanding and the presence of ignorance). However, this cannot be understood in terms of the independent value and disvalue of the outcomes as this would undermine the explanatory aims of the account.
One way we may try to establish the internal relation of pleasure and pain is with reference to understanding and ignorance within Bradford’s view: epistemic rationality aims towards understanding as a result of its excellent exercise, while ignorance is its improper outcome in virtue of being the failure to produce understanding. The internal relation is then given by the fact that ignorance is precisely a failure with regards to understanding – i.e. an inaccurate vs an accurate picture of a subject matter, respectively. Thus, for us to exercise our epistemic capacity towards some understanding and, whether out of misfortune or a poor exercise of our capacity, reach a conclusion on the matter (i.e. as opposed to withholding belief) which is wrong, then this *is* ignorance.

However, this same strategy cannot be applied directly to pleasure and pain. This is because a failure to obtain pleasure is not pain, but an absence of pleasure (though this may be constituted by the presence of pain). We must therefore look for a less straightforward way of applying the example of understanding-ignorance. One suggestion is that we link these by taking pain as an impediment to pleasure. It is not inconceivable that our pursuit of an end \( x \) will imply the avoidance of some \( y \). Thus, the pursuit of \( x \) must be prevented by \( y \) in a special way. Indeed, this seems like a plausible approach in the case of pleasure and pain, as pain certainly often prevents us from experiencing pleasure.

However, this (a) isn’t clearly true, as some pleasures may well *require* the prior or even contemporaneous experience of pain (e.g. masochistic pleasure), and (b) there may be other things that also impede the achievement of pleasure. I will set (a) aside for the sake of argument, though it should be noted that it is not clear how the tripartite view can answer it. Turning to (b) then, it might be countered that pain has a special status in this respect, insofar as it will always impede pleasure, while other impeding states do so only contingently: i.e. pain necessarily impedes any pleasure. But this approach also faces difficulties (aside from (a)
above). First, it begs the question of why pleasure and pain stand in this kind of special relation. After all, this may suggest that there is something further to their relationship, e.g. their being good and bad for us independently of the tripartite account of their evaluative status (and the grounds for their being paired). This, though, is a bullet perfectionists can well bite, so I will not pursue this retort further. Second, this response still leaves pain as bad for us only *qua* impediment to pleasure, something which is highlighted by the fact that its badness would be the same as anything else that, on a particular occasion, impeded our experiencing of pleasure. In fact this would mean that what is bad for us here is still only the absence of pleasure – it’s just that pain guarantees it. But this would make pain merely *instrumentally* bad for us. I take it that this is an unacceptable result.

Turning to an alternative attempt to relate pleasure and pain internally, we also cannot appeal to the relation between the nature of pleasure and pain to motivate their inclusion in the same end. If we follow cognitive scientific analyses of pleasure and pain, however we understand the details of pleasantness or unpleasantness (positive and negative affect), these will be related as, in some sense, opposites of one another: e.g. *p*-desire *for* an experience *x* and a *p*-desire *against* an experience *y* (see chapter 2 section 4.4 for more details). This may suggest that we can, in virtue of this, link the two in the way required by the tripartite account. That is, if we understand *p*-desiring (or any other alternative to this component of the analysis of affective states) as a stand-in for the neurological state (or states) underlying *affect*, then both pleasure and pain are (partly) constituted by the same kind of state (being further distinguished from each other by the valence of the affect). Moreover, the way they are united *qua* affective also means that we are directed towards them in opposite ways: towards one and against the other. This should explain both (1) and (2) above.

This approach, though, involves a serious concern: *p*-desiring and similar notions have been appealed to precisely to explain pleasantness and unpleasantness *qua*
good and bad for us in virtue of how they feel. That is, the unpleasantness of pain (the fact that it hurts and is painful) is supposed to account, under these views, for its badness. Similarly for pleasure and pleasantness. Thus, this is a way of cashing out the nature of affect which also accounts for pleasure and pain as being good and bad for us in virtue of how they feel. Therefore, though appealing to the literature on the topic may well help the tripartite account relate internally pleasure and pain, this way of doing so risks making the proposed explanation of their goodness and badness redundant: the grounds for their internal relation are also the grounds for their being independently valuable and disvaluable. Moreover, even if we granted that, as Bradford (2020) argues, the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain does not reduce to the neurological states to which they are physically reduced, there would still be cause for concern. This is because, if affect does direct us towards pleasure and pain in opposing ways, as is necessary for (2), then it is not our rationally considering pleasure and pain as ends which explains our having them as such, but said affect. As we will see in the next section, though, it is imperative for the tripartite account that pleasure and pain are taken up as ends in the former sense.

Section 5.4 – Is the goodness and badness of pleasure and pain to be understood in terms of ends?

The final problem can be dealt with more briefly, but is, I take it, quite serious. The issue arises in relation to the grounding of the goodness of pleasure and badness of pains on our taking these as ends. I will argue that this misconstrues the explanation of their value and disvalue by making it dependent on our having them taken on in this way.

To begin with, consider that ends do not merely provide explanatory reasons for our actions, but justificatory ones (Raz 1999). They, are, therefore, not merely a
matter of wanting, which can only provide the former. Moreover, this seems apt with regards to accounting for pleasure and pain as if anything gives us justificatory reasons, it is these states (and particularly pain). In articulating how ends are taken on in the requisite way, Bradford (2021) appeals to LeBar (2004), to claim that these are goals which are rationally considered and espoused. The tripartite account, then, is committed to understanding the way pleasure and pain benefit and harm us in terms of our having taken them on as an end in this sense. If the view cannot make sense of this, then, in order to account for the justifying role of pleasure and pain, we would have to accord them independent value and disvalue and reject the tripartite explanation of their value and disvalue. But, if pleasure and pain really are good and bad for us in virtue of being taken on as ends, then there must have been some point at which we took them on as ends, as well as some account of our retaining them as such. This, I will maintain, is wrong about pleasure and pain for two reasons.

First, it is unclear whether, when, and how we would have taken these on as ends. They instead seem to be presented to us as worthy of pursuit and avoidance (respectively), which makes them best understood not as good and bad for us in virtue of being an end, but an end in virtue of being good and bad for us. Second, pleasure and pain seem to be good and bad for us, and thus to supply justifying reasons, even if a subject abandons them as a rational end. Bradford (2021) rejects this intuition, citing, in support, the example of hurt-so-good (HSG) pains (e.g. Bradford 2020), such as masochistic pleasures. She argues that, though painful, these don’t just seem to be net valuable, but straightforwardly so. This, Bradford claims, supports her account as we can understand the positive value of these pains in terms of our having acquired the end of obtaining them and abandoned the end of avoiding them.11

11Note that this is problematic insofar as it compromises the response to the first set of problems raised in this section (see section 5.1), where the tripartite view had to maintain that we must take all pleasure and pains as our end, not merely specific ones. I will ignore this issue here for the sake of argument.
However, this is not entirely convincing. First, Bradford’s is not the only possible explanation of the goodness of HSG pains, so even if such cases provide limited support for the tripartite view, they are not conclusive evidence for her position. Second, it does not seem sufficient to abandon pleasure and pain as an end for them to cease being good and bad for us. To see this, consider the following example. For the sake of argument, I will assume that we can abandon pleasure and pain as ends. Indeed, I will also assume that, through certain practices (e.g. meditative), we can come to not be hurt by pain or to find pleasure pleasant. Thus, take a novice ascetic called Abelard. Abelard has come to reject pleasure and pain as ends. However, though he is engaging in the practices by which he will one day successfully stop experiencing pleasures as pleasant and pains as painful, he is only at the beginning of this process, such that pleasure is still pleasant and pain painful. It would seem to me that, as a consequence, pleasure and pain are still presented to Abelard as worthy of being an end of his – i.e. they are presented as valuable and disvaluable – even if he has rejected them as ends and resists the temptation to take them back on as ends. Indeed, the whole point of Abelard’s asceticism is for pleasure and pain to cease appearing as worthy ends, so insofar as he is merely a novice ascetic, they have not yet ceased to appear in this light. But, if Abelard does experience pleasures and pains in this way, they seem to still be good and bad for him, despite his repudiating them as ends. In particular, this appears to be quite a different kind of case from that of HSG pains, where we take pleasure in the painfulness of the pain (Feldman 2004; Klein 2014) and this is what is good for us about them. If this line of reasoning is correct and pleasure and pain remains bad for Abelard and pleasure good for him, despite him abandoning pleasure and pain as ends, then we can conclude that

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12 e.g. Feldman’s (2004) and Klein’s (2014) accounts from Chapter 2 seem compatible with an account attributing value and disvalue directly to pleasure.

13 Of course, it may be that experiencing pleasure as pleasant is overall bad for Abelard given his end not to experience it in this way. But this is perfectly compatible with it also being good for him qua pleasant.
pleasure and pain are not good for us in virtue of our having taken them on as ends.

Therefore, the tripartite account does not have the capacity to explain the prudential value of pleasure and disvalue of pain, and, as a consequence, it cannot be seen as a truly satisfactory theory of well-being. With it, moreover, is rejected perhaps the most plausible form of perfectionism and, hence, though perfectionism avoids problems with good-ill pairs, we cannot adopt it as a substitute for pluralist OLTs. That being said, in the next section I will briefly discuss a way in which perfectionists can save their intuitions, though one which is at the very least heavily suggestive of the kind of strong pluralism I discuss in the rest of this thesis.
Section 6 – Plural Kinds of Self-fulfilment and Strong Pluralism.

As a final, brief point, I will pick up on something hinted at in section 3.1. This concerns the possibility of a “mixed” eudaimonist theory: an account of well-being where some goods and ills are explained in terms of one conception of self-fulfilment (e.g. perfectionist capacity-fulfilment) while others (e.g. pleasure and pain) are explained in terms of a different kind of self-fulfilment (e.g. Epicurean self-fulfilment – see section 1). The possibility of such mixed views is particularly relevant for the purposes of the rest of this thesis insofar as it is suggestive of (though does not entail) strong pluralism (e.g. Tucker’s, 2016, strong pluralism, or Heathwood’s, 2015, value property pluralism and radical pluralism).

Moreover, it is further made relevant by the specifics of the perfectionist troubles with pleasure and pain. That is, perfectionism seems to be well-placed to explain certain goods and ills, particularly achievement and failure, as well as understanding and ignorance. In fact, we might go so far as to say that, other things being equal, its analysis of these is right: the most plausible explanation of the goodness of achievement is some sense of living up to an ideal, while that of failure as exemplifying some flaw. Which ends realise these, then, seems more a way to reflect one of two (or perhaps both) attractive features: the possibility of exerting some degree of agency over the precise nature of the ideal we are to live up to, or the fact that part of this human ideal involves exerting ourselves to attain our ends. If possible, then, it would be preferable to be able to appeal to this kind of explanation.

On the other hand, this same view seems particularly ill-placed to explain pleasure and pain, as we saw above. To recapitulate the diagnosis of this problem, the goodness of pleasure and badness of pain seem to be (both intuitively and in recognition of the argumentation above) a matter of how they feel, and in no sense of our living up to some ideal in the perfectionist sense. As a consequence, we
are placed in an unfortunate predicament. We have at our disposal a theory that explains exceptionally well one set of goods and ills, but which cannot explain another. Therefore, it seems we must choose between, on the one hand, abandoning a good explanation of one set of goods and ills and, on the other, appropriately characterising another set. As things stand, then, this is a dilemma.

However, there is a way between the two horns by rejecting the underlying assumption that we must account for both sets of goods and ills in the same terms. This assumption, though, would seem to be one of the more attractive features of perfectionism: its promised ability to unify the explanation of different goods and ills. Abandoning it, then, should be unpalatable to perfectionists. But this relies on a few misapprehensions. First, it does not in fact seem that perfectionism can do so, given its trouble with pleasure and pain, such that it cannot actually itself unify all goods and ills under its proposed explanation. There is therefore very little that perfectionists would be giving up on this front. Second, though not articulated in these terms, the suggested solution is perhaps not foreign to perfectionist accounts. For example, we could perhaps interpret Hurka’s (1993, 2011) resistance to characterise perfectionism as a theory of well-being, given his prior commitment to a subjectivist view of the prudential (within which, rightly or wrongly, he includes hedonism), as a recognition that these different components of prudential value cannot be explained in perfectionist terms. If so, there is some precedence for the kind of proposal discussed here. Third, contra Bradford (2017, p347, footnote 10), this would not entail abandoning a unified explanation of these goods and ills in some sense. This is because explaining pleasure and pain in non-perfectionist terms still permits explaining all of them in eudaimonist terms. If, for instance, we could appeal to different forms of self-fulfilment for different goods and ills, then we could still understand all of well-being as a matter of the same key notion (self-fulfilment). This possibility, moreover, is supported by the variety of different kinds of eudaimonist theories, a feature of the approach which was highlighted in section 2.1. Thus, these views can run the gamut from perfectionist
capacity-fulfilment to an Epicurean experiential-fulfilment, where the latter can be understood in terms of the fulfilment of a distinctly experiential self.

What is significant for our purposes going forward is that an appeal to these different kinds of self-fulfilment are at the very least suggestive of the strong form of pluralism I will argue for in later chapters. I say suggestive because it would not entail it. As we will see, these kinds of pluralism are defined in terms of a plurality of value properties (see chapter 4 section 1), and though a theory that proposes different eudaimonist value properties would be committed to there being different kinds of self-fulfilment, the reverse is not true. However, if an appeal to different kinds of self-fulfilment implies an appeal to different conceptions of the self, each of which can be fulfilled independently of the other, such a theory may involve features such as incommensurability, incomparability, and uncompensability; and insofar as these are distinctive, if not essential (e.g. Chang's, 2015, non-reductive pluralism), of a plurality of value properties, such a “mixed” eudaimonist theory provides strong evidence (though not conclusive) for a strong form of pluralism.

Therefore, insofar as such “mixed” eudaimonist views are an attractive proposition for perfectionists and other eudaimonists, there is at least some reason for proponents of these views to also consider strong pluralist theories of well-being. Furthermore, for the limited purposes of explaining pairing, this provides further motivation to investigate such theories.
Conclusion

We can conclude from this discussion that prospects for accounting for pairs within the confines of the traditional (i.e. weak) understanding of pluralism in the well-being literature are slim. This, however, is not because theories operating within this conception of pluralism are incapable of providing a cogent account of pairing. Indeed, perfectionism provides an intuitive and compelling account of this. Rather, it is because perfectionism encounters problems in accounting for pleasure and pain. As these are key to any theory of well-being, this is a serious concern for the theory. Moreover, this also means that the perfectionist account of pairing, even if it holds some truth for other pairs, is not true of the pleasure-pain pair, and thus is not in fact an acceptable account of pairing (at least tout court – i.e. it may be an incomplete account). Finally, the specific nature of this failure is in fact further support for the kind of strong pluralist theory of well-being which will be discussed in the following chapters. This is because it suggests that a different second-order explanation is needed for different goods and ills, even if such explanations all fall within the same family of views (e.g. eudaimonist). Though not committed to strong pluralism, such a move remains suggestive of it, thus further motivating the articulation of strong pluralist theories of well-being, which will be discussed in the following chapters.
In this Chapter I will introduce in more detail a distinction between weaker and stronger kinds of pluralism, which I already hinted at in previous chapters (i.e. Tucker's 2016 weak and strong pluralism). However, here I will focus on Heathwood’s (2015) taxonomy of kinds of pluralism and their opposing kinds of monism: substantive pluralism and monism; value property pluralism and monism; radical pluralism and monism. The relation between these is complex and will be explored in some detail, including their different implications and associated interpretative issues. As a consequence, the first half of this chapter will be somewhat exegetical in nature to establish a framework for the second half. That being said, I will introduce and argue for some novel points regarding the articulation of the framework, such as the following: how to reflect considerations of negative value in formulations of substantive pluralism, how to understand the relation between substantive and value property pluralism within radical pluralism, how different classifications of pluralism stand in relation to each other, and how to understand the analysability of one value in terms of another (and thus their reducibility). Having established this theoretical basis, I will then proceed to articulate a radical pluralist theory of well-being, involving both a plurality of goods (and ills) and of prudential value properties. After providing a first characterisation of the different value properties of the theory, I will defend it from some initial objections, identify how it will be explored and challenged in the next chapters, and how it provides a compelling account of the pairing of goods and ills.

In doing so, this chapter will take the following structure. Section 1 will introduce and explain Heathwood’s taxonomy, as well as briefly relate it to current accounts within the theory of well-being. Section 2 will introduce other distinctions between
kinds of pluralism offered in the literature, relate them to Heathwood’s, and argue for the greater relevance to our purposes of the latter’s proposal. Section 3 will clarify some of the key notions involved in value property pluralism (incommensurability, incomparability, uncompensability, and reducibility). Section 4 will see the articulation of the proposed radical pluralist theory of well-being, as well as answering some preliminary concerns with it. Finally, section 5 will articulate this view’s account of pairing.
Section 1 – Different Kinds of Pluralism.

In this section I will introduce and explain Heathwood’s (2015) distinctions between different notions of monism and pluralism. These are closely related to the previously-discussed weak-strong pluralism\(^1\) distinction introduced by Tucker (2016), but there are some important differences between these (see section 2.1). Heathwood (2015) identifies three different kinds of pluralism: substantive, value property, and radical pluralism (SP, VPP, and RP respectively). Each of these implies a corresponding and opposing notion of monism, which should also be distinguished from one another (respectively, SM, VPM, and RM). In articulating these in more detail, I will also relate each to different theories of well-being.

Section 1.1 – Substantive Monism and Pluralism.

Starting with SP, this form of pluralism is commonly understood as consisting in the claim that an axiology involves an irreducible plurality of kinds of bearers of value (Heathwood 2015, p140 and Tucker 2016, p335). An SP axiology will be one where there are at least two kinds of things whose instances are bearers of value, and whose being valuable cannot be explained in terms of also being instances of some other kind of bearer. On the other hand, an axiology will be SM if this is false: i.e. if all putative kinds of bearers reduce to a single one (e.g. all instances of one kind of bearer can be explained qua bearers of value in terms of being instances of another kind of bearer). Thus, a theory claiming that there is only one kind of thing that can be morally good (e.g. pleasure-maximising actions) will be an SM theory, while one claiming that there are two such kinds (e.g.

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\(^1\)I will use the italicised “weak” and “strong pluralism” to refer to Tucker’s distinction, while the non-italicised “weak” and “strong pluralism” will be used to refer to any kind of pluralism which makes, respectively, weaker and stronger pluralist claims. Hence, the latter but not the former also refers to Heathwood’s (2015) value property and radical pluralism, as well as Mason’s (2018) foundational pluralism.
pleasure-maximising and honest actions) will be an SP theory. See the end of section 1.1 for how this relates to theories of well-being.

There is, however, an alternative characterisation of SM-SP that has come to be preferred to the former within the literature (Hurka 1996, pp560-1, Lin 2014, p129, Heathwood 2015, p142, Tucker 2016, p335-337). This defines the relevant plurality in terms of good-makers, rather than kinds of bearers: an SP axiology is one which involves an irreducible plurality of good-makers, while an SM one involves only one irreducible one. In what follows, I will follow the literature in understanding SM-SP in terms of this good-maker interpretation, rather than the former bearers formulation. However, I will understand this in the first-order good-maker sense discussed in previous chapters: i.e. what make some particular x good, rather than what accounts for why this first-order good-maker makes particular things good (i.e. a second-order good-maker, see Chapter 2 for details). This is done, primarily, in order to fit with how theories of well-being have been articulated. Moreover, it also seems to be the sense in which Tucker (2016) understands good-maker: he gives Hedonism as an example of a theory providing a single good-maker (p336) of being-an-instance-of-pleasure.

Moreover, we should also note that both versions of SM-SP omit one important component of their theory: i.e. disvalue. The current articulations of the positions do not take into account the number of irreducible bad-makers (or kinds of bearers of disvalue) and how this would impact the categorisation of a particular theory. For example, consider a theory that postulates two good-makers (pleasure and understanding) but a single bad-maker (pain). As currently-defined, the theory is an instance of SP, as it involves a plurality of good-making properties. However, classifying it as SP is misleading insofar as its account of ill-being includes a single constituent. On the other hand, it would also be misleading to characterise this theory as SM.
There are four ways we might resolve this issue. First, we could take only good-making properties into consideration. However, not taking into account the number of irreducible bad-making properties in our theory seems to miss something important about it: describing as monist a theory that included only pleasure as a good-making property, but both pain and ignorance as bad-making properties, fails to represent the theory’s pluralist properties. Similarly for the suggestion to take into account only bad-making properties. Second, we could take a conjunctive account, where, for a theory to be SP, there must be a plurality of both good-making and bad-making properties. Third is a disjunctive account, where a theory is SP if it involves a plurality of either good-making or bad-making properties. Finally, we can treat each component separately from the other, such that a theory can be SP with regards to its good-making properties but SM with regards to its bad-making ones. In what follows, I will understand SM-SP to apply to good- and bad-making properties in this last sense. This is because this compartmentalised approach allows us to capture the complexity of asymmetric theories (i.e. ones which postulate a plurality of one set of properties but not of the other). That being said, this issue should not concern us in what follows as all theories discussed henceforth will be symmetric in this regard: they will postulate the same amount of good- and bad-making properties.

Turning now to the relation between SM-SP and current theories of well-being, we can see that the current discussion of pluralism and monism within the discipline has focused primarily on the SM-SP distinction (e.g. Lin 2014, p127, Lin 2016, p331, Fletcher 2016, p149). This is implicit in definitions of theories as monist in virtue of positing a single kind of bearer of value – e.g. Hedonism – and as pluralist in virtue of postulating a plurality of these – e.g. pluralist OLTs. Moreover, such characterisations are often explicitly formulated in these terms, such as Lin’s (2014) definition of monism and pluralism: “Monism is the view that there is only one kind of basic good and one basic bad. […] Pluralism is the view that there is either more than one basic good or more than one basic bad” (Lin 2014, p127).
Therefore, we can, at least provisionally, see how SM-SP is at the basis of current categorisations of theories of well-being as pluralist or monist. Hedonism, for instance, is classed as a monist theory (a monist OLT, e.g. Fletcher 2013) because it involves a single first-order good-maker (being-an-instance-of-pleasure). Pluralist OLTs, on the other hand, posit a plurality of such good-makers, and are called pluralist precisely in virtue of this. Similarly, Desire Satisfactionism (DS) can be understood as being straightforwardly monist insofar as it posits a single first-order good-maker: being-something-that-satisfies-one-of-the-subject’s-desires (e.g. Lin 2014, 2018). Perfectionism, though, is more complicated. As we saw in the previous chapter, though Perfectionism is often understood as a monist theory, it can be interpreted as pluralist in virtue of positing a plurality of first-order good-makers – i.e. one for each core capacity. It is monist, then, only if we understand the definition of SM-SP to be in terms of second-order good-makers (i.e. capacity-fulfilment). However, this should not concern us too much, especially with regards to identifying the monism-pluralism distinction among theories of well-being with the SM-SP conception. After all, Perfectionist theories positing multiple core capacities do seem to be pluralist in some important regards (see Chapter 3, section 1.2), so this appears to be more a discovery about how we should understand Perfectionism than a counterexample to the characterisation of SM-SP.

2It should be noted though that we could interpret DS differently in terms of a projectivist account of welfare, under which what are first-order good-makers are determined by the subjectivist second-order good-maker desiring. The object view from Rabinowicz and Österberg (1996) may be one way of understanding this.
Section 1.2 – Value property pluralism and value property monism.

Turning to VPP, this form of pluralism is a form of strong pluralism, such as Tucker’s (2016) *strong pluralism* and Mason’s (2018) *foundational pluralism*, positing a more radical fragmentation of value than SP.

Unlike SP, VPP does not posit a plurality of *good-makers*, but of *value properties*. That is, a VPP axiology is one which involves an irreducible plurality of value properties, while a VPM one involves only one irreducible value property (Heathwood 2015). Thus, for some VPP axiology with two irreducible value properties $V_1$ and $V_2$, bearers $x$ and $y$ may be bearers each of a different value property, such that $V_1x$ and $V_2y$. For example, if a general VPP axiology includes a *moral* value property ($V_m$) and an *aesthetic* one ($V_a$), then different bearers of value within the axiologies may be bearers of one or of the other (or both), such that $V_mx$ and $V_ay$. Under a VPM one, on the other hand, one of the two would reduce to the other (e.g. *aesthetic* value reduces to *moral* value). I explain what reducibility consists in in more depth in section 3.

The notion of a value property is employed by VPP to represent a kind of value. Thus, VPP is a way of articulating the claim that there is an irreducible plurality of different kinds of value. Hence, returning to our example, under a VPP axiology with value properties $V_m$ and $V_a$, a bearer of $V_m$ is *morally* good while a bearer of $V_a$ is *aesthetically* good. Different values and their bearers are often taken to exhibit certain distinctive properties, such as *incommensurability*, *incomparability*, and *uncompensability*. I will discuss these in depth in section 3, but for now we can understand each of these as follows: when magnitudes of two values cannot be expressed along a common cardinal scale or in terms of a single unit of measure, they are said to be *incommensurable*; when no *positive* and only *negative* value relations hold between two items, then they are *incomparable*;
when losses in one kind of value cannot be compensated by gains in another, then they are said to be **uncompensable**.

Though this form of pluralism has been discussed and accepted more broadly (e.g. Berlin 1969, Williams 1973a, 1981a, Nussbaum 1986, Griffin 1986, Stocker 1990, Kekes 1993), it hasn’t received substantial attention *within* the philosophy of well-being. That is, with few exceptions (see below) no theory of prudential value has been proposed which explicitly understands itself as an instance of a strong kind of pluralism like VPP, such that it posits a fragmentation of welfare into different kinds of prudential value, rather than merely in terms of a plurality of its constituents. There are, however, some notable exceptions. Griffin (1986), for example, explicitly considers and argues for a theory which has the hall-marks of a strong kind of pluralism (e.g. incommensurability and the need to appeal to non-cardinal comparative relations – see Chapter 5 for details). Heathwood (2015) also explicitly considers the application of the stronger forms of pluralism he identifies (i.e. VPP and RP) to well-being, while Mason (2018) attributes this kind of pluralism to Mill in her interpretation of his Qualitative Hedonism. Finally, Alexandrova’s well-being contextualism (2017) and Mitchell & Alexandrova’s (2020) prudential conceptual pluralism can be interpreted as espousing something akin to VPP about well-being.³ This omission, though, is hardly surprising. After all, the debate over stronger versions of pluralism like VPP is often played *between* prudential value and other putative kinds of value: e.g. where we hold that prudential and moral value are irreducibly distinct kinds of value. Though VPP or some other kind of strong pluralism is often accepted *between* prudential and other kinds of value (with notable exceptions, e.g. Fletcher 2013, Thomson 2008), it is perhaps understandable that something like VPP has not been explicitly applied *within* the theory of well-being.

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³Though see responses, Fletcher (2019), and the limitation of this pluralist interpretation in Mitchell & Alexandrova (2020).
That being said, at least one well-known theory of welfare can be characterised as VPP. As Mason (2018) suggests, Mill’s (*Utilitarianism*) Qualitative Hedonism can be understood as an instance of such a kind of strong pluralism. Mason argues that we can understand Mill’s distinction between higher and lower qualities of pleasure in terms of different value properties. Thus, though both pleasures \( p_1 \) and \( p_2 \) are bearers of prudential value, \( p_1 \) is a bearer of one kind of prudential value, \( V_1 \), while \( p_2 \) of another, \( V_2 \), (or, at least, each is *predominantly* a bearer of these respective values). We can hence understand the fact that a certain amount of one pleasure can be *all-things-considered* better than the same amount of another pleasure in terms of the fact that they are bearers of different value properties, such that one one of them has more bearing in *all-things-considered* comparisons than the other (see Chapter 5 for more on this kind of comparison).

Before moving on to RM-RP, we must note something that is often omitted from the explicit characterisation of VPM-VPP: negative value. I will assume that each value property can be realised both positively and negatively, such that its instances can not only vary in the degree or magnitude of their value, but also in whether it is negative or positive. Moreover, my use of the variable \( V \) will be ambiguous between whether the value of something to which it is predicated is negative or positive, while the variables \( G \) and \( B \) will be used as predicates to signify, respectively, positive and negative value only (i.e. \( Gx \) stands for \( x \) is good).

*Section 1.3 – Radical Pluralism and Monism*

Heathwood distinguishes a further form of pluralism and monism from the previous two: RP and RM. The first thing to note about RP is that it does not constitute an entirely distinct notion of pluralism from SP and VPP, but rather specifies a particular relation between the two. That is, an RP axiology is one that
maintains the conjunction of both SP and VPP: that there is both an irreducible plurality of good-making properties and an irreducible plurality of value properties (different ways in which something can be good or bad). For example, an RP axiology might imply distinct and irreducible value properties corresponding to prudential and to moral value, while also claiming that both pleasure and honest testimony can be irredicibly and non-instrumentally valuable. As the denial of RP, RM does not refer to a single kind of axiology, but rather to any of three kinds: SM-VPM, SP-VPM, SM-VPP (more on these combinations below). As a consequence, I will tend to refrain from referring to axiologies as RM insofar as it will be more accurate to refer to them as, e.g., SM-VPM.

These combinations of SP, SM, VPP, and VPP are possible because VPP does not just make a stronger pluralist claim than SP does, but makes a claim that is compatible both with the denial of SP (SM) and with its truth. That is, an axiology maintaining that there is an irreducible plurality of kinds of value could consistently maintain either that there is a plurality of good-making properties or that there is only one. Similarly for VPM. Thus, an axiology could be an instance of any of SP and VPP (SP-VPP), SM and VPP (SM-VPP), SP and VPM (SP-VPM), or SM and VPM (SM-VPM). For example, a monist OLT under which only achievement is good for us is an instance of SM-VPM; pluralist OLTs, on the other hand, are an instance of an SP-VPM axiology, as they posit a plurality of good-making properties of only one kind of value; Mason’s (2018) interpretation of Qualitative Hedonism, on the other hand, asserts that there is only one kind of good thing (pleasure) and that it is good in an irreducible plurality of ways (“high” and “low”), and thus is an instance of SM-VPP; finally, an axiology that holds the conjunction of SP and VPP (SP-VPP) is one which maintains that there is both an irreducible plurality of good-making properties and an irreducible plurality of kinds of value properties. Within prudential value, this kind of pluralism has never, I believe, been espoused by a theory or explicitly discussed. However, it is more common as a general axiology, where moral and prudential value consist in different value
properties and involve different kinds of bearers – e.g. virtuous character and dutiful action as bearers of moral value, and pleasure and understanding as bearers of prudential value.

Before continuing, we should clarify an ambiguity between two interpretations of the interaction between SP and VPP in RP. That is, so far, it is not clear whether RP requires that for each value property there corresponds a plurality of kinds of bearers (or good-makers) or whether it only requires a plurality of kinds of bearers (or good-makers) across all of the value properties. In what follows, I will assume that RP requires only that there is a plurality of good-making properties across all value properties. I do not take much to turn on this point, but resolving the issue in this way makes relating current pluralist OLTs to the proposed RP theory of well-being (section 4) much easier and more intuitive.
Section 2 – Heathwood’s Taxonomy and Other Systems of Classification.

Before moving on to some clarifications of key notions involved in the forms of pluralism and monism outlined by Heathwood, I will relate Heathwood’s system of categorisation to others in the literature. To do so, I will briefly look at the distinctions between kinds of pluralism drawn by Chang (2015), Tucker (2016), and Mason (2018), to then justify my appeal to Heathwood’s over these.

I will begin with Tucker’s distinction as it is the easiest of the three to relate back to Heathwood’s. Tucker introduces a distinction between weak and strong pluralism which more or less corresponds, respectively, to Heathwood’s SP and VPP. He defines weak pluralism as follows: “an axiology is a form of weak pluralism just in case it entails that there is more than one kind of good-making property” (2015, pg337). This is clearly the same notion as Heathwood’s SP. Similarly, strong pluralism and VPP appear to be equivalent, where Tucker defines the former as follows: “an axiology is a form of strong pluralism just in case it entails that there are at least two irreducible kinds of intrinsic value” (2016, pg338).4

However, the two do differ in one key regard. This is that, while VPM-VPP and SM-SP can be combined in a variety of ways (i.e. VPP-SP, VPP-SM, VPM-SP, and VPM-SM), this doesn’t seem to be the case for weak and strong pluralism. That is, the terminology employed by Tucker seems to suggest that, instead, one kind of pluralism just makes a stronger version of the same claim as the other. However, as we have seen above with regards to Mason’s interpretation of Qualitative Hedonism, it is at least possible to combine SM and VPP, such as to have an axiology which recognises a single good-making property while accepting

4Note that Tucker further refines his definition in terms of the entailment of the incommensurability of irreducible values (2016, pg340), but, as I will take incommensurability to be a necessary feature of two irreducible value properties, this again does not affect the relationship between strong pluralism and VPP.
that things can go be good or bad in different kinds of ways. If, however, VPP were just a stronger version of SP, this would not be possible. Therefore, we have reason to endorse Heathwood’s taxonomy over Tucker’s as it more easily allows us to make these kinds of more fine-grained distinctions between kinds of axiologies.

The relation between Heathwood on the one hand and Mason and Chang on the other, though, is a little more complex. Starting with the former, Mason (2018) refers to the distinction between different levels of pluralism in terms of foundational and non-foundational pluralism. She defines the former as the position that there “are plural moral values at the most basic level – that is to say, there is no one value that subsumes all other values, no one property of goodness, and no overarching principle of action.” By contrast, non-foundational pluralism merely holds that “there are plural moral values at the level of choice, but these apparently plural values can be understood in terms of their contribution to one more fundamental value.”

From this it is clear that foundational pluralism is broadly equivalent to strong pluralism and VPP. However, non-foundational pluralism does not correspond to SP or weak pluralism. That is, non-foundational pluralism identifies the superficial appearance of a plurality of values while denying that there really is such a plurality. It therefore makes no claims as to whether there is one or more good-making property. Of course, the appearance of a plurality of values may be due to the fact that there is a plurality of good-making properties; but it need not be so. This also points to why I will be employing Heathwood’s system instead of Mason’s. First, SM and SP are the primary sense in which monism and pluralism are understood within the philosophy of well-being. Therefore, being able to appeal to the SM-SP distinction in the articulation and defence of my own RP theory of well-being will be essential. Second, my own theory will be one which explicitly posits a plurality of good-making properties (SP), as well as of value
properties (VPP). Heathwood’s taxonomy is then better-suited to refer clearly to this aspect of the theory. Finally, my proposed RP theory of well-being is articulated as a development and in competition to theories of well-being which are pluralist in the SP sense, but monist in the VPM sense. In this respect as well, then, Heathwood’s system will serve the current project better than Mason’s.

Turning, finally, to Chang’s (2015) taxonomy, her distinction between reductive (or metaphysical) and nonreductive pluralism is of quite a different sort from all of those discussed above. Starting with the former of these, she defines it as “the metaphysical thesis that there are many values that cannot be ‘reduced’ to a single ‘super-value’” (2015, pg21). This is clearly equivalent to VPP, strong and foundational pluralism, as it, like them, relies on the denial that all values reduce to a single one. However, nonreductive and reductive pluralism are not distinguished from each other by the relative strength of their claims. Rather, it is an attempt to refer to views that maintain some of the features that have been ascribed to reductive pluralist views, but which Chang (2015) argues are neither distinctive nor necessary of them. Therefore, nonreductive pluralism is defined not in terms of the metaphysical claim about the number of distinct, irreducible values. Instead, views are classified as nonreductive pluralist or monist depending on whether or not they ascribe to instances of value one of the following properties (or a combination thereof): incommensurability, incomparability, and uncompensability (see section 3 for a detailed treatment of these). Thus, for instance, an axiology which ascribes incommensurability or incomparability to the value of certain bearers will be an instance of nonreductive pluralism, even if it does not posit a plurality of value properties (i.e. is reductive monist); similarly, even if an axiology posits a plurality of value properties (i.e. is reductive pluralist), if one, some, or all of (depending on the form of nonreductive pluralism concerned) incommensurability, incomparability, or uncompensability is not true of the axiology, then the theory is nonreductive monist.
Chang’s distinction offers an interesting case because of the quite different nature of its basis. Thus, though on the one hand Heathwood’s is clearly more relevant to our purposes, it remains important to bear nonreductive pluralism in mind. This is because it focuses attention on perhaps the most salient aspects of the proposed RP theory, especially incommensurability and uncompensability, which are, ultimately, the key notions we are interested in in formulating such a theory to begin with. Thus, being able to either embrace such properties or reject them independently of commitments to a plurality of value properties may be of use. On the other hand, I will still focus on Heathwood’s system as, just as is the case with Mason’s taxonomy, Chang’s is not helpful in clarifying the more fine-grained relations between different theories of well-being and the proposed RP theory.
Section 3 – Clarifying the Notions.

In this section I will elaborate in greater depth some of the key notions involved in VPP and VPM. In particular, I will explain the notions of incommensurability, incomparability, and uncompensability, as well as relate them to each other. I will then clarify how I understand reducibility and irreducibility. However, I will not discuss SP and SM in further detail here, as I take it that these rely on no notions in need of further clarification.

Section 3.1 – Incommensurability.

I turn now to the key notion involved in the kind of strong pluralism of which VPP is an instance: incommensurability. Indeed, Tucker (2016) understands incommensurability to be a necessary (and sufficient) feature of his strong pluralism: “incommensurability and strong value pluralism are simply different sides of the same coin” (p340).5 I will follow Tucker and the rest of the literature in taking incommensurability in some sense to be the key defining feature of strong kinds of pluralism (see below and section 3.4). However, there is no similar consensus on how we are to understand incommensurability. Indeed, Chang (2013a) identifies six key different ways in which the incommensurability of values has been understood:6 incompatibility, pluralism (or irreducibility), trumping or discontinuity, uncompensability, incomparability, and, finally, incommensurability proper. It is only the latter notion which, strictly speaking, refers to incommensurability and for which I will be using the term.

5Note that this might make Tucker’s strong pluralism a version of non-reductive pluralism, not reductive pluralism.
6Chang also notes that the relevant notion of incommensurability is that of value incommensurability, as opposed to the incommensurability of theories with which Kuhn (1977) and Feyerabend (1978) are concerned.
Chang maintains that incommensurable “values lack a common unit of measurement” (2013a, p5). This basic understanding of incommensurability is widely shared in the literature (e.g. Stocker 1990, 1997; Wiggins 1997; Tucker 2016), though there is no similar agreement on what the consequences of this property are. Chang understands this lack of a “common unit of measurement” in terms of the absence of a “cardinal scale of value according to which both [values] can be measured” (2013a, p5). That is, if there were a common unit of measurement for two values $v_1$ and $v_2$, then this would mean that there is a cardinal scale along which we can assign a numerical value for each magnitude of $v_1$ and $v_2$. This is because a unit of measure by definition involves a corresponding scale of measurement. The converse conditional relation also holds between these: if there is a cardinal scale along which we can measure instances of two values, then there is a common unit of measurement. The reason for this is simply that a value along a cardinal scale is indexed to said scale, and this indexicalisation is represented by a distinct unit of measurement corresponding to said scale. The cardinal scale and the unit of measurement are, then, two sides of the same coin. The consequence of this is that, if two values do not have a common unit (i.e. the negation of the antecedent of the earlier conditional statement), then there is no common cardinal scale along which both can be assigned a value (and vice versa).

This kind of incommensurability both seems to be implied by the irreducibility of values and to be adequately represented by their expression in terms of value properties. Starting with the former point, if instances of two values could be represented along a common scale – i.e. if they were commensurable – then this means that the considerations of each value (i.e. which determine the magnitude of value of an instance) can be analysed in common terms: i.e. a common value and its corresponding cardinal scale. If all putative values in an axiology can be

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7 e.g. Tucker (2016, p339) assumes that this implies incomparability, while Wiggins (1997, p54) does not.
8 I am assuming that we can represent a value in terms of a scale that measures magnitudes of its value.
analysed in terms of one value and measured along its corresponding cardinal scale, then this is the axiology’s super-value, making it an instance of VPM. On the other hand, if an axiology involves a plurality of irreducible values, it means that there is no single value in terms of which all of these can be analysed and neither is there a common cardinal scale along which magnitudes of all values can be measured. Therefore, any strong pluralist axiology, including a VPP one, will involve the incommensurability of its irreducible values.

Moreover, the expression of the strong pluralist commitment in terms of an irreducible plurality of value properties (i.e. VPP) is particularly apt at capturing the incommensurability of these values. This is because VPP represents the fact that two bearers, e.g. \(x\) and \(y\), are good in different ways by predicing different value properties to them, such that, e.g., \(V_1x\) and \(V_2y\). Conceptualising our evaluations in these terms helps us recognise the relevance of the identity of the borne value, including with regards to whether the degrees of value of the bearers re representable along a common cardinal scale or not: if two bearers of value bear different value properties, their magnitudes of value are in terms of a different unit of measurement.

We can now see why value incommensurability is taken to be the mark of value pluralism. However, as Chang (2013a) noted, this notion of incommensurability is often conflated with other, related concepts. In particular, it is often assumed to be more or less synonymous with incompatibility. In the next section, I will explore this notion as well as its relation to incommensurability.

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9Wiggins (1997, p55) makes a very similar connection to a bearer’s value property and a cardinal scale.
10Note that this is Chang’s (2013a, p9) strong incommensurability: that there is no common unit of measurement between any two values or instances thereof (i.e. in contrast to weak incommensurability (p5), which holds that there isn’t a common unit of measurement for all). The reason for this is related to my discussion in section 3.4 of reducibility and irreducibility and the resulting account of the individuation of values.
Section 3.2 – Incomparability.

I will briefly introduce the notion of incomparability and its connection to incommensurability here. This will not be a complete treatment, as this will be left for the next chapter, which will focus on the problem which a commitment to the incomparability of options will pose for a VPP theory of well-being, and therefore also an RP one.

Very succinctly, incomparability is the claim that no positive value relation holds between two items, only negative ones. Value relations are usually understood in terms of what Chang calls the trichotomy thesis (1997): there are only three value relations, better, worse, and equal.\textsuperscript{11} A positive value relation holds between \( x \) and \( y \) if one of these relations holds between them (i.e. \( x \) is better, worse, or equal to \( y \)); by contrast, a negative value relation holds between \( x \) and \( y \) if a positive relation is false about them (i.e. \( x \) is not better than \( y \)). Hence, if we assume trichotomy and \( x \) is better than \( y \), then one positive relation holds between \( x \) and \( y \) and two negative ones (i.e. \( x \) is not worse than \( y \) and not equal to \( y \)). This means that if \( x \) and \( y \) are incomparable, then \( x \) is not better, not worse, and not equal to \( y \). This should be contrasted with noncomparability, which obtains between two items when not even negative value relations hold between them (i.e. it is not the case that \( x \) is better, worse, or equal to \( y \) and neither is it the case that \( x \) is not better, worse, or equal to \( y \)). This is a more radical failure in comparison, where comparing the two items appears to be meaningless (e.g. a comparison between the taste of coffee and the number 9).

\textsuperscript{11}It should be noted that Chang ultimately argues against this thesis, instead defending her own tetrachotomy thesis, which includes a fourth relation: parity. I will not discuss this point here and instead treat it in the next chapter.
Having established what incomparability consists in, we can now turn to its relation to incommensurability. Incomparability has often been assumed to be a distinguishing feature of irreducible, pluralist values and, indeed, almost synonymous with incommensurability (e.g. Raz 1986; p322; Griffin 1997, p35; Tucker 2016, p339). However, the two must be distinguished at least conceptually: while incommensurability is a property of values (their magnitudes cannot be represented along a common scale), incomparability is a property of their instances or realisations (no positive value relations hold between two items) (Chang 1997, 2013a; Andreou 2011). They therefore cannot be the same notion. But this is not to say that incomparability might not follow from incommensurability. Indeed, there are good reasons to think that if two values are incommensurable, then their instances must be incomparable. To see why consider that if two items are bearers of different kinds of value, the magnitude of their values cannot be represented along a common cardinal scale; but if so no cardinal value relation can hold between their magnitudes. For example, take $x$ and $y$, where $x$ is a bearer of value $v_1$ and $y$ of $v_2$ (corresponding to, respectively, value properties $V_1$ and $V_2$), and $x$ has a $v_1$ value of 25 and $y$ a $v_2$ value of 30. As $x$’s value of 25 and $y$’s value of 30 neither are nor can be represented along a common cardinal scale, the comparative relation between them also cannot be represented in terms of a common cardinal value. But, if so, it is not immediately clear what comparative relation can hold between them. Incomparability, then, seems to follow as a consequence of incommensurability.

However, this connection has been questioned on a number of grounds. In particular, accounts of non-cardinal relations (or at least not precisely cardinal, e.g. Chang 2002a, 2016) have been developed in order to resist this conclusion. This point, and more, will be the focus of the next chapter, so I will leave the issue of the connection between incomparability and incommensurability (as well as VPP) to a side here, noting only both the fact that there are strong reasons for asserting their necessary connection, as well as important arguments denying it.
Section 3.3 – Uncompensability.

The last feature of strong pluralist views that I will discuss is *uncompensability*. This term is used by Heathwood (2015, p143), while other commentators have used slightly different terminology. Chang (2013a, p4) uses the terms nonsubstitutability and noncompensability, while Stocker (1990) describes the consequence of this feature as a “lack” (p170) and elsewhere as a “failure of substitutivity” (p248). However, these all refer to the same notion or phenomenon: that a “loss in one kind of value cannot be compensated by a gain in another” (Chang 2013a, p4). For example, a realisation of moral value cannot compensate a loss in prudential value (assuming that these are distinct kinds of value), even if the moral option is better than the prudential one. Indeed, even if the moral option *trumps* the prudential one (Griffin’s 1986 term, see next chapter for details), it does not *cancel* it as a consideration. This is relevant to Stocker’s analysis of Dirty Hands (1990), where an outweighed consideration is left as a remaining *non-actionguiding* consideration after the agent has acted and grounds regret in the choice made (see Chapter 6 for details).

Turning now to the link between VPP and uncompensability, there are important reasons to think that this property is an essential feature of such axiologies. Take a value $v_1$ and value $v_2$ (with respective value properties $V_1$ and $V_2$), and items $x$ and $y$ which are solely bearers of, respectively, $v_1$ and $v_2$. Even if we are sure that one is better than the other, if we choose $x$, this constitutes a gain of kind $v_1$, while if we choose $y$, this constitutes a gain of kind $v_2$. This means that, if we choose $x$ over $y$ and $x$ is better than $y$, this does not change the fact that our not having chosen $y$ constitutes a loss (or missed opportunity) with regards to $v_2$. This is even clearer when we take $x$ to be $v_1$ valuable and $v_2$ disvaluable (and *vice versa* for $y$). Even if $x$ (the bearer of positive $v_1$ value and negative $v_2$ value) is better than
y (the bearer of negative $v_1$ value and positive $v_2$ value), choosing $x$ remains $v_2$ bad. Thus, imagine that, to do our duty, we must accept some serious, protracted suffering, while by breaching our duty we would benefit greatly. Even if doing our duty remains all-things-considered better, the fact that doing our duty is morally good does not cancel the fact that this is prudentially bad for us. If we do our duty, we would still be prudentially worse off. This, then, remains as an uncompensated loss under a VPP axiology which takes moral and prudential value as irreducibly distinct values.

By contrast, take a case where only one kind of value, $v_1$, is involved (i.e. either under a VPM axiology or under a VPP one but where only one of its values is involved). In such a case, the better of two items is straightforwardly better: if any benefit incurred in a choice is greater than some attendant harm, then it the choice is net positive, with no “remainders”. After all, if $x$ has a $v_1$ value of 20 and $y$ one of 15, then there is nothing that is missing from $x$ that is present in $y$: $x$ has everything that $y$ does (15 $v_1$) and something more (5 $v_1$). Heathwood uses the analogy of a “common currency” here to clarify (2015, p143). For example, if one option in a choice involves a net gain of 50 pounds and another involves a net gain of 100 pounds, the second option has everything that the first has (50 pounds) as well as something more (another 50 pounds).

To conclude this discussion, I will briefly turn to the main consequences of uncompensability: conflict and regret (I will discuss these in greater depth in Chapter 6). Conflict arises when two, or more, kinds of values are involved in a choice situation such that both cannot be realised. To return to the earlier example, our moral obligation and well-being are in conflict because we cannot realise both and, as choosing one cannot compensate forsaking the other, by choosing between them we are effectively choosing which of the two values to prioritise over the other. This leads to the second feature of uncompensability: regret. Regret is an attitude or emotion which is warranted when we are
confronted by a loss. Therefore, conflict cases will involve regret *even when we choose the best option* (and the option is not overall bad): as Stocker (1990) points out, in cases of conflict, the best option still involves accepting an uncompensated loss; regret is thus appropriate in recognition of this loss. We can, for instance, regret our pain, even when this is accepted as part of a greater, moral good. By contrast, under a VPM axiology it would, arguably, be irrational to regret this, as there would be no loss towards which regret could be appropriately directed (i.e. there would only be an overall gain). I will not pursue this line of argument any further here, as it is the focus of Chapter 6.

*Section 3.4 – Reducibility and irreducibility.*

In what follows, I will base my understanding of reducibility (and thus irreducibility) on Tucker’s (2016) arguments. Tucker himself bases this on Mason’s (2018) suggestion that some value (or value property) is irreducible *if and only if* it cannot be analysed in terms of different concepts; thus, a value (or value property) is reducible *if and only if* it can be analysed in terms of some other concept. The key suggestion here is that we should understand reduction in terms of analysis: reducibility is a matter of *analysability*, and irreducibility of *unanalysability*.

However, this definition does not make space for the possibility that value can be analysed in terms of *non-evaluative* concepts (e.g. a certain kind of natural property). But this would not be the kind of reduction with which pluralism is concerned. As a consequence, Tucker offers the amendment that we understand the irreducibility of a value in terms of whether it can be analysed in terms of a different value or not. Thus, take an axiology with two apparent value properties $V_1$ and $V_2$ (e.g. moral and aesthetic value). If $V_2$ cannot be analysed in terms of

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12Tucker’s example is of fitting-attitude analyses of goodness (e.g. Brentano 1969; Zimmerman 2001).
$V_1$ (aesthetic value cannot be analysed in terms of moral value) and $V_1$ cannot be analysed in terms of $V_2$ (moral value cannot be analysed in terms of aesthetic value) and neither can the be analysed in terms of a further super-value $V_3$ (e.g. aesthetic and moral value cannot be analysed in terms of prudential value), then $V_1$ and $V_2$ are irreducibly distinct properties. If so, then the axiology in question is a VPP one. If, on the other hand, all of $V_1$, $V_2$, or $V_3$ can be analysed in terms of only one of the three, then the axiology is a VPM one.

Tucker does not provide an account of what *analysability* of one value in terms of another consists in *exactly*. However, I suggest that we can broadly understand this in terms of the incommensurability or commensurability of these values and of their uncompensability or compensability (see above). Therefore, a value property $V_i$ is analysable in terms of a value property $V_j$ if and only if magnitudes of $V_i$ are expressible along a cardinal scale corresponding to $V_j$ and losses in $V_i$ can be compensated by gains in $V_j$; and, a value property $V_i$ is unanalysable in terms of a value property $V_j$ if and only if magnitudes of $V_i$ cannot be expressed in terms of a cardinal scale corresponding to $V_j$ and losses in $V_i$ cannot be compensated by gains in $V_j$. For example, if the value of instances of aesthetic value can be expressed along a common cardinal scale as instances of moral value and losses in aesthetic value can be compensated by gains moral value, then aesthetic value can be analysed in terms of moral value (and thus is

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13 Tucker may well also have something of the kind in mind, as his final definition of *strong pluralism* is precisely in terms of the incommensurability of the posited values.

14 Note that I have articulated both in terms of a conjunction as I am assuming that incommensurability goes with uncompensability and commensurability with compensability. Moreover, the formulation is in terms of whether magnitudes of one value property can be expressed in terms of those of another and not *vice versa* to reflect the fact that analysability may be mono-directional (similarly with compensability). Thus, take, as an example, $V_i$ and $V_j$, and suppose that $V_i$ is analysable in terms of $V_j$ such that magnitudes of $V_i$ can be expressed in terms of those of $V_j$. My definition leaves it open *both* that the reverse is true and that it is not true: that the analysability of $V_i$ in terms of $V_j$ ensures the analysability of $V_j$ in terms of $V_i$, suggesting that reduction of values is a matter of demystifying an apparent fragmentation to reveal a broader unified domain composed of considerations of *both* apparent values; or, that the analysability of $V_i$ in terms of $V_j$ does not ensure the reverse, suggesting instead that the reduction of values is more a matter of the subsumption of one under the other. My definition attempts to remain neutral with regards to these possibilities.
reducible to it); if the value of instances of aesthetic value cannot be expressed along a common cardinal scale as instances of moral value and losses in aesthetic value cannot be compensated by gains moral value, then aesthetic value cannot be analysed in terms of moral value.

Before concluding this section, we should note the fact that this characterisation of reducibility and analysability makes VPP remarkably similar to Chang’s non-reductive pluralism: it ensures that a plurality of value properties has some of the properties which non-reductive pluralism explicitly postulates. This, moreover, offers an account of the individuation of values, the lack of which in the literature is a key concern of Chang’s (2015) and which in part motivates her formulation of non-reductive pluralism in the first place. That is, we can now understand what distinguishes one (irreducible) value as opposed to another in terms of the fact that it is incommensurable with and uncompensable in terms of other values: thus, if it is commensurable with and compensable in terms of another apparent value, then they are not in fact distinct values; and if it is incommensurable with and uncompensable in terms of another, then they are distinct values.

This concludes the clarification and discussion of the key notions involved in Heathwood’s taxonomy. Having done so now allows us to proceed to the articulation of an RP theory of well-being without the risk of confusion going forward.
Section 4 – The Radical Pluralist Theory of Well-Being.

In this section I will articulate an RP theory of well-being. It will serve as a development and alternative to current pluralist theories of well-being by adding to their current SP commitment a further commitment to VPP.

Section 4.1 – Outlining the RP Theory.

As an RP theory, this will be both SP and VPP. Thus it will posit a plurality both of good-making properties and of value properties. Given the across interpretation of the RP conjunction of SP and VPP, this means that there only needs to be a plurality of good-making properties across all of the value properties. This means that the theory only requires that there be a single set of good- and bad-making properties for each value property. This will be relevant to the RP explanation of pairing, to which I will return in section 5.

Before continuing, we should note a terminological point. In what follows I will refer to the different prudential value properties postulated by this theory interchangeably with “dimensions of value”. The reason for this is merely one of clarity: (a) to distinguish different prudential value properties from non-prudential ones more clearly (i.e. prudential value can thus be contrasted with moral value, while different dimensions of prudential value can be contrasted with each other); (b) to help avoid confusions when talking about prudential value, which will be used to talk about the class of such value properties as a whole. After all, though an RP theory of prudential value posits its fragmentation, it is not committed to it not being a separate category of value compared to other values (e.g. moral). I will discuss this last point in greater depth in section 4.2.
For simplicity, let’s start with the goods and ills present in our original SP-VPM OLT from Chapter 1. The goods included pleasure, understanding, achievement, and friendship, and their respective paired ills included pain, ignorance, failure, and isolation. The suggestion then is to assign a different value property for each pair, such that the pleasure-pain pair are bearers of a different value property from other pairs. This would mean that each good is good for us in a different kind of way from others, that each ill is bad for us in a different kind of way, and that paired goods and ills are, by contrast, good and bad for us in the same kind of way.

Thus, we can now characterise a distinct dimension of value for each pair. I will refer to the distinct value property borne by pleasure and pain as the experiential dimension of value, such that pleasure benefits us experientially and pain harms us in the same way. Thus, for a pleasure \( x \) and pain \( y \) there is a distinct dyadic experiential value property \( V_e \) (represented by the positive and negative value properties \( G_e \) and \( B_e \)), such that for a subject \( a \), \( xG_ea \) and \( yB_ea \). This dimension of value concerns our well-being as it pertains to the quality of our experience, which, for the sake of argument, I will here limit to the valence of affective states: i.e. whether they are pleasant or unpleasant.

I take this dimension to be both simple in the sense that it resists clear characterisation, while also being foundational insofar as it concerns the way we experience our world. It therefore not only corresponds to a particular way in which things can go well or poorly, but it is also fundamental to other dimensions and values (e.g. in aesthetic appreciation).\(^\text{15}\) For one, insofar as pleasant and unpleasant experiences have an impact on our evaluative judgements, these are important in guiding our actions with regards to other dimensions. Indeed, it may be necessary to exert some agency over our affective dispositions for the purpose of accurately appreciating certain objects and circumstances (e.g. Aristotle’s

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\(^\text{15}\)Such as in affect-based accounts of aesthetic experience, e.g. Beardsley (1982), Levinson (1996), though note the limitations of such characterisations, e.g. Carroll (2002).
account of the virtuous agent’s affective attunement to the good from the *Nicomachean Ethics*). Second, pleasant and unpleasant experiences may well be an important part of how we come to value non-hedonic goods. Part of our judgements and evaluations about, for example, the value of achievement or friendship are either themselves constituted by pleasant and unpleasant experiences, or based upon these (e.g. the satisfaction of accomplishing a significant goal, the joy of spending time with a friend). This is evident in accounts of the value of pleasure or related affective states (e.g. happiness) which emphasise its role in assessing the subject’s current state (e.g. Feldman’s, 2004, desert-adjusted attitudinal pleasures, Haybron’s, 2008a, mode of authentic happiness, or Epicurean *ataraxia*, Annas 1993). In fact, if we think that the other dimensions of value are grounded in particular identities of ours (a certain self – see Chapter 3, sections 1 and 6, and Chapter 7, sections 2 and 3), and that at least some of these identities are constructed, the *experiential* dimension may very well be heavily involved in our self-constitution (Korsgaard 2009). This, however, is not to say that the other dimensions are reducible to the *experiential* one.

Turning to understanding and ignorance, the relevant dimension of value will be referred to as the *epistemic* dimension. As with pleasure and pain, understanding and ignorance are good and bad for us in a distinct kind of way from other goods and ills (i.e. *epistemically*), such that they are bearers of a distinct value property $V_k$. This dimension of value concerns the way our life goes well and poorly with regards to our epistemic state. My tentative suggested characterisation is that *epistemic* value is a matter of the subject being integrated or attuned to their world. This seems to capture the intuitive basis of the prudential value of understanding. Understanding, then, becomes an ideal candidate for a bearer of this kind of value.

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16 e.g. Korsgaard’s (1996, 2009, 2013) practical identities, which she conceives of as “descriptions under which you value yourself and find your life worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking” (2009, p20).
insofar as, unlike knowledge, it requires the kind of *global* concern necessary for such integration (i.e. a single item of knowledge would not add up to integration independently of how it fits into a broader system of belief, as it could in fact contribute to a poorer overall picture in virtue of these ties – see chapter 1 section 4.3 for more details on this). I will discuss in more detail this suggestion in its possible applications both in Chapter 6 (section 5.2) and Chapter 7 (section 3.3). It is, however, only a suggestion, but it remains illustrative of the different ways in which we can understand the prudential value of understanding (and disvalue of ignorance) once we account for it in terms of a distinct *epistemic* dimension.

Achievement and failure, on the other hand, are good and bad for us *aspiratively*. That is, they concern how our life goes well and poorly with regards to the goals and ends we set ourselves (i.e. what we aspire towards). I will represent this dimension of value by the value property $V_a$. Turning to a preliminary proposal of how we might understand this value property, the chosen term for this dimension is suggestive. That is, if this value property is concerned with our achievements and failures, it may be productive to conceive of it as a matter of fulfilling our aspirations. It is thus the dimension which concerns us as free agents who pursue their own particular goals. The most obvious way of understanding this is in terms of aspirations for some *object*. Such an object should not be understood in terms of an external, physical object we want to materially obtain (e.g. a car), but merely as something logically distinct from the subject. Thus, for example, acquiring a skill, such as whittling, is certainly not external, but is logically distinct from the subject and thus an object in this sense. However, we can further understand these aspirations in terms of an attempt to assert or achieve some ideal of ourselves – e.g. being creative, being smart etc. It would therefore not be surprising at all that achievement and failure are so well suited for a Perfectionist analysis (e.g. Bradford 2021), as well as the requirement that the goals we pursue as part of achievement be *significant* (Bradford 2015).
Finally, friendship and isolation are good and bad for us in a distinct social way, where the corresponding social prudential dimension is represented by the value property $V_s$. This represents how well integrated we are in our social setting, our bonds with others, or lack thereof, which at least for now we can take as being realised by friendship and isolation. It therefore seems to rely on an at least implicit conception of ourselves as subjects who are not just themselves. Instead, it suggests that we are subjects for whom being bonded to others and sharing in a common world with them is in itself beneficial. Though this will neither be argued for in what follows nor is implied by what has been said so far, it is still suggestive of the idea that our welfare and selves are more permeable to our broader social context than we might tend to believe.

Before continuing, we should note an important consequence of this framework. This is that when talking about the quality of life of a subject, we cannot talk of a single quality, but rather of the plurality of different qualities of their life. Thus a subject’s overall level of well-being (whether at a time, over a period of time, or over their entire life) is a matter of the degree of realisation of each dimension of value: e.g. $30v_e$ value, $10v_k$ value, $25v_a$ value, and $25v_s$ value. Indeed, even when talking about the value of some object $x$ that is only valuable along one dimension (e.g. experiential) we must be aware of the fact that $x$’s evaluative status in terms of other dimensions is also relevant, even where this is zero. We can thus understand something’s or someone’s value as a bundle of magnitudes of different values. To refer to this, it is worth introducing a term to refer to this fragmented overall value as something’s or someone’s distribution of values (or distribution for short). This, however, does not prevent us from speaking more loosely in terms of the single value, for example, borne by a particular bearer, where said bearer has a non-zero magnitude of only one value (or negligible magnitudes of others). These observations and new terminology are relevant to discussions in later chapters, particularly Chapter 5.
Section 4.2 – some preliminary concerns.

All problems with the present proposal revolve around the fragmentation of prudential value that it posits. In the next chapter I will explore the most significant of these: the possibility that purely prudential options are incomparable. Here, instead, I will raise two related worries. Both can be understood as versions of the concern that it is in itself implausible to postulate a plurality of prudential value properties: (1) whether the relationality of prudential value (as opposed to monadic values) implies that it is a single property; (2) whether a prudential RP theory contradicts the fact that all prudential goods are good for us.

The first problem starts with the standard analysis of prudential value in terms of a dyadic relation (first proposed by Railton 1986) of the form $xVs$ between a valuable object $x$ and a prudential subject $s$ (i.e. a subject for whom things can go well or poorly). Rosati (2008) employs this to distinguish personal value from other values which are represented by a monadic value property of the form $Vx$ (Railton 1986, Sumner 1996, and Korsgaard 2013 also appeal to relational value in this capacity). The worry, then, might be that, if prudential value is distinct from other values in virtue of being relational, this suggests that it is a unitary value property qua relational.

However, this worry is easily dismissed. After all, it is simply false that all monadic value properties reduce to a single monadic super-value in virtue of being monadic. First, it is clearly possible that some values that correspond to monadic value properties are irreducibly distinct, such as aesthetic and moral value. Second, even if we though that, in fact, all monadic value properties reduced to a single one, it would not be in virtue of being monadic that this would be the case. But if the relationality of prudential value implied that it corresponds to a single value property, the same should be the case for any monadic value property. As
the consequent of this conditional is false, so is the antecedent. Of course, this is not to say that the relationality of prudential value doesn’t ensure that it is distinct from any monadic value (though this may also be questioned), but this has no bearing on whether prudential value is itself a unitary or fragmented evaluative domain.

The second problem is more serious, and concerns whether and how we are to understand all the suggested prudential dimensions of values as, though distinct, nonetheless all prudential. The thought is that there must be something about them which makes them all prudential, but if they are distinct values, then it is not clear how. A similar concern is raised by Heathwood (2015): “… the goods that are each good in their own unique, sometimes incomparable, sometimes uncompensable, way all manage to make our lives better. That is, they are all welfare goods.” (p143) Might this not require, he asks, a common (welfare) “currency”? If not, it is not clear that we can maintain that all the different instances of these different kinds of putatively prudential value still all make our lives go better.

However, this objection relies on the question-begging assumption that a prudential subject’s life goes well or poorly in only one kind of way. But this is of course just VPM in disguise, as VPP implies that our lives go well and poorly in different kinds of ways. To supplement the objection, then, VPM defenders must appeal to something like an observation made by Sumner (1996, p17). 17 This is the linguistic fact that we refer to all prudential goods or aspects of our well-being, precisely, in terms of the same language: “when we distinguish, for instance, among physical, psychological, and emotional well-being, this suggests there is something – well-being unmodified – of which these are the several kinds or aspects” (p17).

17 Though note that Sumner does not himself take this to be sufficient grounds to establish the unity of welfare.
However, this relies on the assumption that if these different “aspects” correspond to different kinds of values, they would be referred to by a different term. This is at best questionable though. At most it shows that, if we do maintain that the domain involves a plurality of kinds of value, we must be able to distinguish the putative different prudential values from other kinds of values (or ethical concepts). But, as we already saw, this is clearly possible within an RP framework. Moreover, the same linguistic observation also highlights how there are reasons for not treating the domain as unitary. After all, Sumner also notes that we can distinguish between different aspects of well-being (physical, psychological, and emotional). Of course, this merely shows that there are reasons to permit of differentiations between aspects of the domain, not that these aspects are constituted by different values (i.e. VPP). For example, different OLT goods could explain said differentiation. Nonetheless, the fact that we distinguish between aspects of prudential value provides as much reason for asserting that the domain is a VPP one as the fact that all are referred to in terms of well-being supports VPM. Thus, Sumner’s observation is best understood as setting constraints on any plausible theory of well-being: that it must be able to explain both that there are different aspects of well-being, and that they are all aspects of well-being. But this seems perfectly achievable in terms of RP. The former is, of course, easy enough in terms of both the SP and VPP components (i.e. there are different goods and different value properties). The latter, on the other hand, can be understood in terms of the fact that all of RP’s dimensions of prudential value are ways in which the life and condition of the same subject can go. For example, we can understand this in terms of the relationality of all of these values, such that all of these value properties are good, in some sense, for someone.

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18 Hence why Sumner does not take this to constitute sufficient grounds.
19 Note though that some authors deny that all relational value is prudential (e.g. Rønnow-Rasmussen 2007). However, even if this is true, this seems like a good first step in the right direction regarding an answer to this problem.
Section 4.3 – Defending and arguing for the RP theory.

Before moving on to explaining how the RP theory accounts for the pairing of goods and ills, I will briefly outline what a defence and argument for RP will look like in our case. In both cases, it will focus on its VPP element, rather than its SP one. This is both because it is the more controversial of the two kinds of pluralisms it combines, and because, in the case of this thesis at least, the development of the RP theory of well-being has taken an SP theory of welfare as a starting place.

Concerning a defence of the RP theory, this will be the focus of the next chapter and will almost entirely concern a problem arising from the apparent incomparability of instances of different values. I will present an adaptation of Chang’s argument from nominal-notable comparisons (1997) in support of the comparability of instances of putatively different prudential values. Thus, if the RP theory claims that some x and y are bearers of different prudential values and instances of different such values must be incomparable, but x and y are comparable, then RP must be false. I will ultimately offer a defence from this argument, arguing that incomparability need not follow from incommensurability.

On the other hand, Chapter 6 will offer an argument for RP based on the uncompensability of one value by another. This will proceed by arguing that prudential cases of conflict between putatively different values exhibit a phenomenon of rational regret which VPM theories cannot explain, and which only VPP can. Thus, given an assumption of SP, this constitutes an argument for RP (i.e. SP-VPP). Moreover, though not strictly an argument for RP, Chapter 7 will explore some issues in the literature of well-being which the RP theory can help dissolve: namely, the formulation of explanatory theories, the variabilism-invariabilism debate, and the problem of alienation in subject-transcendent views.
If RP can help deal with these current impasses, then this should count in favour of its explanation of well-being.
Section 5 – The Radical Pluralist Account of Pairing.

It is time to return to the main concern of the first three chapters: the pairing of goods and ills. Though the rest of this chapter and, indeed, this thesis will largely ignore the issue of pairing, it was, in Chapters 1 through 3, the main critique of current SP-VPM theories motivating a search for a different kind of pluralist account of well-being. Indeed, the RP theory is well-placed to explain the phenomenon in an intuitive way that was in fact discussed early on in Chapter 2, but to which SP-VPM OLTs could not appeal.

Section 5.1 – Pairing as bearing the same value property.

Based on the RP theory of well-being articulated above, we can identify the basis of the pairing relation in the fact that paired goods and ills are bearers of a common value property that is different from that borne by goods and ills with which they are not paired. Thus, the special relation of pairing is, under this RP axiology, a purely evaluative one. This was a possibility raised in Chapter 2 but which was unavailable to traditional pluralist OLTs (i.e. because they cannot appeal to different prudential value properties). Indeed, this was perhaps the most intuitive explanation of the phenomenon. That is, that, for example, pleasure and pain are specially related in virtue of being the bearers of a distinct kind of concern from other goods and ills. Similarly for other paired goods and ills. RP, then, accounts for this by claiming that, e.g., pain stands in a special evaluative opposition to pleasure, compared to other goods, as it is simply the bearer of negative experiential value while pleasure is the bearer of positive experiential value. Understanding, for instance, is thus excluded from standing in the same relation to pain as pleasure does, even though it is a bearer of positive value, because it is the bearer of a different kind of prudential value (i.e. epistemic).
This addresses both the original *Problem from Pairs* (i.e. it provides an account of the pairing relationship) and the *Problem from the Proliferation of Pairs*: it links membership of a pair with prudential status by making the nature of the pairing relation a matter of a special evaluative relation. Thus, under this RP axiology, pairing is in fact an expected phenomenon: if for each value property there is at least one good and one ill, then we should expect the list of goods and of ills across all value properties to mirror each other with corresponding goods and ills (i.e. the pairs). After all, under this view, goods and ills will stand in a special evaluative relation to each other and thus will stand out as correspondents on their respective lists. Therefore, the fact that there are many good-ill pairs is not only explained, but predicted by the theory.

*Section 5.2 – What about plural goods per value property?*

Before continuing, there is a final worry that might be raised regarding the RP account of pairing. This is that, as we develop this RP theory, we may find that there are more than one good and one ill per value property. This, in itself, is not an issue for RP theories as, although we are here taking them in the *across* interpretation (section 1.3), this does not preclude them from involving a plurality of goods and ills for each value property. We might worry, though, that this will complicate the above account of pairing. We can understand the concern in either of two ways. First, if pairing is an exclusive relation between one good and one ill, then the above account in terms of being bearers of the same value property would not be an appropriate account of pairing, as there would be more than one good and ill which bearing the same value property. Second, if there is a plurality of goods and ills within each dimension of value, the worry becomes that these will themselves be subdivided into pairs. But if so, the same problem will present itself once more *within* each dimension without the possibility of appealing to a distinct value property.
Responding to these in turn, the first problem relies on a misunderstanding of the requirements of the pairing relation. In Chapter 1 it was characterised as holding between one good and one ill *for simplicity*, but it was also highlighted that this is not necessarily the case. It could hold between one good and two ills, or one ill and two goods (or two of each). For example, it could hold between pleasure and pain, but also between pain and both of happiness and pleasure, as well as between pleasure and both of unhappiness and pain. What matters about the exclusivity of pairing, rather than its exclusively relating two things, is that it *excludes* other possible *releta*. In other words, what matters is that it does *not* relate pleasure and, say, ignorance, rather than that it only relates it to pain. Whether the proposed account relates goods and ills to the wrong kind of ill and good, then, is a matter for judgment in each case. At least in the case of the examples just discussed (pleasure, pain, happiness, and unhappiness), this does not seem to me to be a problematic case:

Turning to the second problem, this concern is somewhat hasty. After all, it is yet to be seen that *if* there is a plurality of goods and ills within some of these posited dimensions, they will be subdivided into pairs. If so, though, it is not clear to me that we cannot further fragment these dimensions of value. After all, if the *experiential, epistemic*, and other dimensions of value are instances of the more general prudential kind of value, there may be further instances of these dimensions. Of course, such a move is not without concerns, as suggesting a greater and greater fragmentation of value may both seem *ad hoc* and also undesirable with regards to the consequences it might have for rational choice (as well as further complicating our theory and practical considerations). However, whether this is viable or not will also depend on considerations specific to the particulars of the case (see Chapter 6, section 5.2 for a discussion of this). For instance, it will depend on whether there are difficulties in the comparisons between instances of different such goods or whether they appear to be
uncompensable. Thus, not only is it not clear that the problem will materialise itself (i.e. whether there will be such a plurality of goods and ills within some dimensions and whether there will appear to be further pairs amongst this plurality), but also whether it would be a problem if it did turn out to be the case.
Conclusion

This chapter has helped introduce and clarify the important distinctions in kinds of pluralism and monism proposed by Heathwood. Moreover, it has also helped relate them to current accounts of well-being and to other proposed distinctions between kinds of pluralism-monism present in the literature, as well as arguing for the advantages presented, at least for the purposes of articulating a different kind of theory of well-being, by Heathwood’s taxonomy. The implications of such accounts were then explained, as well as some significant ambiguities and interpretative issues resolved. Finally, an RP theory of well-being was introduced and explained, as well as defended from initial objections and applied to the problem of pairing from earlier chapters.

In this chapter, I introduce a problem for strong pluralist theories (including value property pluralism, VPP, and radical pluralism, RP, theories). This is a consequence of the apparent connection between incommensurability and incomparability already noted in the previous chapter. This apparent incommensurability-incomparability connection is particularly problematic for an RP or VPP theory of well-being, in that accepting the widespread incomparability of prudential options seems deeply implausible. In response to this worry, this chapter argues that comparisons between instances of incommensurable values are possible. This will involve offering proposals for two levels of explanation. The first level offers an account of how items bearing different value properties are compared, while the second proposes an explanation of why they are compared in the way that they are. At the first level it is argued that we ought to differentiate between an account of the comparative relations between distributions of value and an account of the relations between individual options. The former are analysed in terms of a discontinuity-based view. The discussion of the latter, on the other hand, applies Andreou’s (2011) notion of a pattern of choices to formulate an account of the comparative relations between options in terms of their place in a pattern of choice enacting a particular distribution. The second level offers an explanation of the grounds of these normative relations in terms of a unifying picture (Chang 2004) which I will characterise in terms of the idea of a compromised good life.

In this chapter, then, I present a case for asserting the incommensurability-incomparability connection as well as argue for the comparability of instances of putatively different prudential values (i.e. from nominal-notable comparisons) to formulate an argument against RP theories of well-being (Section 1). I then reject
incomparativist attempts at answering this problem (Section 2), before turning to outlining a roadmap for a comparativist response providing an account of the normative relations between values. This will require two levels of explanation in terms of what this structure consists in and of its grounds (Section 3). The first level of explanation is further subdivided into two further accounts, one specifying the comparative relations between distributions of values in terms of discontinuity relations (Section 4), and the other specifying a view of the choiceworthiness of options based on the former account and Andreou’s (2011) notion of a pattern of choice (Section 5). Finally, I articulate a proposal for understanding a second level of explanation of the normative relations between values (i.e. their grounds) by developing a programmatic proposal (in terms of a metaphor) offered by Chang (2002b) (Section 6).
Section 1 – The Problem from Incomparability.

In this section I outline a problem for the RP theory of well-being based on the claimed incomparability of instances of incommensurable values.¹ In section 1.1, I briefly summarise the (current) commitments of the RP theory, as well as an argument for asserting a connection between the incommensurability of values and the incomparability of their instances (the incommensurability-incomparability connection). The rest of the section builds upon this to form a case against the RP theory of well-being.

Section 1.1 – The connection between incommensurability and incomparability.

The previous chapter introduced an RP theory of well-being (i.e. a theory espousing both the plurality of prudential good-making properties – substantive pluralism, henceforth SP – and a plurality of prudential value properties – VPP). The main focus of discussion in this chapter will be its VPP element, as this is its component from which worries about incomparability arise.

To summarise the discussion from the previous chapter, RP’s VPP component commits it to there being a plurality of prudential values or dimensions and, hence, to these prudential values being incommensurable.² That is, that there is no cardinal scale along which we can express magnitudes of two such dimensions of value. For example, take an instance of pleasure p and of achievement a. Under RP, p and a are bearers of different prudential value properties (experiential and aspirative respectively), i.e., V₁ and V₂, representing values v₁ and v₂. The incommensurability of v₁ and v₂ means that, if p has 25 v₁ value and a has 35 v₂

¹I follow Chang (1997) in taking items that can be comparable or incomparable to be either bearers of value or reducible to these.
²Chapter 4 programmatically identified four of these value properties and their respective goods and ills: the experiential (pleasure and pain), epistemic (understanding and ignorance), aspirative (achievement and failure), and social (friendship and isolation) dimensions of prudential value.
value, these two magnitudes (25 and 35) cannot be expressed along a common cardinal scale.

This has an implication with regards to the comparability of $a$ and $p$: if $p$'s magnitude of value $v_1$ (25) and $a$'s magnitude of value $v_2$ (35) cannot be expressed along a common cardinal scale, then there cannot be a positive cardinal relation holding between them. It would be akin to comparing a magnitude of mass (kilograms) and a magnitude of distance (metres). But if all comparative value relations require a cardinal relation to hold between the magnitudes of value of the compared items, no positive comparative relation can hold between instances of incommensurable values. Therefore, instances of incommensurable values are incomparable.

This outcome would be problematic for RP, as bearers of different RP value properties do appear to be comparable (see section 1.2). However, there are reasons to reject this basis for asserting the connection between incommensurability and incomparability. After all, the ratio-cardinal comparative relations between the magnitudes of value that they bear is not the only kind of comparative relation available. Indeed, there are three main accounts of such non-cardinal relations: Griffin’s (1986) rough comparability and Parfit’s (1984, 2016) and Chang’s (2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2016) imprecise comparability. Here, then, I will assume that, in principle, non-cardinal comparative relations can hold between items bearing incommensurable values. Moreover, I will assume that Chang’s tetrachotomy thesis is true of comparative relations. That is, that rather than three, there are four comparative relations – better, worse, equal and parity – where between items that are on a par there is a non-zero unbiased difference:

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3Note that Chang refers to the notion of non-cardinal comparative relations as imprecisely cardinal, but as I have been using “cardinal” here in the sense of ratio cardinality, this should be a superficial terminological difference.

4See Appendix 1 for a detailed presentation of these models of comparative relations, including of Chang’s key notion of parity.
an evaluative difference with magnitude, but where said difference “does not favour one alternative over the other – it has no direction” (Chang 2016, p195). See Appendix 1 for details.

Therefore, in order to establish the connection between incommensurability and incomparability we must turn to some different line of argument. Unfortunately for RP, such a basis for asserting the incommensurability-incomparability connection does exist. To see this, let us start by setting out a more systematic framework for understanding comparability and incomparability. This will help articulate the basis for asserting the incomparability of instances of incommensurable values.

An influential framework (espoused by, e.g., Thomson 1997 and Anderson 2016a) of this kind is proposed by Chang (1997, p5), and it characterises comparisons as proceeding with respect to a covering consideration: \( x \) cannot be better than \( y \) full stop, but only with respect to a covering consideration \( c \) (Chang 2013a, p8).\(^5\) Thus, for a comparison between two, e.g., sofas to make sense it must be carried out with respect to some considerations that is applicable to them: their size, their appearance, or how comfortable they are. In the case of well-being, we might take this consideration to be the quality of our lives.

On this basis, we can now define comparability and incomparability. If a positive comparative relation (i.e. better, worse, equality, and parity) holds between \( x \) and \( y \) with respect to \( c \), then they are *comparable*; if only negative relations hold (i.e. not better etc.) between \( x \) and \( y \) with respect to \( c \), then they are *incomparable*; if not even negative relations hold then they are *noncomparable* (see Chapter 4 for details). We might put the question of whether our RP theory involves the

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5Here, “covering consideration” should be taken loosely, so as to provide a framework for talk of comparisons, comparability and incomparability that is neutral with regards to a host of issues (e.g. the nature and individuation of values, bearers, comparative relations). The specifics of our interests and theoretical commitments regarding a particular issue will then set the kind of covering consideration that is relevant.
incomparability of instances of different values as the question of whether, for example, an instance of achievement $a$ stands in a positive comparative relation with an instance of pleasure $p$ under the covering consideration of how they contribute to our overall quality of life. If there is no such positive relation that holds between them under this covering consideration, then they are incomparable.

This framework, however, raises an issue when it comes to comprehensive considerations which subsume two incommensurable values. That is, at least in the case of plural and irreducible values, instances of incommensurable values will be good or bad in different kinds of ways. This means that when we compare some $x$ that is good in way $v_1$ with a $y$ that is good in way $v_2$, for there to be a positive value relation between $x$ and $y$ we must compare them under a common covering consideration. But as $x$ and $y$ are valuable in different kinds of way, such that they are incommensurable, it is not clear what this covering consideration would be.

A first way of trying to account for this should be quickly dismissed. This is to compare both $x$ and $y$ under one of $v_1$ or $v_2$. Doing so will give us some positive value relation, as any item can be said to have a magnitude of any kind of value, insofar as we can represent items that do not bear this value as having a magnitude of zero. Thus, if $x$ has no $v_2$ value and $y$ has no $v_1$ value, $x$ is better than $y$ under $v_1$ and $y$ is better than $x$ under $v_2$. However, this is not the kind of comparison we are interested in here. We are concerned with comparing the $v_1$ magnitude of value borne by $x$ and the $v_2$ magnitude of value borne by $y$.

We are thus presented with a new argument for asserting the incomparability of instances of incommensurable values. That is, in order for us to compare $x$ and $y$ under $c$ qua bearers of their respective values, then $c$ must in some way give due regard to the magnitudes of value of each kind. However, the possibility of non-
cardinal comparative relations only shows that such comparative relations are conceptually possible, but not how \( c \) can give due consideration to both of the values it subsumes: parity holds only as a result of the fact that \( c \) manages to give due regard to both \( v_1 \) and \( v_2 \) magnitudes. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that attempts at doing so may themselves seem conceptually suspicious. On the one hand, if \( c \) can give due regard to magnitudes of both \( v_1 \) and \( v_2 \), it must weigh them against each other appropriately. But this sounds suspiciously like expressing said magnitudes on a common (ratio) cardinal scale by some conversion rate, which would suggest that we have managed to reduce \( v_1 \) and \( v_2 \) to a common super-value. On the other hand, if we do not reduce the two to a super-value, it is not clear how both considerations can be given due regard. If so, then the covering consideration remains fundamentally fragmented, such that we cannot compare in the requisite way instances of different values it subsumes.\(^6\)

For instance, this might mean that we can meaningfully talk about instances of achievement and of pleasure as both subsumed under the same covering consideration of the quality of our life. However, this covering consideration is itself radically fragmented such that the quality of our life is a matter of different ways it might go well or poorly which do not resolve in terms of an overall way it goes well or poorly.

Moreover, this problem cannot be overcome by simply rejecting Chang's framework for comparability and incomparability. Not only is it both neutral with regards to substantive issues and an effective way of formalising the relevant notions, but her critique arises under any way of framing this issue. That is, the comparison must be taking place from some point of view from which both values are given due regard, otherwise we would not be comparing the two options \( qua \) instances of their respective values (which is what we are, after all, interested in).

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\(^6\)This is similar to an argument Chang considers (2001, p78-82). I will discuss her answer in later sections, particularly sections 3 and 6, and it will form the basis for my own answer to the problem from incomparability.
But even in these terms the problem is still present: how do we give due regard to both values if we cannot express them along a common cardinal scale?

This, then, appears to establish the incommensurability-incomparability connection, which entails that bearers of different RP dimensions of prudential value cannot be compared to one another. This is already, in itself, problematic for the RP theory, as this would mean that the account has the unappealing consequence of making many things that are good for us incomparable. On top of this, as we will see shortly, the incommensurability-incomparability connection forms the starting premise of an argument against the RP theory of well-being (section 1.3).

Section 1.2 – The Argument from Nominal-Notable Comparisons.

Chang (1997, pp14-15) provides an argument in favour of the comparability of goods which under VPP would be bearers of different kinds of value. This is sometimes referred to as the argument from nominal-notable comparisons: i.e. a comparison between a poor exemplar of a value (i.e. something that has low value, though not negative) – i.e. nominal – and an exceptional exemplar of another value (i.e. something that has high value) – i.e. notable. Chang offers an example with bearers of different dimensions of creativity: first, she considers a comparison between Mozart and Michelangelo (notable instances of their respective dimensions – music and sculpture), and then between these and Talentlessi (a nominal instance of a sculptor). Mozart and Michelangelo are not clearly comparable, while Michelangelo is clearly better than Talentlessi. As they are creative in the same way (sculpture) this is not a problematic assertion. However, Chang notes that Mozart also seems more creative (better) than Talentlessi. As they are (putatively) creative in different ways, we must find a way to account for this.
Putting this in purely prudential terms, consider a choice between an important achievement and a protracted period of pleasure. For example, take a choice between two careers, one involving some great achievement and the other involving a great deal of pleasure – e.g. between a civil service career and running a bar on a sunny beach.\(^7\) We can imagine instances of each for which it is hard to establish in what comparative relation, if any, they stand. This would likely be the case for a comparison between notable instances of each. However, this does not seem to be the case for a comparison between a notable instance of one and a nominal instance of the other. Compare the following. On the one hand, an idyllic life on the beach, working in a small bar for a good wage, serving drinks and food to pleasant customers, while also having plenty of free time for enjoyable activities. On the other, a stressful civil service career full of drudgery which amounts to little (but not no) progression and, thus, impact on the public (though let us assume not for our own lack of trying). The former life (idyll) seems, overall, to be better than the latter (drudgery).\(^8\)

Moreover, Chang notes that given the comparability of the nominal and notable instances, other instances of the same values are also likely to be comparable. Thus, idyll is likely comparable with improvements on drudgery – e.g. drudgery+, drudgery++, and mediocre. Of course, at some point idyll may no longer appear to be better for us than the achievement with which it is compared. But so long as we have an account of the comparative relation between them (e.g. parity), it does not follow that they are incomparable.\(^9\)

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\(^7\)This example is based on Raz’s (1986) involving a choice between a legal and musical career.

\(^8\)Note that we can similarly offer an example with an aspiratively notable life and an experientially nominal one.

\(^9\)There are some concerns with this “chaining” argument (e.g. Boot 2009, Elson 2014, Andersson 2016b) moving us from the comparability of idyll and drudgery to that between idyll and a notable achievement. However, I will ignore this issue as, for our purposes, the fact that idyll and drudgery are comparable is sufficient to show that instances of putatively different prudential value properties are comparable (P2 in the argument below).
This argument shows that at least some instances of what are, under the RP theory of well-being, incommensurable values are, in fact, comparable. In section 1.3 this will serve as the second premise for an argument against the RP theory, given the incommensurability-incomparability connection argued for in section 1.1.

Section 1.3 – The Argument Against VPP from Nominal-Notable Comparisons

As highlighted by Sagdahl (2014), the argument from nominal-notable comparisons is not meant by Chang as an argument against pluralism. However, given the case for the incommensurability-incomparability connection discussed in section 1.1, the problem nominal-notable comparisons raise for pluralism is relevant and is thus clarified here:

(P1) If VPP is true of a particular domain, then bearers of different and thus incommensurable values are incomparable; (from section 1.1)

(P2) In the prudential domain, bearers of what would be different values if VPP were true of the prudential are in fact comparable; (from the argument from nominal-notable comparisons)

Therefore, (C1) VPP is false about well-being (modus tollens from P1 and P2)

(P3) if VPP is false about a domain, then RP is false about it too; (from the definition of RP as a conjunction of SP and VPP)

Therefore, (C2) RP is false about well-being. (modus ponens from C1 and P3)

The argument is formally valid, so to resist it we must deny at least one of the premises. (P3) is merely stating the relation between VPP and RP, and (C2) follows from (P3) and (C1). Therefore, efforts should focus on stopping (C1) by
rejecting either (P1) or (P2). Starting with the latter, a viable incomparativist account of rational choice might help explain, in its own terms, the kind of scenario discussed above in relation to nominal-notable choices. For example, incomparativist accounts of rational choice could attempt to explain how it is rational to choose a large pleasure over a small achievement (but not the other way around – this last point will be salient in what follows). If so, we could deny the interpretation of nominal-notable “comparisons” in terms of, precisely, the comparability of the options involved.

Turning to (P1), Section 3 onwards explores some ways of addressing the challenge of accounting for the comparability of instances of different and incommensurable values. Ultimately, this chapter argues for a way of undermining the incommensurability-incomparability connection argued for in this section, which will be discussed in sections 3 to 5.
Section 2 – Incomparativist Solutions.

In this section I discuss incomparativist accounts of rational choice. These are attempts to explain our justification for choosing between incomparable options. They thus stand in contrast to comparativist models, which hold that the only kinds of thing that can justify a choice between two options are the comparative relations between them (Chang 2016). I evaluate incomparativist accounts on a number of grounds, but their primary purpose here is in denying (P2). That is, though incomparativists are committed to denying, for instance, that idyll is better than drudgery, if they can explain the justifiability of choosing the former over the latter, then they should be able to offer an alternative explanation of the cases on which (P2) is based: idyll is not better than drudgery (because they are incomparable), but, rather, idyll is rationally eligible over drudgery.10 By offering this alternative explanation of the premise, incomparativist accounts may be able to stop the argument against RP by denying (P2).

Section 2.1 – Incomparativist accounts of rational choice and their difficulties.

The first of the incomparativist accounts of choice discussed argues for understanding choice between incomparable options in terms of willing (Raz 1986). That is, we choose between incomparable options by exerting our will one way or the other, rather than by reflecting on which is better. This view does not deny the importance of reason, as it still assigns it a role in eliminating options that are commensurable and cardinally worse than others, providing us with a

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10 I use “rationally eligible” here as a term that remains neutral as to whether or not the basis of choosing one option over another is that it is comparatively better. Thus, incomparativists must maintain that, for example, idyll is rationally eligible over drudgery, rather than better than it is.
limited range of acceptable options. We then choose amongst these rationally eligible options simply by an act of willing. Thus, for example, given choices $x$, $y$, and $z$, reason determines that $x$ is worse than $z$ (where the values of $x$ and $z$ are commensurable), while $y$ is incomparable to $x$ and $z$; this leaves us with $y$ and $z$ as rationally eligible options, amongst which we can choose either.

Under this account, there seems to be no further reason for our choosing one of these options over another – making Chang (1992) criticise this practice by characterising it as “plumping”. However, this kind of outcome is not necessarily as problematic as it might appear. First, as Chan (2010) points out, reason is still relevant to the choice between $y$ and $z$, even beyond its narrowing our options down by eliminating $x$. That is, we can still say that, when choosing between $y$ and $z$, we are acting for a reason. Second, the objection cannot be that “plumping” is, in itself, problematic, as it appears to be how we choose between options that are equal in value. Say we must choose between $x$ and $y$, but they are equal in value. There is no reason for favouring one over the other, but we must choose one of them (or we will miss out on any benefit – i.e. the implicit third and worst option). So, we must “plump” for one of the two. This means that there is nothing in principle wrong with selecting an option in this way. Otherwise, there would be no way for us to make a rational choice when confronted with equal options.

This proposal still contains some problems. In particular, it cannot serve as a basis for dismissing (P2). First, this proposal would require accepting an unpalatable multiplication of such plumping choices. Whereas these would previously have been limited to equal options, they now appear in any case where multiple values

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11Note that this is similar to maximisation (Sen 1997, 2000).
12I am assuming here that reasons follow value. Though we could take value to follow reasons (e.g. Kahn 2011), I will not comment on this point, as I take it that, mutatis mutandis, the arguments presented in this thesis translate to models taking reasons as primary.
are involved. This would mean that many of even our daily choices involve such options and, thus, require us to plump one way or the other. This flies in the face of our experience of such cases. Second, it makes choices between incomparable options and equal options implausibly similar (if not identical in rational justification). But incomparable options are not the same thing as equal ones. In the case of the latter, there is no way of rationally choosing between the options, because they have the same value – i.e. which we choose does not matter. By contrast, which option we choose between incomparables is often significant, especially if this is a feature linked to value pluralism. After all, choosing between bearers of different kinds of values means choosing which of the two values will be realised. Merely leaving this kind of choice to something like “plumping” is unsatisfactory.

Third, leaving choices to “plumping” opens us up to worries such as the money-pump argument (Chang 1997): if it is rational for us to choose either x or y on the basis of their incomparability (i.e. not on the basis of their equality), it will also be rational for us to choose either x or y- where y- is a small decrease in value from y; but if so, if we first choose x, and then are presented with a different choice between keeping x and swapping it for y-, then it will be rational for us to choose y- (and so on). This has the consequence of making it rational for us to accept increasingly lower and lower value options.\(^\text{13}\)

Finally, and most significantly for the purpose of rejecting (P2), this approach cannot fully explain nominal-notable cases. Though it can explain why choosing idyll over drudgery is rational – i.e. as the two are incomparable, idyll’s value supplies us with a sufficient reason to choose it – this cannot explain why it is not rational to choose drudgery. Accounting for nominal-notable comparisons requires at the very least that it is irrational to choose drudgery over idyll (i.e.

\(^{\text{13}}\)Note that this is not an issue for equal options, as if x and y were equal, x would not be equal to y-.
drudgery is not rationally eligible over idyll). But this is precisely what the present incomparativist model of rational choice cannot explain, as choosing drudgery still means acting for a reason (and there is no straightforwardly better reason for an alternative option). This, I take it, is implausible, and fails in the incomparativist endeavour to deny (P2).

Section 2.2 – A more sophisticated incomparativist model of choice: Andreou and patterns of choice.

In response to these objections, incomparativists can leverage Andreou’s (2011) suggestion of expanding consideration to our patterns of choices. Andreou contends that the debate over the incomparability of certain options seems so difficult only because it has been framed in the wrong kind of way: the question is always framed around whether the options in an individual choice are comparable and, if not, whether and how it is rational to choose between them. The problem with this restriction is that it is hard to see how we can choose between the two options while doing justice (Andreou’s 2011 expression, p54) to all of the values involved within that single choice situation. But, as she notes, we don’t need to rely only on single choices in order to do justice to all of these values. We can, instead, do so across a range of choices: we can realise one value in a first choice and another in the next, thus realising both values across the two choices. Andreou then maintains that it is our patterns of choices which should be our primary rational concern. That is, as it is through such patterns that we do (or do not) do justice to different values, the first step in a rational choice is choosing a pattern which does justice to these values. At the level of options, then, the rational one to pick in a given case is that which conforms to said pattern.

14It should be noted that, though Andreou remains committed to incomparativism, she acknowledges her proposal may form the basis of an account of comparability (see section 5).
This proposal seems to avoid some of the problems that we previously identified as applying to incomparativist accounts of rational choice. For example, take the issue with money-pump cases. Andreou avoids this kind of concern in virtue of the fact that a pattern of choice which led to such money pump cases would be irrational: it would not give due consideration to whatever value or values are being diminished. Moreover, it also can explain nominal-notable cases to some extent. That is, Andreou can claim that the nominal option is one whose magnitude of value can be easily compensated across other choices (i.e. by realising options bearing the same value) while the notable option cannot. For example, if we choose to forsake a small pleasure for a great achievement, we can, likely, realise the same amount of pleasure (and more) by choosing experientially good options in other choices. By contrast, it is unlikely that we can compensate the forsaking of a great achievement even across many choices. Therefore, forsaking it means forsaking the relevant degree of realisation of aspirative value in general. Thus, failing to realise the notable option means failing to do justice to the relevant value across choices, while failing to realise the nominal one does not have the same implication. This also explains the difficulty in deliberating over notable-notable options, as neither can be (easily) compensated across different choices. By contrast, even if it is hard or impossible to determine which of two nominal options is rationally eligible over the other, choosing between them is easy, as not choosing one of the two can be easily compensated over future choices.

This promises, then, a way of dismissing (P2). An appeal to deliberation over patterns of choices offers two ways of accounting for the rational eligibility of idyll over drudgery. First, insofar as the former, but not the latter, is notable, forsaking it cannot be (easily) compensated across future choices. Though, ex hypothesis, idyll involves little to no aspirative value, drudgery still involves such a small amount of aspirative value that idyll can be compatible with a pattern of choices in which we realise a similar amount of aspirative value as in drudgery. Second,
Andreou talks of *doing justice* to a value as a norm governing rational eligibility across ranges of choices (more on this in the next subsection). Choosing *drudgery* over *idyll*, then, might violate this norm: choosing an option that is poor even with respect to the principal value it bears over one that is notable with respect to its own principal value would fail to do justice to the latter value. Andreou’s incomparativist account offers a way of explaining both why we are justified in choosing *idyll* over *drudgery* and why we are not justified in choosing *drudgery* over *idyll*. Hence, it has the means of offering an alternative explanation of the cases on which (P2) is based, thus allowing the rejection of (P2). This, then, would allow RP to resist the argument from incomparability. However, the following section criticises this proposal, at least insofar as it remains committed to incomparativism, which makes it impossible to form a defence of RP on its back.

*Section 2.3 – Problems for the incomparativist appeal to patterns of choice.*

Though Andreou’s account is an improvement on earlier incomparativist approaches, it still faces a significant concern. As described in the previous section, her approach entails that one option is rationally eligible in virtue of being part of a pattern which does justice to the value(s) in question. However, in this subsection I argue that this incomparativist view in fact relies on a comparative relation between the patterns involved (or, more properly, between the distributions they realise).

First, note that all considerations of rational eligibility between options in Andreou’s account rely on prior considerations about the rational eligibility of the patterns of choices involved. To see this, take the case of a comparison between a *notable* option and a *nominal* one. According to the account, the *notable* option is rationally eligible over the *nominal* one in virtue of which pattern of choices each is a part. But this means that, for us to be able to discriminate in favour of one
option over the other, we must be able to discriminate in favour of one pattern over the other. It is thus because one pattern is rationally eligible over the other that the related option is rationally eligible over the other. Moreover, some notables and nominals, including idyll and drudgery, are better characterised not as options within a pattern of choices, but as distributions of values realised by patterns, as they reflect two different ways of life. They are therefore two complex states realised by a series of choices (i.e. a pattern) rather than by a single choice. Thus, in establishing which is rationally eligible, we cannot be considering in which pattern they fit, but rather we must be directly considering the patterns which constitute them and which of these is rationally eligible over the other.

The key worry with this is that such a discrimination of one pattern over the other must be appealing to some kind of comparison: that a notable option is rationally eligible over a nominal one because the pattern which realises the former is better than the pattern realising the latter. It should be noted that I am assuming that if a pattern is evaluatively better than another, it must be because the distribution of values that it realises is better than those realised by an alternative pattern.15

In response to this worry, we might point to at least one way in which a pattern A being better than a pattern B is not problematic for incomparativists. These are cases where, after a first choice that realises value $v_1$ over $v_2$, we then act, through the later choices in the pattern, to realise $v_2$ over $v_1$. For example, compare two possibilities, one where the first choice is a notable experientially good option and one where our first choice is a nominal aspiratively good option. In the former case, we then act to realise aspirative value (pattern A), while in the latter case we then act to realise experiential value (pattern B). In such a case, it is unlikely that pattern B can realise more experiential value over its course compared to pattern A, as the notable starting experientially valuable choice will make it hard

\[15\text{i.e. the bundle of incommensurable magnitudes of different values accounting for someone or something’s overall value under RP – see Chapter 4 Section 4.1 for details.}\]
for \( B \) to fully match it. By contrast, the fact that \( B \)'s starting \textit{aspiratively} valuable choice is only \textit{nominal} means that \( A \) may well be able to match or surpass \( B \)'s overall \textit{aspirative} value. This would mean that \( A \) could be both \textit{experientially} and \textit{aspiratively} better than \( B \) (i.e. in the sense that its \textit{distribution} is better in both ways than \( B \)'s), making \( A \) unproblematically better than \( B \).

But this is a somewhat optimistic scenario for the incomparativist. It assumes that pattern \( B \) will involve the realisation of \textit{experiential} value in future choices, as well as that \( A \) will realise \textit{aspirative} value in future choices. But this assumption seems unfounded. It is not, after all, clear why it would be ineligible to realise more \textit{experiential} value through the rest of pattern \( A \) (call this \( A' \)) rather than \textit{aspirative} value, or to double-down on realising \textit{aspirative} value in the rest of pattern \( B \) (call this \( B' \)). The simplest explanation for this is that the rational ineligibility of \( A' \) over \( A \) (and of \( B' \) over \( B \)) relies on an implicit comparative judgement about the resulting \textit{distributions} of \( A \) and \( A' \). But if so, incomparativists cannot maintain the ineligibility of \( A' \) over \( A \) (and of \( B' \) over \( B \)) as they cannot appeal to such comparative judgements. However, if \( A' \) and \( B' \) are both eligible patterns, then it is not true that \( A \) or \( A' \) (i.e. the patterns including the \textit{notable} option) are straightforwardly cardinally better than \( B' \) (unlike the case with \( A \) and \( B \)). This is because \( A' \) would not be better than \( B' \) both \textit{aspiratively} and \textit{experientially}, but only \textit{experientially} (i.e. \( A' \) realises very little if any \textit{aspirative} value) while \( B' \) would be \textit{aspiratively} better than \( A' \). Indeed, \textit{idyll} and \textit{drudgery} themselves cannot be of the kind \( A \) and \( B \) as, \textit{ex hypothesis}, they are patterns which realise, respectively, more \textit{experiential} and more \textit{aspirative} value than the other. They instead seem to fit the mould \( A' \) and \( B' \). Thus, this approach cannot explain why \textit{idyll} is rationally eligible over \textit{drudgery}.

However, Andreou may have the means of addressing this concern. That is, she might suggest that the means by which we discriminate between patterns of choices (including \textit{idyll} and \textit{drudgery}) is not in terms of the comparative relations
holding between the distributions they realise, but in terms of some deliberative norm. This seems to be more along the lines of what Andreou has in mind, seeing her appeal to the idea that patterns of choices must do justice to all values.\(^\text{16}\) If so, then drudgery does really seem rationally ineligible over idyll. After all, not only does it fail with respect to experiential value, but it seems to do a poor job in realising aspirative value as well. That is not to say that this norm would not also critique idyll: it is still constituted by a pattern which violates the norm by failing to realise aspirative value in any meaningful way. But, at least, it does full justice to one value (i.e. experiential).

Ultimately, however, the appeal to the doing justice to all values norm is also problematic. To see why, consider that, in order to produce the correct result about cases such as choices between nominal and notable options, the doing justice to all values norm must require that we act across a range of choices to realise all values in a (more or less) balanced way. Otherwise, it would be rationally eligible to maximise aspirative value by choosing pattern \(B'\). Though this is undoubtedly intuitive, it is not clear what the basis for this claim is, unless it relies on a prior claim about comparative relations. This is because, it is presumably the case that doing justice requires not just realising values in a balanced way, but that this is the result of taking all of their demands into consideration in the right kind of way. After all, it seems also wrong to say that any pattern that realises all values is rationally eligible over any that does not do so. We can, for example, imagine a pattern \(A''\) that is rationally eligible over pattern \(B''\), where \(A''\) realises an exceptional degree of experiential value while \(B''\) realises both experiential and aspirative value in a balanced but nominal way (note that the particular values can be inverted). So the doing justice norm does not reduce to a norm to realise values in a balanced way, but instead is sensitive to the specific demands made by considerations of different values in particular cases. But this must then rely on

\(^{16}\)This is meant to be a common-sense appeal by Andreou, so she does not characterise it further.
an interplay of the relative strengths of said demands. If so, then it would seem that this interplay either (1) is based on comparisons between distributions (i.e. the demands express these comparative relations) or (2) constitutes the normative relations between values that in sections 4 and 5 will form the basis for a comparativist account (i.e. the demands express normative relations between values which then determine comparative relations).

Therefore, it seems that incomparativists struggle to provide a coherent picture of rational choice, especially with regards to the kind of cases which supported (P2). This approach, then, cannot be used to undermine (P2) and, hence, the argument against RP. As a consequence, in what follows I will set these approaches to a side and focus on comparativist attempts at rejecting (P1).

A proviso to this conclusion should be added though. That is, my argument against Andreou relies on the claim that the described interplay in the demands of different values must be reducible either to comparative relations between distributions or the basis of such comparisons. However, though it is not clear to me what other account of this interplay is available, I cannot exclude that incomparativists can formulate one. If so, and if the resulting incomparativist account allows us to reject (P2), I see no reason not to embrace it instead of my own proposal from sections 4 through 6. This is particularly true given the fact that I will be appealing to Andreou’s account within my own comparativist proposal. That being said, if my comparativist suggestion is successful, it will also supplement the case against Andreou’s incomparativist model, showing how its claims can indeed be understood as relying covertly on a comparativist basis.
Section 3 – Rejecting (P1): Diagnosing the Problem and Mapping the Way Forward.

The incomparativist attempt at resisting the argument against RP by denying (P2) (i.e. that instances of putatively different values are comparable) has failed. In resisting the problem from incomparability, then, we must turn to the rejection of (P1): the thesis that instances of incommensurable values are incomparable. In this section I will diagnose the current obstacle to denying (P1) presented by the argument from section 1.1, to then map out how the case for the rejection of (P1) (and hence of its supporting argument) will proceed in the next three sections (4 through 6).

Section 3.1 – Diagnosis: covering values and structure.

A brief reminder of the argument in favour of (P1) is in order. This was based on Chang’s formal framework for comparisons, where comparisons can only proceed under a *covering consideration* which takes into account the relevant evaluative concerns of both of the compared items. The issue that arose from this was that, in the case of comparisons between items bearing incommensurable values, there doesn’t seem to be a way for a covering consideration to take into account the magnitudes of both subsumed values without weighing both appropriately against each other. But doing so raises the concern that we are expressing both magnitudes along a common cardinal scale and, hence, reducing both of their values to a single super-value (which would be unacceptable for RP).

This led to the conclusion that we cannot compare instances of incommensurable values, i.e. (P1) (see Sections 1.1 and 1.3 for more details). To respond to this problem, we must find a way in which the *covering consideration* in question does indeed consider magnitudes of both values appropriately without reducing them
to a common super-value. As a starting point, I propose looking at Chang’s (2004) own proposal. Her suggestion is that we understand the comparability of bearers of incommensurable values in terms of comprehensive or covering values. Thus, her proposal is clearly continuous with her suggested framework for understanding comparisons, so it is not surprising that it holds some key insight into how to resolve the current problem. The two, however, should be kept distinct, as not all covering considerations are covering values in the sense appealed to here: covering considerations also specify the comparison of instances of the same value (e.g. Chang 2002a). Covering values, on the other hand, are covering considerations that act in a particular way on the values they cover. To avoid possible confusions, I will use the term “covering” or “comprehensive consideration” for the notion involved in the formal framework, while “covering” or “comprehensive values” will be used for the notion involved in Chang’s explanation of the comparability of instances of incommensurable values.

Chang’s suggestion is that comparisons between instances of incommensurable values (all-things-considered judgements) are carried out under a covering value which includes the options’ respective values as parts. “All-things-considered” in all-things-considered judgments is thus a “placeholder for a more comprehensive value” (2004, p2). Chang claims that this comprehensive value takes the contributing values as parts to then determine “how the things taken as parts relate to each other normatively” (2004, p2). An appeal to covering values, then, involves something more than simply “covering” two or more incommensurable values. How they subsume the contributing values must account for their ability to provide comparisons of the latter’s instances: i.e. their structure organises their contributing values such as to provide orderings of instances of both values.

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17 I will use this term henceforth to refer to the values covered by a covering value.
18 Mason (2018) associates this notion with Stocker’s own higher-level synthesising category (1990, p72).
It is therefore an account of this structure of a covering value that is the key to solving the problem outlined in the subsection above. In the rest of this section and in following ones I will outline what is required of such an account and propose one such approach. In particular, I will focus on what it must do to both allow comparisons and avoid the threat of reducing its contributing values.

That being said, before continuing, I must make a clarification. Chang’s view has received some vociferous criticisms, though many are not exactly warranted. As a consequence and to remain neutral with regards to issues in the literature, I will not explicitly couch my proposal in terms of her covering values. Instead, I will limit myself to presenting an account of one way of conceiving of the structure organising prudential dimensions of value. For this reason, I will refer to the structure of the covering value in terms of the normative relations between them, as this language is more neutral regarding commitments to covering values. There are, however, two important qualifications to this. First, I take what I will say to be both in the spirit of Chang’s approach and potentially serving as clarifying some of her claims. Thus, my proposal can still be understood as involving covering values. As the comparisons in question will be restricted to well-being, the omission of an explicit mention of covering value ought not to impede reading the proposal as compatible with Chang’s account. Second, something like a

19 We should moreover note that, as Chang argues, the identity of the covering value is given by what its contributing values are plus its structure.

20 Some of these seem to be based on a misunderstanding of what Chang means by a covering value (see below). For example, Chan (2010) claims that, because the approach posits a distinct and unnamed value for each set of contributing values, it is ad hoc or otherwise artificial. But this is most plausible as a criticism if we interpret the covering value as being of the same kind as the more fundamental contributing values: e.g. as implying a distinct cardinal scale in terms of which the contributing values are made commensurable. On the other hand, covering values understood in the way suggested below do not lend themselves to being criticised on the same basis. Hsieh (2005) and Hsieh & Andersson (2021) also seem to understand Chang’s covering value in somewhat the same, erroneous way, as Boot notes (2017, p326 footnote 44).

21 Note though that, at least in some places (e.g. Chang 2002a), Chang speaks in terms suggesting that a plurality of legitimate covering values are at play in a single, imprecise comparison (e.g. see Chang’s
covering value may well still be necessary in order to account for what structures the contributing values in the relevant way. This will be discussed in Section 6. However, as there are alternative notions available that could fill this role (e.g. Stocker’s 1990 higher-level synthesising category – see footnote 18), this is also still not a commitment to the specifics of Chang’s view.

Section 3.2 – Roadmap to a solution: providing an account of the normative relations between values.

In answering the problem presented in section 1, we must provide an account of these normative relations between values. In judging the viability of this proposal, our focus should be on the plausibility of both the nature and grounds of these normative relations, as well as to the function they are supposed to play. It is, after all, what accounts for the comparison of the instances of the contributing values. The question addressed in the coming sections, then, is how are different (and incommensurable) dimensions of prudential value normatively related such that a comparison of their instances is possible?

However, this question is ambiguous, and it is necessary to distinguish two different senses of it, each individuating a different explanandum for our account. The first understands the how question as a request for the properties of the normative relations (how are the values related). The second is best understood as asking for an account of the grounds of the posited normative relations. That is, it must establish in virtue of what these normative relations come to subsist between values (why are they so related).

discussion of the supervaluational interval model of parity, 2002a pp147-149). Hence, my talking in terms of a single set of normative relations between values may be an impediment to associating our accounts.
Neither of these issues should be taken for granted. If we fail to answer the first question, then we don’t have an account of the mechanism by which instances of different values are given due consideration in a comparison (i.e. without which there is no sense to talking about their “due” consideration). Any comparison between instances of different kinds of value, then, would be unsystematic in how they take these different kinds of consideration into account, which should be at least suspicious. Moreover, it will be helpful in answering the problem from section 1.1 to show that there are ways of understanding the normative relations between incommensurable values such that their instances can be meaningfully compared. On the other hand, if we don’t have an account of the second *explanandum*, we will have merely shown how we have come to make a comparison (i.e. by appealing to the mechanism outlined in answering the first question), without sufficient justification.

There are, therefore, two respective levels at which the proposal might fail. Regarding the former of these, we could fail to provide an account of the normative relations between values compatible with our actual comparative judgments between particular bearers. Moreover, we could also provide an account which, though fitting our intuitions, is otherwise theoretically inadequate insofar as it fails to specify an appropriate way of considering both intuitions (e.g. it is *ad hoc* or it ends up reducing the contributing value to a single super-value). With regards to the second level, on the other hand, our explanation could fail to ground the first-level explanation of the normative relations between values. First, by not making the comparisons *normative*. That is, our first level of explanation may produce comparisons in some sense, but a failure at the second level may mean that these do not provide the kind of justificatory reasons that are required by *rational* choice. Second, by proposing an account that would ground justificatory reasons, but which fails to support the first-level explanation.
Therefore, in providing an adequate basis for the rejection of (P1), we must formulate an account of the comparability of instances of incommensurable values at both levels of explanation.
Section 4 – The Discontinuity-Based Approach.

In the following sections I provide an account of the normative relations between incommensurable values which will attempt to meet the criteria outlined in Section 3.2. However, this is not meant to constitute a conclusive claim about the nature of these normative relations, but rather a proof-of-concept demonstrating that such an account is possible. This, in turn, will help undermine the case against RP by allowing the rejection of (P1) as seen in Section 3.1. In this section, I offer a way of describing the normative relations between values in terms of discontinuity relations (Griffin 1986). However, as I maintain in the next section, this only accounts for the comparative relations between distributions of values. Section 5 discusses a different explanation of the choiceworthiness of options.

Section 4.1 – Describing the normative relations: Discontinuities.

To begin with, discontinuity-based approaches should be contrasted by an alternative also outlined by Griffin – trumping-based approaches (superiority under Arrhenius & Rabinowicz 2005). Trumping relations rely on an ordinal ranking of values, from highest to lowest, and then extends this ranking to describe all comparative relation between their instances: i.e. any instance of a higher-ranked value is better than any instance of a lower-ranked one. However, this seems too coarse-grained to be appropriate for prudential value, where some amount of any good can be better than at least some amounts of any other good (e.g. some great pleasures are better than some small achievements).

By contrast, discontinuities are descriptions of relations which only hold within a particular, limited range of cases, rather than globally. For example, Griffin (1986) identifies two such discontinuities (p85): the first holds that any amount of a value $v_1$ is better than any amount of a value $v_2$, so long as our overall realisation of $v_2$
is already above a certain threshold $T_2$; the second holds that an amount of $v_1$ over a threshold $T_1$ is better than any amount of $v_2$. Both posit a relation (e.g. any amount of $v_1$ is better than any amount of $v_2$) which holds over a limited range of cases (e.g. where $v_2$ is above a threshold $T_2$) such that outside of this range (where $v_2$ is below $T_2$) the specified relation does not hold (it is not true that any amount of $v_1$ is better than any amount of $v_2$). Thus, for example, if we take $v_1$ to correspond to *aspirative* value and $v_2$ to *experiential* value, the first *discontinuity* claims that any amount of achievement is better than any amount of pleasure, so long as our overall amount of pleasure is above a certain minimum threshold, while the second *discontinuity* claims that achievement above a certain threshold (i.e. an exceptional achievement) is better than any amount of pleasure.

This is already a step forward from *trumping* in allowing for the kind of fine-grained considerations needed to account for the comparative relations between instances of different prudential dimensions. However, a *discontinuity*-based account requires further refinement beyond $D_1$ and $D_2$. Otherwise, a life of bliss with little to no achievement would be far worse than a life with mediocre (but above threshold) pleasure and very low achievement (though intuitions may depend precisely on what this threshold might be). In what follows, I outline three kinds of amendments to the current approach: the specification of further *discontinuity* relations as well as their harmonisation, the inclusion of further values, and the specification of all these relations explicitly in terms of distributions of values.

*Section 4.2 – Defining the discontinuity relations.*

Here, I start by defining and clarifying an illustrative, simple *discontinuity*-based characterisation of the normative relations between values. Later this will be refined further in a few key ways.
In what follows I will specify the discontinuity relations in terms of distributions of values, rather than in terms of individual bearers or options. This is done for two reasons. First, as has already been noted in Chapter 4 Section 4.1, within a VPP (and hence RP) theory when we are talking about well-being as a whole we must express this in terms of fragmented evaluative considerations (i.e. each dimension). Thus, as we are here concerned with comparisons and considerations at this all-things-considered level, we must take into consideration bearer’s relevance to all dimensions of value, even where they are not valuable along a dimension (i.e. a \( v_r \) value of zero). Second, discontinuities posit a comparative rule over a limited range, hence making their relevance context-dependent. And as we saw with Griffin’s first discontinuity relation, our current distribution can determine which relation is relevant (e.g. when our level of experiential value is under a certain threshold, realising experiential value is better for us than realising aspirative value). Hence, consideration of what our distribution is and how something contributes to it are essential in determining how and whether a discontinuity relation applies in context. This, as we will see, becomes particularly relevant as we consider the interplay of a greater number of discontinuities.

In specifying discontinuity relations, I will harmonise them between each other such that there is no context where two discontinuities are in conflict (i.e. where two relations are both relevant in the same context and attribute different comparative relations to the compared items). This is done in part for simplicity, but also in case such conflicts are found to be problematic.

Based on this, I will define a simple discontinuity-based approach, which should be taken as an illustrative starting point rather than a fully-fledged account, with three discontinuity relations. Two are based on Griffin’s original discontinuities
discussed in Section 4.1. Thus take \((D_1)-(D_3)\), which are articulated in terms of *experiential* and *aspirative* value:

\[(D_1)\] if our *current* level of *experiential* value is above a threshold \(T_e\), distributions with higher *aspirative* value are better than ones with lower *aspirative* value irrespective of their level of *experiential* value (so long as it remains above \(T_e\));

\[(D_2)\] if our *current* level of *experiential* value is under the threshold \(T_e\), distributions with higher *experiential* value are better than ones with lower *experiential* value irrespective of the level of *aspirative* value (until *experiential* value reaches \(T_e\));

\[(D_3)\] if a distribution has a level of *aspirative* value over a (high) threshold \(T_a\), it is better than any distribution with a lower level of *aspirative* value.

This requires the kind of harmonisation noted earlier, as \(D_2\) and \(D_3\) enter into conflict in cases where current *experiential* value is below the \(T_e\) threshold and when a resulting distribution will realise *aspirative* value above the \(T_a\) threshold. According to \(D_2\) a distribution increasing *experiential* value with low *aspirative* value would be better than a distribution with low *experiential* value but above-\(T_a\) *aspirative* value, while \(D_3\) would evaluate the latter to be better than the former. Here, I offer two simple ways of harmonising the two. The first approach offers a general rule concerning such cases (i.e. also in cases of conflicts between other *discontinuity* relations, if and where these are added to the account). That is, we can specify a rule to the effect that items ranked differently by two conflicting *discontinuity* relations are on a par.22 The second approach, on the other hand, amends the current formulations of the conflicting *discontinuity* relations so as to resolve said conflict. In order to do so, the amendment must limit the applicability of one or both relations such that they cannot both determine comparative

\[22\text{A similar proposition to Chang’s (2002a) supervaluational interval model of parity.}\]
relations in the same context. For example, we could specify \((D_2)\) to exclude cases where at least one of the compared distributions has a level of *aspirative* value above \(T_a\), or we could amend \((D_3)\) to explicitly overrule \((D_2)\): \(^{23}\) if a distribution has a level of *aspirative* value over a (high) threshold \(T_a\), it is better than any distribution with a lower level of *aspirative* value, irrespective of either’s level of *experiential* value (including if it is under \(T_e\)). Thus, if a distribution surpasses in its realisation of *aspirative* value the threshold \(T_a\) (i.e. it involves exceptional levels of achievement), it does not matter if it involves level of *experiential* value below \(T_e\) (or if our current distribution of value does): it is better than any distribution with lower levels of *aspirative* value. This should not be taken as a commitment to a particular way of resolving the conflict, but rather as a demonstration that, where such conflicts arise, they can be dealt with easily and in a number of different ways.

Though just a first sketch, normative relations between values characterised in terms of \((D_1)-(D_3)\) already seem to reflect some important intuitions. For instance, it does seem true that being miserable or generally lacking pleasure is particularly bad for us, \(^{24}\) not withstanding our having other prudential goods, such that increasing our overall pleasure seems better for us than acquiring other goods \((D_2)\); but if we are not miserable, achievements seem generally better than pleasures \((D_1)\) and some exceptional achievements might be worth sacrificing pleasure even to the point of being somewhat miserable \((D_3)\).

Therefore, this account of the normative relations between values seems to be adequate in characterising *how* instances of different values are compared. For reasons of space I will not give a fully spelled-out version of this account. After all, my main concern is not in giving such an account, but in demonstrating that it is

\(^{23}\)Note that we could also do both.

\(^{24}\)I will assume that this is still net positive, though very low, *experiential* value for simplicity.
feasible to give one. In support of this, in Section 4.3 I outline a few further ways in which this account can be developed.

Section 4.3 – Refining the account.

The account above is only programmatic, but it demonstrates the possibilities offered by the approach. It can moreover be further refined in a number of ways. One way of doing so is by introducing further thresholds for each value (e.g. a low-to-medium threshold and a medium-to-high threshold), to permit scope for articulating further and more fine-grained discontinuity relations (or to refine the specified interrelations between current discontinuities). For instance, perhaps certain pleasures above a medium-to-high threshold outweigh achievements under a particular low-to-medium threshold, irrespective of \((D_1)\). Another way of carrying out similar refinements is by clarifying how discontinuity relations interact when they approach each other. For example, if we are worried by the abrupt shift in rankings that happens at each of the thresholds discussed in \((D_1)-(D_3)\), we can introduce a mediating zone around these where instances of the different values are on a par.\(^{25}\) For instance, when our realisation of pleasure reaches around the \(T_e\) threshold from \((D_1)\) and \((D_2)\), instances of pleasure could be considered on a par with instances of achievement before instances of achievement start being better than ones of pleasure.

A second and necessary amendment to the current formulation of these normative relations is the introduction of the other dimensions of value from Chapter 4: epistemic and social prudential value. While limitations of space do not permit a full discussion, there is no reason to think that this introduction would be

\(^{25}\)Note that this problem and its solution is similar to an issue raised in connection to the repugnant conclusion (e.g. Parfit 1986, 2016, Jensen 2020) and to one potential response to this (e.g. Jensen 2020, Chang 2021).
challenging. It may, though, require a slight change in how the *discontinuities* have been specified. This is because it seems inadvisable to do so by simply introducing more *discontinuities* specifying relations between instances of two values within a particular context. The reason for this is that this would mean specifying an increasingly complex and potentially *ad hoc* web of interrelated considerations as to which *discontinuity* is relevant in a given context. Instead, it seems advisable to specify current *discontinuities* in terms of the interplay of different dimensions of value. Though this will likely involve some added complexity, there is little reason to think that this will require merely *ad hoc* specifications. All of this will likely mean adjusting \((D_1)-(D_3)\), but this does not seem in itself problematic.

For example, we could specify \(D_2\) not just in terms of the current under-realisation of one dimension, but of any dimension, such that increasing realisation of any dimension above a low-to-medium threshold takes priority over other considerations. Within this we could then specify which dimension takes priority when under-realised. For instance, if *experiential* value took priority in this sense, then even when all dimensions are under their respective low-to-medium thresholds, increasing *experiential* value above its threshold takes priority; if this is achieved, then the next-highest ranked value takes precedence. This would then make *discontinuities* more clearly akin to *trumping*, except that the postulated comparative relation obtains only within limited contexts. Moreover, to further simplify our account, we could suggest that any distribution where all dimensions are realised within a medium-to-high range (i.e. neither poor nor exceptional) are on a par. As Chang (2001) points out, where options are on a par we can choose freely between them, not just as if they were equal to each other, but by allowing the subject to determine which is best for them (see 2001, p170-172). This, then, creates a space of different legitimate normative relations between values.
In this section we have seen how we can formulate a viable first-level account of the normative relations between values. This then, sets us well on our way in showing that (P1) can be denied. That being said, in the next section I describe a potential problem with the account outlined here, alongside a solution that shows that its potential remains intact.
Section 5 – The Choiceworthiness of Options as their Place in a Pattern of Choices.

In this section I outline a problem that the account from Section 4 encounters in explaining the choiceworthiness of certain options. I then also offer a solution to this in terms of an appeal to Andreou’s (2011) notion of a pattern of choices.

Section 5.1 – Apparent explanatory limitation: recommending the wrong choices.

We should start here by noting that the above account, strictly speaking, does not make claims about which options are choiceworthy in a particular situation. That being said, there is a clear naïve reading of its relation to an account of choiceworthiness: out of two options, the one realising the better distribution according to $(D_1)-(D_3)$ is the better option of the two and, hence, choiceworthy.

However, this does not seem to bear out in practice, as there are options whose apparent overall choiceworthiness is not accountable in terms of the comparative relations between the distribution they individually realise and the distribution realised by their alternative. For example, according to $D_t$, distributions with a higher realisation of aspirative value are better than ones with lower aspirative value, no matter the quality of the experiential dimensions, if our current experiential value is over a threshold $T_e$. This, according to the naïve application to choiceworthiness of the Section 4 account, would mean that options increasing aspirative value in this context (i.e. current levels of experiential value are above $T_e$) are better than ones which don’t. But there are counterexamples to this. For instance, notable instances of experiential value that are better than mundane instances of aspirative value, even when we are otherwise not miserable. For example, choosing to go on the exciting holiday of our dreams seems better than to stay home to read a challenging book (fiction or non-fiction) or to catch up with
our correspondence (though there may be non-prudential reasons to do this). If we assume that we are not currently doing very poorly *experientially*, then the *naive* reading would instead say that the better option is to stay home and obtain even a minor achievement.

A second set of problem cases arise from options which do not *individually* realise a value, but which do so only in conjunction with other options in other choice situations. Most achievements are realised by actions of this sort – e.g., the achievement of obtaining a degree by choosing particular options, such as staying home to study rather than going out, in different cases – not by standalone choices. However, insofar as we have assumed that the comparative relation between options in a choice situation is based on their *individual* contribution to a distribution of values, it is hard to see how we are to account for the relative value of these options: after all, they do not themselves, individually realise a value. Indeed, there seems to be an important asymmetry in this regard between different values. Whereas some can be realised in individual choices, such as *experiential* value, many others simply cannot be realised in a single choice. But then how are we to understand the, for instance, *aspirative* value of a single option relative to an *experientially* good alternative? Assigning it no value because it does not realise it directly seems misguided, and would ultimately mean that we likely never realise these values so long as we choose the “best” option.

This apparent explanatory limitation of the account of comparisons between distributions of values raises two significant concerns in the case for rejecting the argument against RP. First, it in itself already casts doubt on an account of the normative relations between values. After all, we would expect such an account to be the basis for the comparability of options, not just of distributions. This, then, undermines its viability as an approach to rejecting (P1). Second, even if opponents of RP conceded that the *discontinuity*-based account undermined (P1) with regards to distributions (i.e. it shows that instances of incommensurable
values can be compared insofar as the distributions they constitute are comparable), it does not show that this is the case with regards to options: the incommensurability-incomparability connection is still true of options (due to, e.g., multiple options being necessary to lead to certain distributions), meaning that options bearing incommensurable values cannot be compared. And, as at least some cases supporting (P2) show that options bearing incommensurable values are comparable, this would still constitute an argument against RP. Therefore, as things stand, we do not have the basis for responding to the problem from incomparability facing the RP theory of well-being.

Section 5.2 – Addressing the concern: patterns of choices and deliberating over a range of choices.

The solution to this issue, however, is readily available by articulating a different account of the choiceworthiness of option. Indeed, we have already discussed an account which, I argue, explains the current problem cases in conjunction with the account of comparative relations between distributions of values from Section 4. This is Andreou’s incomparativist appeal to patterns of choices and deliberation over a range of choices. As we saw in Section 2.3, this account suffered due to its suspected reliance on comparisons between the distributions of values realised by the patterns. Though this was problematic for the account in its incomparativist formulation, a reliance on this kind of comparisons is not at issue given the account of the comparative relations between distributions of values offered in Section 4.

It seems plausible that what we ultimately care about with regards to our well-being are the distributions of values we realise. Thus, given a comparativist optimisation account of rational choice (e.g. Chang 2016), what we have rational
justification to do (and thus choose) is the *best available* overall distribution of values.\(^{26}\)

Based on this, we can formulate a statement of the choiceworthiness of options in terms of patterns of choices:

*Within a particular choice situation, the best option is the one which is part of the best pattern of choices, where the best pattern of choices is the one which realises the best distribution of values.*

Call this the *patterns of choices* account of the choiceworthiness of options.\(^{27}\)

Thus, an option \(o_1\) is choiceworthy over option \(o_2\) in a choice situation \(c\) when \(o_1\) fits within a better pattern of choices \(p_1\) than \(o_2\) does, such that \(p_1\) realises a distribution of values that is better (according to the account from Section 4) than that realised by the pattern of choices \(p_2\) in which \(o_2\) fits.\(^{28}\)

As a demonstration of this suggestion, I turn back to the two problem cases outlined in Section 5.1. The first of these highlighted a case where a great pleasure seemed choiceworthy, but the alternative option realised some degree of achievement, and, given \((D_1)\), the latter should be chosen given the *naive* account. The *patterns of choices* account, on the other hand, gives a different judgement as to the relative choiceworthiness of these two options. That is, if we assume that the achievements we would realise by, e.g., not going on vacation can be compensated for across a range of choices, then the distribution realised

\(^{26}\)I assume that the best available overall distribution is one that is not merely possible, but probable, at least if we stick to a feasible pattern of choices. This likely permits of some borderline cases, but I take it that these do not raise a serious issue (e.g. we can take a slightly-more unlikely pattern realising a slightly-better distribution and a slightly-more likely pattern realising a slightly-worse distribution to be on a par with each other and that options constituting them are, hence, equally choiceworthy).

\(^{27}\)Note that the attractiveness of this account seems to extend to monist theories insofar as the second problem case from Section 5.1 seems to concern instances of achievement even within a VPM framework.

\(^{28}\)I assume that if two options either fit in the same pattern or fit in patterns realising distributions that are on a par with each other, then the two options are equally choiceworthy.
by going on vacation is better than that realised by not doing so: through the
pattern in which the former fits it can realise an overall better distribution than that
in which the latter fits, as the two distributions will have about-equal realisations
of aspirative value but the former will have a higher experiential value than the
latter. The ability to explain this case is particularly important for our purposes, as
said case is an instance of a choice between a notable option (the holiday) and a
nominal one (the small achievement). In this case, then, the patterns of choices
account appears to give the correct result in selecting the notable option.

The second problem case raised the issue of a choice between an option which
directly realised a value and one which, though intuitively more choiceworthy than
the former, did so only in conjunction with options in other choice situations. For
the patterns of choices account, this is not a difficult case to explain. After all, ex
hypothesis, the achievement partially realised by the option in question is better
than the pleasures realised by other options. Thus, under the present approach,
we can say that the option that partly constitutes the achievement is more
choiceworthy than the alternative insofar as it fits in a better pattern of choices (i.e.
one realising the achievement in question) realising a better distribution than that
within which the alternative, pleasant option fits (i.e. one not realising the
achievement but only a collection of pleasures).

Thus, it appears that by combining the discontinuity-based account of the
comparative relations between distributions of values with the patterns of choices
account of the choiceworthiness of options, we can provide a viable account
explaining comparisons of instances of incommensurable values. This then
constitutes the first step towards the rejection of (P1) – the thesis that instances
of incommensurable values are incomparable. Hence, with the account of the
grounds of the normative relations between values presented in the next section,
we will have the means to reject the argument against the RP theory of well-being
articulated in section 1.
Section 6 – Normative Relations, Covering Values, and the Unifying Picture.

The above account of the normative relations between values seems to provide an adequate description of the comparative relations between options, bearers and distributions of value. However, it still faces a concern insofar as it does not explain what the grounds are for these normative relations. That is, given the incommensurability of the prudential dimensions of our RP theory of well-being, it is not clear in virtue of what such relations would hold between them. There is, after all, nothing about the values themselves which would imply such relations. This would be very suspicious indeed, either suggesting that the values are commensurable after all or that the approach is ultimately bankrupt. Therefore, in order for us to be able to reject (P1), we must be able to provide an account of the grounds of the normative relations between values.

In what follows, I will present a programmatic proposal of the grounds of such normative relations. In so doing, I will build upon a suggestive metaphor offered by Chang (2004), before turning to consider whether we should understand this in objective, subjective, or perhaps hybrid terms.

Section 6.1 – Comprehensive Values, Puzzles, and a Unifying Picture.

In her own influential account, Chang does not offer a formal characterisation of how the contributing values are considered and structured under a covering value. However, she appeals to a metaphor to suggest how we might do so: “[contributory] values, I believe, are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle” (2004, p17). That is, the contributory values remain separate, but create a larger whole in the way they fit together. The crux of the metaphor is in how to understand the manner

29This is unlike the task facing SP-VPM theories of establishing the relative weights of different goods. If they bear the same value, there is nothing theoretically problematic with doing so (e.g. see Fletcher 2016).
that these “fit together”. As Chang highlights, the way they do cannot be determined “simply in virtue of their own shapes interlocking in the right way” (p17). That is, the values cannot “put themselves together.” If they did, it would mean that the normative relations between them would already be determined by their own intrinsic properties – i.e. “their own shapes”. But this would suggest that, when they join to form the puzzle, they are reduced to a common super-value – i.e. by their own nature they are already analysable as parts of this whole.

Hence, Chang proposes a different way of conceptualising in virtue of what it is that these “jigsaw pieces” might come together. This is with reference to a “unifying picture”. That is, the jigsaw pieces do not come together purely in virtue of their intrinsic properties, but rather their place relative to one another is determined by their place within this picture. For example, if this picture represented a car, what place the front wheels have to a door is determined by the place each has in the overall picture, rather than any features intrinsic to the door or wheel on their own. Having established the place of each in the whole, they will then stand in a particular normative relation to each other.

In Chang’s account, it is each covering value which functions as such a unifying picture to structure the contributing values. However, as this is not quite sufficient for our purposes, the following section discusses how a unifying picture can aid our project.

Section 6.2 – A Proposal for a Unifying Picture.

I will limit my proposal to what might be a unifying picture for well-being. Though it may also be a viable starting point for a unifying picture more broadly, addressing this is not part of the present purpose.
The question of what unifying picture can serve to unify different dimensions of value separates into two: in virtue of what are these different dimensions in fact unified, and in virtue of what are they unified in the manner that they are (i.e. in the manner outlined in Section 4)? In the case of prudential values, the clear candidate that can answer both questions is the notion of a good life. To see this, consider the relation between the dimensions of value and this good life. This, I would suggest, is as parts to a whole: what it is for the life of a subject $s$ to go well is for the different prudential dimensions of $s$ to go well. With regards to the first question, then, the good life unifies the different dimensions of prudential value in virtue of each of these dimensions all being aspects of the life of the same subject (aspects with regards to which the subject’s life can go well or poorly). In virtue of this, these are not just any value properties unrelated to one another.

The second question – how the notion of a good life can ground the manner in which the different dimensions are related – requires greater elucidation than the first. To see how it can determine the way in which different dimensions are related, we can start with what we might call the ideal good life. This is a life wherein all values are fully realised. What this means can be understood simply in terms of the maximisation of each dimension, something that can be determined internally to each of these. For all dimensions to be fully realised, there must be a complete harmony between them, such that they do not come into conflict. Therefore, within this ideal good life we do not need to appeal to the normative relations between values.

However, these idealised conditions do not represent our lives. Our different dimensions are not in harmony and indeed very often come into conflict, such that we cannot fully realise all of them. The first reason why this is the case is the limited resources (e.g. of time) at our disposal to realise different values, such that we must opt to dedicate said resources to one over another. Thus, even if some dimensions are not in principle in conflict, they may be so in practice. Second,
realising some values may necessarily require forsaking realising others. For example, if achievement (aspirative value) requires the overcoming of difficulties (see Chapter 1 for Bradford’s 2015, 2016a, 2016b analysis), then realising aspirative value will require at least some experiential disvalue (or at least diminished positive value). Finally, our real-world conditions are themselves not ideal, such that even where dimensions are not truly in conflict, we cannot fully realise them. For instance, we may be physically harmed through no fault of our own, such that our experiential dimension, at least for some time, cannot be fully realised.

Therefore, we cannot base our unifying picture purely on this ideal good life: given its impossibility, acting as if it were possible is likely counterproductive (e.g. acting to realise experiential value as if it were not at least sometimes in conflict with other dimensions likely results in neglecting said dimensions). This is not to say that it cannot serve as a starting point in our discussion. That is, we can say that, confronted with this conflict between our dimensions of value, we must compromise on the ideal good life. What compromising means is that we must determine which values we must prioritise, and to what extent. This prioritisation is a normative relation of the kind discussed in Sections 4. As we saw there, this cannot take the form of trumping, where one value is prioritised in general. Rather, all we need is that the broader context of our distributions affects which value is to be prioritised and to what extent relative to others in a given choice situation – i.e. as described by the discontinuity-based account presented in Section 4. For example, in considering experientially bad circumstances, we might find that increasing overall realisation of experiential value up to a certain threshold is more beneficial than increasing any other dimension (i.e. $D_2$ above).

This suggestion, then, is that the notion of a good life provides a unifying picture for different prudential dimensions of value by (1) unifying these as constitutive parts of the same life, and (2) by structuring them in terms of the different, context-
dependent prioritisations between them, given the necessitated compromising on the notion of an *ideal* good life. This is merely a programmatic proposal, but one which at least indicates that some explanation along these lines is possible.

However, one aspect of this second level of explanation remains unanswered: whether these grounds of the normative relations between values are subjective or objective. This is explored in what follows.

Section 6.3 – Objective or Subjective Grounds.

Before exploring whether the grounds of the normative relations between values are subjective or objective, note that these terms are employed as specified in the introduction: objectivist normative relations are attitude-independent, while subjectivist relations are attitude-dependent. The picture presented in section 6.2 could be interpreted in either sense. That is, we can understand what happens when we compromise on the *ideal* of a good life to determine normative relations in one of two broad ways: the compromising *reveals to us* what priorities exist between values, making this a form of *discovery* (i.e., objective grounds); or, faced with having to compromise, we ourselves *determine* these priorities, and thus the normative relations between values (i.e., subjective grounds). The remainder of this section explores potential issues each interpretation presents and possible responses or mitigating considerations. Doing so will show that, whichever interpretation is preferred, whether it entails an objectivist, subjectivist, or hybrid account, comparisons between instances of different prudential values are possible and, hence, the RP theory of well-being is secure from the problem articulated in Section 1.

Starting with the objectivist interpretation of the grounds of these normative relations, one concern may be that this approach collapses RP’s plurality of values
into a single super-value, thus undermining the theory. That is, if these relations hold in virtue of the intrinsic nature of the values themselves, the critique may go, this would make them commensurable and thus reducible to a common super-value, supporting VPM rather than VPP. In responding to this worry, then, we must identify an alternative candidate that grounds the relevant normative relations. This objectivist candidate, then, must be something which can ground the way the aspects of a life, corresponding to the value-dimensions, come together in said life in the manner that they do (as explored in sections 4 and 5). A fruitful approach would plausibly be to appeal to some objective fact(s) about the subject in question. That is, the make-up of the subject structures the different dimensions, determining the normative relations between values. For example, it may be that for one subject, being miserable is particularly bad, such that it is better to not be miserable, no matter the quality of possible distributions of other values (i.e. $D_2$); but when the subject is not miserable, other concerns become more central to their life, particularly concerns regarding achievement. We might be doubtful of the viability of this approach if it required a commitment to a particular conception of human nature, rather than the subject-specific explanation offered here. This subject-specific account, however, can appeal to notions such as the self, as noted in the discussion of Eudaimonist theories in Chapter 3, which imply no such general commitments: the kind of self a subject is may be socially determined. If even this conception is unacceptable, though, the subjectivist approach may be more attractive.

The subjectivist approach, where the subject’s attitudes determine the normative relations, also faces some concerns. To begin with, it would be an odd outcome given our objectivist starting point (i.e. OLTS). In particular, we may worry that those who find the objectivist RM and RP theories attractive, would object to an account which ultimately grounds the comparative relations between instances of values on a subjectivist foundation. However, there are some reasons to think that objectivist theories of different prudential values are compatible with subjectivist
theories of the normative relations between them. Indeed, this appears to be Wolf’s (1992) contention, where she argues for pluralism as providing a mediating position between the extremes of objectivist and subjectivist views, and, in particular, its ability to resist the more radical relativistic tendencies of the latter. Under such an approach, the more problematic aspects of subjectivist theories – e.g. issues with grass-counter cases (e.g. Rawls 1971 – see Chapter 7 for details) – could be avoided, as what is valuable is accounted for in mind- or attitude-independent terms (i.e. not anything can be valuable). At the same time, subjects having agency over the comparative relations between bearers of different values allows us to mitigate problems facing objectivism – e.g. the problem of alienation (e.g. Sumner 1996 – see Chapter 7).

That being said, even if objectivist and subjectivist views are compatible in this way, the seemingly arbitrary nature of said normative relations could be a concern. After all, if determined by our attitudes, they could be anything (e.g. a subject may disregard the value of achievement whenever it conflicts with a bearer of experiential value). But note that not all normative relations seem legitimate. For instance, we might doubt that any kind of trumping relation within well-being can be legitimate. While this problem might be mitigated to an extent, (e.g., by positing a de facto homogeneity in our attitudes with regards to value relations – e.g. that we all endorse something like \((D_1)-(D_3)\)) ultimately, this is a bullet that subjectivists will have to bite.

The third option entails a hybrid view of the normative relations between values. This view is an attempt to retain the more attractive features of both the objectivist and subjectivist approach, while avoiding the more serious flaws of each. The suggestion is to start with the objectivist approach to determine what the values are, as well as to set constraints on the extremes of possible comparisons (i.e. that certain comparative relations cannot hold, no matter the subject’s attitudes). This latter aspect entails that, with respect to certain facts about the subject in
question, certain objective constraints are put in place. For instance, $D_2$ could function as a constraint where, due to certain facts about the subject, not being miserable must be constitutive of the best distribution. These constraints could then set a range of legitimate normative relations, such that any normative relation within these objectivist constraints is then rationally eligible to determine along subjectivist lines. For example, the constraint given by $D_2$ would allow the subject’s positive attitude towards *epistemic* value to determine a normative relation entailing that increasing *epistemic* value takes precedence over *aspirative* value, yet would not allow a normative relation where increasing *epistemic* value takes precedence over increasing *experiential* value if their experiential value is below a certain threshold. In comparing distributions regarding realisations of all values, then, subjects have agency over the comparative relations reigning between them where they do not contradict the objective constraints. This hybrid approach thereby avoids two potential worries: on the one hand, that the objectivist grounds cannot define nuanced enough relations for individual subjects and, on the other hand, that the subjectivist grounds permit implausible relations.

Whichever of these options is preferred – subjectivist, objectivist, or hybrid the compromise between them – it seems clear that there is nothing in principle problematic with grounding normative relations between values. This means that RP axiologies have the means of answering the challenge posed by the problem in Section 1 by articulating a viable comparativist model of instances of different values, hence rejecting (P1) from the argument – the incommensurability-incomparability connection.

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30Note that this suggestion is very similar to Chang’s (2002a) view of parity and how we should confront options that are on a par.
Conclusion.

In conclusion, this Chapter saw the articulation of a serious problem for the RP theory of well-being based on the thesis that instances of incommensurable values are incomparable while instances of different RP dimensions of prudential values appear to be comparable. A response in terms of denying the comparability of bearers of different prudential values was dismissed, and I instead focused on rejecting the incommensurability-incomparability connection. To do so, a two-level account of how different dimensions of prudential value can come to be structured by normative relations between values was provided. At the first level of explanation, I articulated a plausible account of what these normative relations are and of the comparative relations between instances of incommensurables that they specify. The comparative relations between *distributions* of values were articulated in terms of *discontinuity* relations, while an account of the choiceworthiness of options was developed based on this in conjunction with Andreou’s notion of patterns of choices. Finally, I provided a programmatic account of the grounds of these normative relations between values (the second level of explanation) which could be flexibly applied to both an objectivist and subjectivist interpretation, and indeed a hybrid one as well. This undermined the case presented for asserting the incomparability of instances of incommensurable values, thus undermining the argument against the RP theory of well-being.

Chapter 4 and 5 saw, respectively, the articulation of the radical pluralist (RP) theory of well-being as well as the discussion of, and answer to, the problem of incomparability facing such theories. In this chapter I posit and analyse argumentation in favour of the RP theory. First, I introduce two arguments for RP. However, these arguments fail to adequately argue for RP as value property monist (VPM) theories are able to explain the relevant phenomena (e.g. by embracing value holism). In the remainder of the chapter I discuss a different and more effective kind of argument: from conflict and regret.

This argument entails that there are cases of purely prudential choices where it is rational to regret lesser, forsaken goods, suggesting that what is at stake is a conflict between different values. This is due to the fact that, in order to explain the rationality of said regret, we must appeal to something like the uncompensability of different value properties. This is put forward in section 2. Section 3 presents three cases which, I argue, are purely prudential in nature and exhibit characteristics which, following section 2, cannot be explained within a VPM framework. To explain the cases at the root of this argument, we must appeal not only to different goods, but to different value properties: that these goods are good for us in different kinds of ways (and the relevant ills are bad for us in different kinds of ways). Sections 4 and 5 explore how VPM may respond to the argument from conflict and regret, e.g., by undermining the cases from section 3 or by arguing that VPM can also explain these. However, these responses are found to be lacking.
This, then, will constitute an important argument for RP, as well as demonstrating the theory’s explanatory potential and the possible new outlook it offers on our conception of our own lives and on prudential deliberation.
Section 1 – Three Initial Arguments for the Radical Pluralist Theory.

This section outlines two lines of arguments in support of an RP theory. However, these ultimately do not provide a conclusive case for RP as, though they provide compelling analyses of the cases at issue, radical monist (RM) theories also have some ways of accounting for them. The arguments are based on *akrasia* on the one hand and on small improvements and non-additive aggregations on the other. As I maintain both that these arguments do not provide conclusive evidence for RP and that there is a different kind of argument that does, this section only discusses each briefly.

Section 1.1 – Akrasia and weakness of will.

Authors such as Wiggins (1980) and Nussbaum (1986) maintain that phenomena such as *akrasia* can only and most appropriately be accounted for if we think two or more kinds of values are at stake in such choices. *Akrasia* refers to a phenomenon of weakness of will (or lack of control) where an agent both judges that an option A is better than an option B and nonetheless chooses B. The contention is that if VPM were true of the domain including the values borne by A and B, then choosing B would not only be a mistake, it would be incoherent. It would be equivalent to a subject being offered a choice between 100 pounds and 50 pounds and choosing the latter. Thus, the argument goes, under VPM the agent must intentionally choose an option they believe to be straightforwardly worse than the alternative; but this is not just a problematic deliberation (which *akrasia* is), but an incoherent one, thus ascribing too high a degree of irrationality to the agent. Moreover, this is particularly relevant in the case of well-being, where

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1 This fulfils Davidson’s (1970) criteria for *akrasia*: that B is chosen over A (1) intentionally, (2) while believing that both are open, and (3) while also believing that A is better than B.
cases of *akrasia* seem to be quite widespread: e.g. abandoning the pursuit of achievement for the sake of a lesser pleasure.

By contrast, a VPP theory explains *akrasia* in terms of the two options being good in different kinds of ways. This means that, even though A may be *all-things-considered* better than B, the forsaking of B’s value is not compensable by choosing A’s value. Therefore, there remains a reason for choosing B over A: the reason corresponding to the (magnitude of) value of B. Moreover, VPP can still account for *akrasia* being a *bad* choice insofar as A remains *all-things-considered* better than B.²

However, a number of authors (Stocker 1979, 1990; Hurka 1996; Chang 2015) have resisted this kind of argument. I will briefly outline some of the possible responses RM theories have at their disposal. First, Chang (2015) notes that all we need to avoid an ascription of irrationality to the agent is that they believe that there is a plurality of values. If these agents believe that something like VPP is true, then they would still be rational while VPM is true. The problem with this approach is that it is implausible to attribute to almost all agents a belief in VPP (or any value theory for that matter). The most we can say is that a belief is implicit in the structure of the interests, attitudes, and evaluations of these agents. But, if so, then, if anything, this constitutes a further argument for VPP, as it admits that VPP would be appropriate for capturing our ordinary evaluative talk and thought.

A second approach attempts to characterise the process of *akrasia* in different terms that are compatible with VPM. One way of doing so is by ascribing to the agent a reversal in their original comparative evaluations: at the time of choosing B over A, they have come to believe that B is better than (or equal to) A (e.g. Audi 1990; Arpley 2000). Though this risks making *akrasia* entirely unproblematic,

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²I discuss the notions of cancelling, outweighing, and double-counting upon which this argument relies in section 2.
which goes too far, there are a few ways of substantiating this picture with an account of what is objectionable about akratic deliberations. For example, Holton (2009) offers an alternative explanation of what is problematic about akratic choices in terms of the agent violating their prior intention to choose A over B (which was likely based on the prior judgement that A is better than B). This allows the agent to reevaluate their options and still be akratic. Alternatively, or in conjunction with this, VPM theories could appeal to Bratman’s (1999) discussion of temptation. Here he identifies what is problematic about akratic deliberations as the fact that they are not responsive to the agent’s own future regret in their choice (e.g. if the agent goes to the pub instead of staying in they will later regret this). This would help explain what is problematic about akrasia (we are not responsive to reasons to believe that we would regret our choice) under VPM, without having to attribute any incoherence to the agent’s choice (at the time of choice, we believe B to be better than A).3

A different approach appeals to the Aristotelian analysis of akrasia in terms of a lack of control, where the agent acts against their better judgement due to some opposing impulse or emotion (i.e. as opposed to the enkratic agent who resists this impulse and the virtuous agent who does not experience it).4 We can understand these as quite mundane emotions or desires, the kind on which our ordinary decision-making and evaluations are based (e.g. Nussbaum 2001), which present the situation under a new light.5 Furthermore, as Andreou (2014) notes with regards to temptation, it seems that in many cases of akrasia the better option is partly constitutive of a pattern of choices realising a vague project or end (Tenenbaum 2010; Tenenbaum & Raffman 2012): e.g. (a) what constitutes the

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3 Andreou (2014) highlights a key issue with this suggestion: the fact that future regret can be avoided by rationalising our bad choices, even in cases of akrasia (e.g. “I didn’t really want to publish that paper…”).
4 Though without appealing to a powerful passion, which does not seem present in most cases of akrasia (Andreou 2006) and risks framing akrasia as involuntary.
5 e.g. by introducing a problematic discount function (Ainslie 2001) giving too little considerations to future well-being.
accomplishment of our goal is not clear (writing the paper; having it published; having it published in a good journal), and (b) exactly what actions are necessary for its accomplishment is not clear (working through the evening each day of that week, six days, or five). As, therefore, a number of different patterns of choices (Andreou 2011) could realise the same goal, the way temptation may influence our choices is by presenting a pattern where we do give in to temptation (i.e. choose B over A) may still be one where we accomplish our project. This would explain both why akrasia involves a problematic deliberation (e.g. going out puts the project at risk due to giving in to faulty considerations) as well as why it does not attribute any implausibly high degree of irrationality to the agent (we still choose the subjectively better option).

As a final point, not only does VPM seem able to answer the charge against it, but it may well be in a similar boat to VPP. That is, something that has been overlooked so far is the fact that, even if under VPP an agent is acting for a reason in choosing the lesser option, they still choose an option which they believe is all-things-considered worse. Thus, VPP must still explain why the agent chooses B despite judging that A is better than B. Therefore, VPP also seems to require something like the above account in order to explain akrasia.

Section 1.2 – Arguments from comparisons.

The second argument for RP that I will consider proceeds from cases of comparisons which suggest that two (or more) incommensurable values are involved: the argument from small improvements and the argument from the non-additive aggregation of different goods. Though these involve slightly different

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6Note that Tenenbaum and Raffman identify another three ways in which a project can be vague.
considerations, they remain closely related, and, moreover, face the same
defeating objection.

Starting with the argument from small improvements, this is employed by different
authors for slightly different purposes (Sousa 1974; Griffin 1986; Chang 2002b).
Here I focus on Chang's use of the argument, which she employs to argue for a
fourth value relation: parity. Insofar as parity only holds between instances of
incommensurable values, showing that it holds between two bearers or options
would show that their values are incommensurable; and insofar as
incommensurable values are irreducibly different, this would in turn support VPP
(and thus RP in our case).

Imagine a case where a subject s must choose between an instance of pleasure
x and an instance of understanding y. Appealing to an example discussed by
Stocker (1990), take these to be, respectively, the pleasure of sitting on the beach
under the sun and the understanding gained by going to a talk one afternoon.
These are, let us assume, neither better nor worse than the other (i.e. either equal
or on a par). If we increase the value of sitting on the beach by, for example,
slightly increasing our stay there (by a small amount – e.g. 15 minutes), and thus
of the pleasure involved, this second pleasure x+ is better than x (even if only
marginally). If x and y are equal and x+ is better than x, it should follow that x+ is
better than y. However, it would seem that, on reflection, this is not the case.
Increasing our stay on the beach by such a small amount of time (and thus of
pleasure) does not make it better than the lecture (though there may be some
greater amount that would). If this judgement is correct, however, this means that
y cannot have been equal to x, otherwise y would have been worse than x+.
Therefore, y must be on a par with x (as well as with x+); and thus y and x (as well
as x+) must be the bearers of incommensurable values; hence, their values are

\[\text{i.e. a fourth, comparative relation holding between instances of incommensurable values with a non-zero and non-biased difference between them (Chang 2016, see Chapters 4 and 5 and Appendix 1).}\]
irreducibly different, making VPP true of the domain in question (i.e. prudential value).

There are a few issues we might raise at this stage with this argument. However, I will set these to a side here and discuss the most important objection to this argument in Section 1.3.8

The second argument is based on Sarch’s (2012) discussion of the non-additive aggregations of the value of different goods. Sarch starts by noting that the standard and most intuitive way of understanding how the value of different goods (and ills) is aggregated is in terms of additivism: “the intrinsic value of a whole comprised of x and y (where x and y do not overlap) equals the sum of the intrinsic value of x and the intrinsic value of y” (Fletcher 2010, p162).9 This would mean that, under a minimal SP OLT with pleasure and achievement as goods (and pain and failure as ills), the total value of some subject s’s life or period therein is given by the net value of pleasure over pain plus the total net value of achievement over failure.

The implication of this is that the distribution of value with regards to these goods should not matter to the value of the whole. After all, if the value of the whole is a sum of the parts, the relative value of the parts does not matter if they add to the same numerical value. However, as Sarch argues, this does not in fact seem to be the case when it comes to well-being. He finds that, in comparing cases involving different distributions of two different goods, their distribution is important

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8The most important objection to this argument that does not affect the next concerns the reliability of the comparative judgements involved. In particular, it concerns the reliability of our attributions of value. As assigning a precise value to bearers (e.g. Hausman 2015; Alexandrova 2017), the comparison between y and both x and x+ may be rough not in Parfit’s (1984) or Griffin’s (1986) technical use of the term (which is analogous to Chang’s notion of imprecisely cardinal comparisons – see Chapter 5, section 3), but rather in the sense that they are an approximation, permitting of enough of a margin of error that we cannot be sure which, if either, of x or x+ is equal to y.

9Though spelled out in terms of value in general, I will focus on prudential value specifically here.
in determining the value of the whole. Thus, he finds that an aggregate of pleasure and achievement with equal amounts of each, other things being equal, will rank higher than an aggregate of the two with the same total (i.e. sum of the two) but an unequal distribution. That is, an aggregate of pleasure worth 50 and achievement worth 50 (totalling 100), will rank higher than an aggregate of pleasure worth 75 and achievement worth 25 (also totalling 100). For example, compare the lives of two subjects, Ray and Riotta. Ray has had a productive civil service career in which he has accomplished quite significant goals, but without sacrificing their enjoyment of their work, family, and hobbies, such that both components contribute equally to the overall value of their life. In contrast, Riotta has had a similar career, except that they have dedicated much more time to their career than Ray has. As a consequence, Riotta has obtained more achievement than Ray, but far less pleasure (though it is still net positive). Sarch argues that we would rank Ray’s life higher than Riotta’s, even if we assume that the sum of the values of pleasure and achievement in each life is equal (i.e. 50 and 50 for Ray and 75 and 25 for Riotta). But if so, then the additivist account of aggregation is wrong about well-being.\(^{10}\)

From this we can formulate an argument for RP. That is, the kind of non-additivist result above is what we should expect under RP at the all-things-considered level of evaluation, where instances of different value properties are compared. That is, as we saw in Chapter 5, distributions where the realisation of one of the values is comparatively low relative to the realisation of another tend to be all-things-considered worse than distributions where the realisation of value is more balanced. We can understand this kind of outcome as being due to the uncompensability of one value in terms of another (see Chapter 4, section 3.3): as one dimension being poorly realised is not compensated by another being highly realised, increasing the realisation of one dimension while ignoring that of

\(^{10}\)Sarch goes on to discuss two alternative models of aggregation – the Threshold and Discount/Inflation theories – but these fall outside of the scope of our discussion so I will leave this to a side.
another leads to diminishing returns at the all-things-considered level of comparison, such that it would be all-things-considered better to realise dimensions of value in a more balanced way.

Section 1.3 – Objection: value holism and alternative explanation.

Both of the arguments above face a common objection. This is that VPM theories can also explain these phenomena by appealing to value holism (e.g. Moore 1903; Dancy 2004). That is, discussions of well-being tend to assume atomism, which I will here understand, following Brown (2007) and Fletcher (2010), as the conjunction of invariabilism and of additivism. The latter has been defined above, and we can understand invariabilism as the position that “for any x, the intrinsic value of any valuable x is the same in any context in which it appears” (Fletcher 2010, p162). Thus, under atomism, the value of a certain amount of a good (e.g. pleasure) will remain constant across contexts, and the value of an aggregate of different instances of the same good (e.g. different pleasures) or of instances of different goods (e.g. pleasure and achievement) will equal the sum of the value of its constitutive parts (e.g. the sum of the value of the pleasure and of the achievement).

By contrast, value holism denies either or both of variabilism and additivism, therefore asserting either variabilism (e.g. Dancy 2004) or non-additivism (e.g. Moore 1903). Each is simply the negation of its counterpart. Thus, variabilism asserts that whether something is valuable, or to what extent it is, may vary with context (e.g. if we think that malicious pleasures are not good for us or indeed bad for us – see Chisholm 1986 and Zimmerman 1999); non-additivism, on the other hand, asserts that the value of a whole may differ from the sum of the value of its
constituents (e.g. pleasant understanding being better than the sum of the understanding and pleasure involved).\(^{11}\)

I will not delve here into which of the two forms of holism is preferable to the other as either will serve the VPM theorist well in this context.\(^{12}\) That is, by abandoning \textit{atomism}, VPM theories can explain both the case of small improvements and of non-additive aggregations. Starting with the latter, if the VPM theorist is prepared to embrace \textit{value holism} (at least in its Moorean, \textit{non-additivist} form), then they should be able to resit this argument. After all, Sarch’s argument only shows that \textit{additivism} is false.

Turning to the argument from small improvements, there are two ways in which, under \textit{value holism}, a small improvement in value may \textit{not} constitute an overall improvement. First, given the context, the increased quantity (or quality) of the bearers of value may have no added value over the original (\textit{variabilism}); second, the increased quantity (or quality) of the bearers of value may not affect the overall value of the whole (\textit{non-additivism}). Thus, to return to an earlier example, the added pleasure of spending more time at the beach may not constitute greater overall value, either because, in the context of the whole pleasant evening, the extra fifteen minutes do not bear any added value (i.e. \textit{variabilism}) or because adding fifteen minutes as a part to the whole of the evening does not alter the total value (i.e. \textit{non-additivism}). As a consequence, the slightly longer stay at the beach may not in fact constitute a small improvement \textit{in value}, meaning that it is possible that the original and longer stay are both \textit{equal} in value. If so, there is no basis for concluding that they are on a par and, therefore, incommensurable.

\(^{11}\)Hurka (1998) understands this as the whole itself bearing a certain value (or disvalue) on top of that borne by its parts.

\(^{12}\)For further information, see Hurka (1998), Brown (2007), and Halliday (2013) for defences of \textit{invariabilism}. On the other hand, Korsgaard (1993), Dancy (2004), and Fletcher (2009, 2010) argue for rejecting \textit{invariabilism}. 

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Thus, VPM is able to resist both of these arguments by appealing to *value holism*. However, some of the drawbacks to doing so should be noted before moving on. First, by embracing *value holism*, VPM must abandon some of the simplicity which should have been its main rationale over VPP theories. Moreover, confrontation with RP has moved VPM onto positions that are suspiciously similar, at least in their outcomes, to VPP, as we have seen in section […] (Chang, 2015, highlights a similar problem with regards to value qualities). Finally, it is not clear that VPM can explain *why* something like *value holism* is true, while, as noted in Section 1.2, VPP theories such as RP have the ability to do so.
Section 2 – The Argument from Conflict and Regret.

I will now turn to a stronger argument for RP, based on cases of conflict among our dimensions of value. As I will argue, VPM seems unable to explain cases where, even after we have established which of two options is all-things-considered best, the reason in favour of the worse option seems to persist. The way this is usually understood concerns how the agent ought to feel about or otherwise experience their choosing the all-things-considered better option. In particular, these are cases where it seems to be rational to regret the forsaken option, even when we are certain that it was the worse of the two.\(^{13}\)

In this section I present and analyse two cases discussed in the literature, the problem they pose for VPM theories, as well as the VPP explanation offered. However, these cannot, in their current form, support an RP theory of well-being for a few reasons (see section 2.3). In response, I will outline requirements examples must satisfy in order to support the case for an RP theory of well-being.

Section 2.1 – Cases of conflict and regret.

The first case I will discuss is articulated by Stocker (1990). In this, a subject is faced with a choice between, on the one hand, spending their afternoon at the beach, enjoying the sun and a refreshing swim, and, on the other, spending it engaged in inquiry attending a lecture. This, Stocker argues, is a hard choice, but not just in the sense that we do not know which option is best. Instead, the choice is a hard one in the sense that, even if we are sure that the afternoon on the beach is the better option, it would still be rational to regret not having gone to the lecture.

As regret is apt in response to a loss of some kind, then rationally regretting missing the lecture, i.e., the lesser option, must still constitute a loss of some kind.

A second example called Crash Dive is raised by Khan (2011) and is more or less exemplary of many cases of moral conflicts discussed in the literature. In this scenario a submarine captain is forced to make a terrible decision. While the submarine has resurfaced to make some important repairs, it is spotted by enemy planes, which are now approaching to torpedo it. The captain must quickly decide whether to crash-dive or not. Doing so will save the submarine and crew from the attack; however, a few of the crew are still on the outside performing repairs and will die in the dive. On the other hand, if the captain refuses to crash-dive, all of the crew, including those performing the repairs, will die. It seems clear that what the captain ought to do is to crash-dive – or, at least, it is better for him to crash-dive than not to. However, at the same time it seems rational for the captain to regret or experience shame or guilt with respect to the action he has taken. Indeed, as Murphy (2001) points out, it seems not only permissible, but obligatory for the captain to experience an emotion of this kind, at least insofar as, if he did not experience it, there would be something reprehensible about this.

There are a number of similar cases discussed in the literature, such as Stocker’s Dirty Hands (1990), Nussbaum’s detailed treatment of Greek tragedies (1986), and a number of scenarios discussed by Williams (e.g. Jim and the protesters, Williams 1973b, Gauguin and Anna Karenina, Williams 1981b). In what follows, this type of case is analysed, and it will be shown that VPM cannot account for the rationality of the regret involved.

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14 The difference with regards to which of these emotions is apt depends on the exact nature of their target. Shame or guilt are responses to having done something wrong or morally dubious. As we are discussing responses to one’s own well-being, I will only discuss regret.

15 I will leave open the question of whether his experiencing such emotions is part of how he performs the original crash-diving action or it is part of a different action or object of evaluation.

16 Note that Nussbaum’s discussion is not merely concerned with Greek tragedies as supplying contemporary philosophy with interesting scenarios, but as offering their own complex ethical outlook.
Section 2.2 – Analysis and the case against VPM.

If we follow Stocker (1990), whether regret is rational depends on whether it is appropriate in a given situation, i.e., when it involves a loss. The problem in accounting for the rationality of regret in the above cases, however, is that, as the agent chooses the better of the two options, it is not clear what loss is incurred. As Stocker (1990) and Gibbard (1990) put it, for a theory to be able to explain the rationality of this regret, it must be that there remains in the situation an uncancelled consideration in favour of the lesser option. Thus, in the cases discussed above, though the reasons in favour of the worse option were defeated by those in favour of the better option, the former reasons remain in consideration at, in Stocker’s (1990) terms, a second, non-action-guiding level of evaluation (i.e. they are double-counted – Stocker, 1990). For a theory to explain the rationality of regret in cases of conflict, then, it must be able to account for this kind of uncancelled reason; in turn, to explain this, it must be able to point to something about the forsaken option that is both evaluatively-significant and absent in the chosen option.

The problem for VPM is that it cannot point to something of the sort: the chosen option has all the value present in the forsaken option and more. For example, if spending the afternoon on the beach is worth 25 units of value and spending it at the lecture is worth 20 units, then there is nothing of value about the lecture that is absent in going to the beach. Thus, VPM does not seem to have the resources to posit something evaluatively-significant about the forsaken option which is

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17. i.e. this regret implies no belief that we should have acted differently, at least at the all-things-considered level.
18. As the magnitudes of value borne by these options are commensurable under VPM, any difficulties in expressing said magnitudes in terms of a single unit do not bear on this point, as these must be in principle expressible in terms of a common unit.
absent in the chosen option, while still being worse than the chosen option. There are some potential VPM responses available, but I will discuss these at length in sections 4 and 5, so I will grant VPM’s inability to account for these cases for the time being.

In contrast to a VPM framework, a VPP axiology has the resources necessary to explain the rationality of regret in cases such as those introduced above. The reason for this is that, so long as the goods involved are bearers of different kinds of values, gaining one cannot compensate forsaking the other. This is because one of the features of a VPP axiology is the \textit{uncompensability} of instances of one value property in terms of the instances of another (see Chapter 4). Thus, we cannot compensate losses of \textit{experiential} prudential value in terms of gains of \textit{epistemic} prudential value. Therefore, when presented with a choice between an instance of \textit{experiential} value and one of \textit{epistemic} value, where the former is \textit{all-things-considered} better than the latter, it remains rational to regret not choosing the instance of \textit{epistemic} value. This is because, though the instance of \textit{epistemic} value is less good than that of \textit{experiential} value, it is good in a different kind of way. As a consequence, the gain in \textit{experiential} value would not compensate the loss (or lack) in \textit{epistemic} value.

To clarify this, let us turn back to Stocker’s example. Unlike in the VPM analysis of such a case, the afternoon at the beach and the lecture are not bearers of different magnitudes of the same kind of value, but of magnitudes of different kinds of value. Therefore, they are not, respectively, worth 25 and 20 units of value, but, say, 25 units of \textit{experiential} value and 20 units of \textit{epistemic} value. This means that if the subject chooses the former she does not have a gain in 25 units of value, but a gain of 25 units of \textit{experiential} value \textit{and} 0 units of \textit{epistemic} value. Thus, in contrast to the VPM interpretation, choosing to attend the lecture, though worse than going to the beach, involves something that is absent in the latter: 20 units of \textit{epistemic} value.
We can now see how VPP accounts for the rationality of regretting not choosing the worse option (i.e. going to the lecture in Stocker’s example): the regret is directed towards the loss in a kind of value which was not present in the option that is chosen (or, at least, is present to a lesser extent). This loss, then, remains uncompensated and *uncancelled*. This, then, is the proper object of regret present under VPP which accounts for the rationality of said emotion in the cases discussed. This also helps VPP insightfully characterise these cases as ones where two or more values are in *conflict*. This allows us to understand these situations and deliberate about them in a different kind of way compared to that suggested by VPM: not as a choice between different magnitudes of the same value, where the main concern is determining which magnitude is cardinally greater, but as a choice which is fundamentally about which value to prioritise and which one to sacrifice in that particular situation.

Before continuing, we should note that the successful VPP explanation of these cases is particularly problematic for VPM. This is because they highlight how something like *uncompensability* and the possibility of genuine conflict is necessary to adequately explain the cases in question. But if so, then VPM does not have much of a chance to respond to this challenge, as it does not have any resources of this kind at its disposal. This means that, if it can be shown that there are cases of *prudential conflict*, then we will have a powerful argument for characterising well-being in terms of a VPP, and thus RP, framework. In section 3 I will present three scenarios that I will argue are precisely instances of prudential conflict.
Section 2.3 – Potential Pitfalls and Requirements on Cases.

Before outlining these cases, there are some potential pitfalls in their formulations which must be identified.

The first and simplest point is that both of the goods (or ills) discussed in these examples must be clearly prudential. If one of the options involved some non-prudential value (e.g. moral or aesthetic), welfare VPM theories could dismiss the argument against them: though the options would involve rational regret and show that there is a conflict between different values, it would only support the much less controversial position that VPP is true more broadly (e.g. that moral and prudential value are irreducibly distinct). In particular, many cases discussed in the literature (e.g. Williams’s, 1973b, Jim and the protesters case) are either entirely or partly moral in character. Therefore, entirely new cases must be formulated.

Second, we must ensure that the regret elicited is not ascribable to a change in our judgment about which option was best. After all, rationally regretting an overall loss in value compared to the alternative can be easily explained by the monist. Therefore, the pluralist has to appeal to cases which cannot be interpreted in this way. Furthermore, providing a number of such cases should help diffuse this suspicion. I will thus discuss three such scenarios in the next section.

Finally, we might worry that, even according to VPP, in some cases of an apparent value conflict within a choice, regret may not be warranted. That is, if we follow Andreou (2011) in considering values to be realised across ranges of choices, then regret is likely unwarranted and irrational in the vast majority of cases where conflicts between values obtain in an individual choice. This is because regret is appropriate in the case of an uncompensated loss. But, most often, we can compensate a loss accepted within one choice across a range of choices. To
return to Stocker’s example, if we don’t go to the beach today, we could go another day. Much the same goes for the talk. This is true even if these specific activities are no longer available to us. We can, after all, likely do other things which realise the same kinds of values. For instance, we could take a warm bath, read a good book, or go to a museum. If so, regret might not be appropriate as, instead of regretting the loss or lack in our original choice, we can actively go about compensating it. This will undermine reliance on Stocker’s example from earlier, motivating the formulation of alternative cases which do not encounter such an issue: i.e. cases where, for whatever reason, we cannot compensate the loss or lack involved in the original choice across future choices.

This, however, should not be too difficult to address, as not all choice situations are such that one or both of the values realised by the options involved can be compensated across future choices. We can identify three broad kinds of cases which will conform to this requirement: (a) an instance of a value which is so fundamental to the value’s realisation that missing this opportunity is irreparable; (b) instead of particular choices, we can compare patterns of choices as a whole; (c) a tragic choice where which option we choose will limit our future options, such that we will never be able to realise the value whose bearer we did not choose. These three kinds of cases are respectively discussed in the following section. If we find that we would regret the lesser, foregone good in such scenarios, this provides a solid argument for conceiving of well-being as a VPP and, hence, RP domain.
Section 3 – Examples of Conflict.

Section 3.1 – Example of Kind (a).

This example follows the format of (a) from the previous section and is based on Stocker’s (1990) beach scenario, except in two regards: first, instead of involving a choice between pleasure and understanding it will present a choice between friendship and understanding, as pleasure is too easy to compensate across future choices; second, both options are particularly significant in realising their respective dimensions of value, again so that they cannot be easily compensated across future choices.

Thus, imagine the following example. Our subject, Alice, is a Literature student specialising in the work of Virginia Woolf. One evening, she has the opportunity to attend an important lecture by an eminent lecturer on a new topic in her field (e.g., the permeability of the private and the public in the abrupt narrative shifts between the consciousness of characters inhabiting the same space). Moreover, she will have the opportunity to speak to the lecturer after the talk, which will greatly help her understanding of the topic.\(^{19}\) However, a dear friend, Beatrice, is coming to town on the same day. Alice and Beatrice have not seen each other in a long time and likely will not again for the foreseeable future. They have been trying to stay in contact and maintain their friendship, but its long-distance nature is making this increasingly difficult, and if they do not spend the evening together, Alice is afraid that she will lose this important relationship.\(^{20}\)

Thus, Alice must choose between these two options – attending the lecture and talking to the lecturer on the one hand, and spending the evening with Beatrice on the other. Though which option is best might not be immediately clear, let us

\(^{19}\)Alternatively, this could be an aspiratively notable option for the purposes of networking in her field.

\(^{20}\)Let us assume that it is 1985 and there is no video calling technology.
assume that, at least for Alice, spending the evening with her friend is definitely *all-things-considered* better for her. She therefore meets up with Beatrice, and they spend a fantastic evening together, securing the friendship going forward. However, it would seem to me not only that we can expect Alice to experience some regret for missing the lecture, but that this regret is entirely rational. Indeed, insofar as we hold fixed her commitment to the study of Woolf, she would be criticisable for *not* regretting this, as this suggests she is not truly committed to what she says and takes herself to be (i.e. she would be *inauthentic*, one way or the other, if she did not regret her decision).

This suggests that choosing the more beneficial option still involves an uncompensated *loss* with regards to the foregone realisation. But, if the two options realised the same kind of value, we would expect there not to be any such *loss*. By contrast, a VPP axiology would allow such a loss, as, within it, the two options are good for Alice in different ways, such that meeting Beatrice involves an uncompensated *epistemic* loss or lack compared to going to the lecture. Thus, if it is rational for Alice to regret having missed the lecture (and meeting the lecturer), this indicates that the choice involves a conflict between more than one irreducible value property. Therefore, this suggests that an RP theory of well-being is correct.

*Section 3.2 – Example of type (b)*

The second example is inspired by Raz’s (1986) comparison of a musical and legal career and conforms to the framework of (b), which asks us to evaluate two different lives and, therefore, patterns of choices, thus avoiding the problem presented by considerations of future choices compensating for an individual choice.
The first life is one where the subject realises, through their career, a number of their most important projects (i.e. it is a life rich with achievement). However, in order to do so they have to forego developing their friendships and other meaningful personal relations. The second life is one where the subject has a modest and unfulfilling career, and otherwise does not pursue or attain significant goals. They choose this, though, for the sake of pursuing and maintaining a rich social and interpersonal life. Thus, the first life is rich in achievement but poor in friendship, while the second is rich in friendship but poor in achievement. Other things, we can imagine, are similar between them, in that they both attain comparable understanding and enjoy to a similar degree their quite different lives. Both subjects also choose said lives knowing, to some extent, what they involve. Finally, for simplicity, let us also assume that no matter which life we choose, the forsaken good remains at a net positive. That is, neither life involves some particularly bad aspect.

Once again it seems that, whichever life we think is better than the other, it would be rational for the agent to occasionally feel regret for not pursuing the other course of action, e.g., while talking to their successful friend. Moreover, VPP explains the case neatly, as the first life involves realising the subject's aspirative dimension of value at the expense of their social dimension, while the second involves realising their social dimension at the expense of their aspirative one. Therefore, this example also supports an RP theory of well-being.

*Section 3.3 – Example of kind (c)*

The third example, based on the last years of Kafka and Freud’s life, involves a tragic choice, conforming to the framework of (c). A subject, Josef P, is diagnosed with a painful terminal disease. It will take him a long time to die of it, and the pain
involved will be the only harmful symptom of the disease while he lives. However, Josef can take a strong painkiller which, when administered in the right dose, completely eliminates any unpleasant experience. Unfortunately, this drug also severely impairs his rational capacity such that he will be able to realise neither his epistemic nor aspirative dimensions (perhaps his social dimension would also be affected). Moreover, Josef is in the process of completing an important part of his life's work, which he would be able to complete (e.g. Kafka finished editing “A Hunger Artist” while bedridden shortly before his death) if he did not take the painkillers.

The choice, then, is between accepting this pain for the sake of a great achievement (aspiratively good for Josef) and avoiding the pain while forsaking his ability to complete an important project (assuming that this is sufficient for failure). We might think that, one way or another, there is a clear best choice, and by altering details of the scenario it seems clear that we can affect our judgment (e.g. how altered Josef's faculties would be, how bad the pain, how long does he have, how significant is the goal he is forsaking). However, whichever Josef chooses, the option he does not take does seem regrettable. This, once again, supports the case for characterising prudential value in terms of VPP.

However, we might object that if Josef P takes the painkiller, he will not be in a position to regret the foregone realisation of his epistemic or aspirative dimension. However, this does not necessarily mean that it is not regrettable. The painkiller’s effects are not permanent and do not cause permanent cognitive impairments. Not only does this mean that Josef is still in a position to come to regret the choice (i.e. when the effects of the painkiller cease), but also that we can make a slight change to the scenario to address this worry. We can, for example, add that in between doses, Josef’s rational capacities are restored without any attendant pain. These episodes of clarity do not last enough for Josef to pursue his project, but
do last enough for him to experience regret as to the lack involved in the choice he has taken.

There is a different way of understanding this concern which is not addressed by this response. This is that, while under the influence of the drug, Josef is not the kind of subject to whom the epistemic and aspirative dimensions apply. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, not all prudential subjects can stand in all of the prudential value relations posited by this RP theory of well-being. For example, if we accept that animals are prudential subjects and that they can be benefited by pleasures but not by achievements, this is because the experiential but not the aspirative dimensions of value apply to them. If so, we might suspect that losing his rational capacities will not be harmful for a drugged Josef because he is not the kind of subject that can be harmed by failure. Thus, choosing to take the painkillers also means choosing to become the kind of subject for whom not pursuing their project is not bad for them.

However, this form of the objection can also be answered. First, its premise is at least questionable. Just because Josef is not the kind of subject that can take on goals and pursue them appropriately at a particular time, it does not mean that he is not such a subject in general. After all, many human subjects are frequently incapable of achievement (e.g. when inebriated or asleep), but that doesn’t mean that achievement is not good for them (i.e. because they are capable of it in general). Moreover, it is still true that Josef is the kind of subject who can come to understand and achieve things – he just needs to stop taking the painkiller. Moreover, even if he does not stop taking the painkillers, if we accept the amendment from the previous paragraph, Josef still is lucid and rational in the moments between doses. It is thus still true that Josef is the kind of subject for

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21 Note that Lin (2018) interprets these cases differently – i.e. in terms of being unable to obtain a good.
22 I do not mean to imply that being capable of achievement is sufficient for also being the kind of subject for whom achievement is good – more in Chapter 7.
whom things can go well and poorly *aspiratively*. At least in these moments, then, he is harmed by his choice.$^{23}$

$^{23}$I am assuming that he is *numerically* the same subject as the Josef that is under the effects of the painkillers.
Section 4 – Two Objections to the Argument for the Radical Pluralist Theory.

This section examines two potential objections to the above argument to which VPM might appeal. First, they may argue that regret is not justified in the cases discussed, perhaps even under a VPP axiology. Second, they can attempt to find a way of accounting for regret under VPM. While the first argument will be rejected in section 4.1, the second approach, introduced in section 4.2, does present a serious problem for the VPP interpretation of conflict and regret. This problem will be refined in section 4.3 and addressed in section 5.

Section 4.1 – First objection.

The first line of questioning, then, is to maintain that regret is not rational in these cases. Something like this is argued by Klocksiem (2011) as a possible monist response to pluralist arguments from regret. The basis for this claim is that there should be nothing to regret in situations where we chose the best option. After all, the foregone good was not, ex hypothesis, as good for us as what we chose, so we are, overall, better off than if we had chosen differently. Regretting not choosing the worse option does not seem rational.

The first way of taking this is merely as a practical recommendation. That is, it would be better for us not to wallow in regret. Not only would regretting our choices, even when we chose well, distract us from other activities and projects, but insofar as regret is unpleasant, it is itself harmful. However, VPM cannot rely on this approach. First, the emotional demands of rational regret are not as onerous as it suggests. Hurka (1996, p556) argues, for example, that the best way of understanding the rationality of regret is in terms of a “proportional” view: we

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24Note that it is not clear which approach best characterises Klocksiem’s (2011) response.
should regret the foregone good proportionally to its value relative to the value of
the good gained, and similarly take pleasure in the latter proportionally. Thus,
even when we regret a foregone, lesser good, we are not wallowing in this regret,
and our emotional state with regards to the choice will in fact be overall one of
satisfaction. Second, the sense of rationality appealed to in this interpretation of
the objection is not the same as the one claimed by VPP. That is, the claim is that
it is rational to regret the foregone good because said regret is appropriate: it
correctly evaluates or otherwise interprets the case. As we saw earlier, this is a
matter of having suffered a loss. By contrast, this interpretation of the objection is
concerned with the sense of rationality in which it is rational to promote our own
welfare. It is therefore not the same sense as that in which the pluralist claims that
regret is rational.

We must then understand this objection in a different way. This is, that it is not
justified to regret not taking the worse option because there is no loss involved in
this choice. But this form of the objection is also problematic. On one
understanding of this, the objection must rely on a claim that there is in fact
nothing absent in the best option which was present in the worse one – or at least
nothing that is not compensated. But this is question-begging. It assumes that
“worse” is precisely a matter of a single value. Instead, the objection must be
making a claim about our intuitions regarding these cases: that, at least on
reflection, we do not think that regretting the lesser good is rational. But this does
not in fact seem right. As we saw, it does seem rational to regret the foregone
option. This line of response, then, seems to fail at an early stage, and VPM
should avoid pursuing it.
Section 4.2 – Second objection: a first formulation.

The second line of argument against the case from conflict and regret is to accept that regret in the discussed cases is rational, but find a way to accommodate this within an SP-VPM conception of well-being. This, however, will require a serious effort on part of monists. The first line of argument is to suggest that in the discussed cases, it is merely rational to regret not having more (Klocksiem 2011, Heathwood 2015). Thus, what we regret is, under this proposal, not the foregone good over the chosen good, but rather not having the foregone good and the good we already have. For example, Alice regrets not being able to meet up with Beatrice and attend the lecture – not just the latter over the former. However, this is not an appropriate interpretation of the example.

Regret may be rational in cases of this kind, but only if having both goods is a real option. Otherwise there would be no sense of a loss towards which regret could be appropriately directed. This is why discussions concerning conflict and regret are conducted in terms of “practicable options” (e.g. Stocker 1990 and Hurka 1996). The question is then whether the examples at the basis of the argument for RP are the sort in which we really could have had both goods. Though there are likely some situations of this sort, what they imply is actually that we have misunderstood the choice situation. We saw it as a choice between A and B, when it was actually a choice between A, B, and C, where C is the uncontroversially better option bearing all the value of A and all the value of B (in cases of disvalue, C would bear none of the disvalues of either). But this does not seem to be the case with the examples of rational regret with which we are concerned with. For instance, Alice cannot choose to both meet her friend and attend the lecture. Indeed, the incompossibility of the two goods is key to the identity of the case (e.g.

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25 This is not to say that we don’t sometimes experience regret even in cases where having both goods is not a real option. It’s just that regretting not having both is irrational.
Stocker 1990). Therefore, this suggestion cannot explain the rationality of regretting not going to the lecture.

However, the VPM theorist might retort, it might be rational to regret our “choice situation” – i.e. the situation in which we have to make a certain choice, or the fact that we are presented with certain options – even when realising both values is not a real option. Thus, perhaps we could appeal to this kind of regret to explain the rationality of regret in the examples above: we regret finding ourselves in a situation where we cannot realise both values. But this is again an unsatisfactory response for a few reasons. First, for this kind of regret to be rational it must have been at some point a real option for the subject not to find themselves in this choice situation, and that this other option was itself better for them than that which led to the current choice situation.26

The problem with this response, at least for our purposes, is that none of the subjects discussed in the examples from section 3 find themselves in this kind of difficult choice situation as a direct result of some previous choice. In fact, for some of them it seems that no previous choice would have allowed them to realise both goods: Josef did not choose getting ill, nor was he aware of this possibility. As such, he had no reason to choose to attempt to finish his life’s work as soon as possible, before the onset of his illness. Likewise, Alice would not have been able to change the date for either the talk or Beatrice’s visit – plausibly Beatrice booked her journey before the date of the talk was released. Second, at least some of these subjects are confronted with a difficult but “good” choice, so they cannot regret finding themselves in that kind of situation at all. To return to Alice, though she can regret which option she chooses, the fact that these goods are available to her to choose from seems fortunate.

26For simplicity, we can understand the value of each option as a matter of the value of the overall best pattern of choices resulting from them.
Therefore, it seems that the second approach to undermining the argument for RP also fails. However, there is a different way of formulating this objection which is more successful.

Section 4.3 – Refining the second objection.

A defender of VPM must identify something else that we can say is missing in the best option and present in the worse one. Hurka (1996, pp561-562) proposes such a candidate. This is that an SP-VPM axiology does still involve in each option something that is missing in the other: i.e. the intrinsic properties of the different goods chosen. For instance, if we choose a pleasure over an instance of understanding, our choice will miss, precisely, understanding. However, expressed in these terms, the example is question-begging. After all, the RP theorist would say that the difference in goods is a cause for regret, but only because they are good for us in different ways. To provide a convincing objection, then, the monist must provide examples to which RP would attribute the same kind of value.

To do so, Hurka notes that instances of the same good will also differ with regards to some of their intrinsic properties: for example, two pleasures may differ with regards to the quality of the pleasure, or two beliefs will differ with regards to their content. Hurka proposes the example of choosing between two different kinds of understanding, one scientific and the other historical (1996, p568, though note that he frames this in terms of items of knowledge). He argues that it is rational to regret whichever we do not choose as it has a different content and object from the one we chose. For instance, imagine that we must decide which of two summer courses to attend: one is a course on medieval peasant and proletarian

27Schaber (1999) makes a similar argument and example.
revolts, the other on black hole evaporation (Hawking radiation). Also imagine that we are interested in both, but that the scientific understanding, in this case, is non-instrumentally better. In this case, it would seem that it is rational to regret not being able to attend the history course.

Both RP and VPM would agree that the options do not differ in terms of how many value properties are at stake: VPM theories claim that only the single, unitary prudential value property is involved, while RP claims that only the epistemic value property is involved. This places VPP theories in something of a dilemma. On the one hand, they cannot simply reject the rationality of regret in these cases (at least without good reason), as this would open them to a charge of hypocrisy: after all, VPM could then do the same with regards to those cases which form the argument for RP. On the other hand, they cannot explain the rationality of regret in these cases in the same terms as VPM theories (the different intrinsic properties of instances of the same good), or this would admit that VPM can explain the cases from section 3, thus undermining the argument for RP.

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28 Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that we are somehow capable of understanding both topics to a similar degree.
Section 5: The Second Objection Refined and Responses.

There are two lines of response open to VPP: undermining the VPM case for rational regret and proposing a different interpretation of the problem cases under which VPP can account for rational regret. The first of these cannot work on its own, as, even if it convincingly establishes that the SP-VPM explanation of rational regret does not work, it would not have shown that VPP theories can either. The second response, then, serves as a second prong in defending the argument from conflict and regret by offering an explanation of Hurka’s cases which is either explicitly VPP in character or, at least, cannot be used to explain away the examples from section 3. Three such possible explanations are provided, each of which I will explore in turn. The first two both stick to the commitment that rational regret in a lesser option must be grounded in the presence of different value properties. On the other hand, the third accepts that only one value property is involved (the epistemic one) but that there is some other basis for regret we have not considered. While this last explanation is compatible with VPM, it cannot be invoked to explain the cases from section 3, so it does not undermine the argument for RP. While I do not provide a conclusive answer as to how the RP theory must explain rational regret in cases such as Hurka’s, the encouraging variety of explanations strongly suggests that the theory can explain these problem cases and thus answer the objection to the argument from conflict and regret.

Section 5.1 – First response: undermining VPM’s account of the rationality of regret.

Starting with the first line of response, then, there is an important problem with the VPM explanation of the rationality of regret in Hurka’s example. That is, while Hurka aims to identify a kind of case that presents rational regret directed at a
foregone, lesser good which bears the same kind of value as the chosen, better good, his explanation of this is itself not viable: whatever does account for the rationality of regret here, it is not what VPM is claiming it is. This is because it is questionable that identifying a difference in the intrinsic properties of the two bearers is *sufficient* to justify regret. After all, it is not enough that something is missing to justify regret; what is missing must *matter* and its missing must also *matter*. This point might seem trivial – if something matters, whether it is present or absent must also matter – but it is salient in the context of a choice between two bearers of value. No one would deny that the foregone good matters, but the VPP contention is that VPM cannot explain why its absence matters *given the greater good that was chosen*. Here the VPP case begins to show its teeth. This is because what *matters* about the two goods is precisely their value – the intrinsic properties involved matter precisely only in the sense that they ground value. But under VPM the difference in their value is merely one of amount (i.e. in the sense of the numerical difference in magnitude of value, which is compatible with both the quantity and quality of a *good* affecting something’s magnitude of value – see below for discussion of a different notion of evaluative quality), not of kind. Therefore, there is nothing *that matters* missing in the chosen good but present in the foregone one.

A defender of VPM has a few ways of countering this, but none, ultimately, work. First, they could try to find a further reason why the missing intrinsic property matters and that it matters that it is missing. For example, they could account for this in terms of a desire or preference for this missing intrinsic property (or this aspect of the foregone good). For instance, in the case of the two items of understanding, we might have a preference for the historical understanding over the scientific one, and it is this which explains the fact that, though the latter is better than the former, it is rational to regret not choosing the former instead.
However, though there are at least two ways we can understand this suggestion, neither can work for the purpose for which VPM intends them. The two interpretations are the following: desire-satisfaction is itself a good-maker; desires are themselves (or are based on) evaluations of their objects, such that they track value rather than determine it. The first of these is problematic insofar as it makes obtaining the historical knowledge an instance of desire-satisfaction; and if desire-satisfaction is a further good-making property, then we have changed the premises of the example such that the historical knowledge may now be overall better than the scientific one (i.e. it is less good for us qua understanding, but better for us overall given that it is also good for us qua desire-satisfaction). Moreover, this opens the door to a VPP explanation of the case in which it identifies a new value property in correspondence with the desire-satisfaction good-making property. Hence, this would make the historical understanding, e.g., desideratively better for us than the scientific understanding (even if it remains all-things-considered worse), meaning that the historical understanding does involve, under VPP, something that is missing in the scientific understanding: its desiderative value. Thus, this approach cannot be employed by VPM as it undermines the example supporting its objection.

The second approach also faces serious concerns. This is because, if desires track value (i.e. they are directed towards their objects on the basis of our evaluations), then one of three problematic alternatives must be true: the desire is actually directed at the scientific understanding qua the better option; the desire is irrationally directed at the historical understanding despite it being the worst option; the desire reveals some mistake in our original evaluation of the two options. The first clearly cannot help VPM, as the desire cannot be appealed to now to explain regret in the historical understanding. The second is also at issue as, even though it might offer an explanation for why we in fact regret not choosing

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29 Note that we may be able to account for desires as good-makers within objectivism as just another good (e.g. Lin 2018); or, at least, I will assume that this is possible in some sense for the sake of argument.
the historical understanding, it does not make said regret rational. But this neither offers a counterexample to VPP, as the latter relies on a claim about rational regret, nor is it actually needed – after all, there is no need to appeal to a desire for the historical understanding in order to explain our irrationally regretting it. Finally, if the desire is successfully tracking the comparative value of the two options, then the historical understanding is better than the scientific one in some sense. If it is better along a common dimension of value, then Hurka’s counterexample to the VPP explanation is undermined (unless we could rationally regret not choosing the scientific understanding, but this would just raise all of these same concerns again with regards to it), as it would not offer a case where we can rationally regret the lesser option (i.e. we are regretting not choosing the better option). If, on the other hand, the historical understanding is better than the scientific one under a different dimension (i.e. because we are holding fixed that the scientific understanding must be epistemically better), then this must again appeal to a VPP explanation instead, and therefore cannot serve as the basis for an objection to the argument from conflict and regret.

Turning to the second counter, the VPM theorist may deny that the only thing that matters about bearers of value is the degree of the value they bear. For example, as Hurka suggests, they could maintain that it is also the quality of value which matters. Thus, the two instances of understanding from Hurka’s example may differ with regards to their value qualities (which we can identify with the relevant intrinsic properties, or at least take said properties as the grounds of these qualities). In appealing to this, though, quality must not be understood in terms of a different factor determining the magnitude of value of the bearer (i.e. alongside quantity). Otherwise, this would be accounted for in the value we attribute to the bearer, and thus would not affect the considerations relevant to regret. Instead, value qualities must be differences in value which have similar features to value properties, such as uncompensability and incommensurability, without in fact being value properties. Chang (2015) introduces precisely this kind of notion.
However, an appeal to this kind of notion is problematic. First, it is not clear exactly what this notion consists in. In particular, Chang highlights how value qualities are supposed to account for many of the features of VPP-style plural values, which makes VPM’s use of the notion of a value quality liable to the accusation of being *ad hoc*. Second, and relatedly, the purpose of formulating the notion of distinct value properties was in part motivated by the need to explain uncompensability (see Chapter 4 on the relation between Heathwood’s, 2015, and Chang’s, 2015, categorisation of kinds of pluralism). Therefore, postulating a further notion to fulfil the same function seems redundant. Finally, introducing value qualities risks making the difference between VPP and VPM mostly cosmetic (Chang 2015 makes much the same point): if value qualities can account for uncompensability and, perhaps, other distinctive features of VPP axiologies, then VPM will look suspiciously similar to VPP, which in turn means that whatever reason we might have had to stick to this VPM framework may well have evaporated in the process.

Therefore, VPM still does not seem able to account for why we can rationally regret not choosing the lesser of two options, at least without collapsing into VPP. Of course, as noted earlier, unless a VPP explanation is found, this would only show either that our understanding of the aptness of regret is flawed or that our intuitions about the rationality of regret in particular cases is. In either case, this would still undermine the argument from conflict and regret for the RP theory of well-being.

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30Chang notes that whether value qualities collapse into value properties depends on the question of how we are to individuate values, and notes the lack of either discussion or implicit consensus on the matter (citing Hurka, 1996, in making this point).
Section 5.2 – Second response (1): the fragmentation of the epistemic dimension.

We should thus turn to the second prong of the VPP response to Hurka: its own explanation of these cases. There are three ways we might try to do so. The first two both stick to the commitment that rational regret must be grounded, at least in this kind of case, in the presence of different value properties. On the other hand, the third accepts that only one value property is involved (the epistemic one) but that there is some other basis for regret we have not considered. This last explanation is compatible with VPM, but it cannot be invoked to explain the cases from section 3, so it does not undermine the argument for RP from conflict and regret.

The first response posits a further fragmentation of our epistemic prudential value property to account for these cases. That is, it posits that the epistemic dimension in fact consists in further irreducibly distinct value properties which all nonetheless remain epistemic. This is not to say that we are simply positing more value properties in our theory. Instead, this is to say that VPP (and perhaps SP as well) is true about the epistemic prudential domain as well. Thus, these sub-epistemic dimensions are instances of the epistemic dimension in a way similar to how the latter is an instance of prudential value (such that epistemic and aspirative dimensions are instances of a common kind – prudential value – contra moral value properties). This would allow us to explain the rational regret for the forsaken, lesser historical understanding from our example, so long as it and the alternative scientific understanding were good for us in different, though still related, ways: i.e. they must be bearers of different sub-epistemic value properties (or, at least, they must differ with respect to which is better with regards to each of these sub-dimensions).

I think it is immediately clear that this move can be challenged. The main concern with the proposal is that this kind of further fragmentation may be a slippery slope
to an increasingly radical fragmentation throughout welfare. A certain degree of this may well be acceptable, but the worry is that not only would this suggest that our other dimensions are fragmented, but that the new sub-dimensions could fragment even further. On the other hand, asserting this fragmentation while denying the possibility that other dimensions (or the sub-epistemic dimensions themselves) fragment further seems *ad hoc*: the fragmentation is posited when but only when it is needed in order to address problem cases.

However, this points to a possible counter. This is to provide a rationale for fragmentations. Such a rationale must justify both allowing certain fragmentations and resisting others. One approach I will outline here is to appeal to a characterisation of the relevant prudential dimension which accounts for some kind of fragmentation. Thus, let us consider the programmatic characterisation of the *epistemic* prudential relation from Chapter 4: *epistemic* prudential value is a matter of the *attunement* or *integration* of a subject to *their world* (*integration* henceforth). When a subject is epistemologically integrated in their world, they stand in an *epistemic* prudential relation with an instance of understanding about said world. Thus, understanding is good for (certain) subjects in the sense that it constitutes this *integration*.

I will not press this characterisation further, as not much rests on the success of some of its details. Instead, it serves as a demonstration of how this may justify a degree of fragmentation of the *epistemic* dimensions. That is, the characterisation makes reference to the subject’s *world*. But, if a “world” in this sense corresponds to a particular domain of concern of the agent’s, then it may be that each subject has a plurality of these. If so, then we may understand the different *sub-epistemic* dimensions as a matter of the subject’s *integration* into each of these worlds. Not only does this allow for a principled fragmentation of the *epistemic* dimension, but it may motivate similar fragmentations within other dimensions, such as between
different projects within the *aspirative* dimension. However, it also prevents a slippery slope of such fragmentations: if the domains or concerns underpinning each world have a certain internal unity, then there is no basis to further divide this dimension.

A few words of caution are necessary here. The use of the term “world” is metaphorical and hardly technical, such that future discussion of this approach should further explore how we should cash-out this notion. But this raises a concern. If we cannot pinpoint the basis for a distinction between such “worlds”, then the worry is that the demarcations we draw by them are merely *arbitrary*. If so, then they would not ensure a principled stop to a slippery slope of increasing fragmentation, as we could define increasingly narrow “worlds” grounding increasingly narrow *sub-epistemic* dimensions. As I will not be giving an account of these “worlds” or of their basis here, I cannot provide a conclusive response to this worry. In *lieu* of this, however, I will very briefly note what would be needed to successfully provide such an account and, based on this, a reason to think that this project is not only possible, but promising.

What is needed in order to provide a basis for these “worlds” is not just a principle for drawing a boundary *between* worlds, but also one for asserting some degree of unity *within* these worlds. This we can call an *organising principle*, which must account for how and why a domain is internally united in contrast to others. Though articulating such a principle may appear to be a tall order, there are at least two reasons to think that it is not impossible and that, in fact, something of the kind must be available. First, the organising principle in question need not be grounded in (or itself be) some objective fact about the relevant domains. Instead, it could be determined by the subject themselves. After all, it could be a matter of how the subject organises their worldview and concerns. Though this may be

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31Note that this also depends on how we characterise the *aspirative* dimension, which I will not pursue here.
arbitrary in the sense that the subject did not base this organisation on any objective basis, the fact that such an organisation obtains is itself an objective fact, such that the resulting divisions between domains are not arbitrary (i.e. though the “worlds” could have been narrower than they are, fragmenting the epistemic dimension further and further, they are not in fact narrower, and so the dimension does not fragment further). If such a basis for an organising principle is possible, then the project of determining these seems perfectly practicable.

Second, the metaphor of “world” does seem to point to a real division between different areas of epistemic concern: someone’s concern with their socio-political context seems quite separate from their concern with a purely intellectual or entertaining question (e.g. Bronze Age farming practices or Lord of the Rings lore). In particular, there is a sense in which making sense through one group of explanations (e.g. scientific) is independent from our making sense through some other group of explanations (e.g. historical). If so, there must be some basis for this mutual independence, boding well for the articulation of the relevant organising principles. At the same time, this independence does not seem to extend within these divisions. That is, though understanding physics may be independent of understanding history, understanding a historical period is not independent of understanding another historical period (e.g. the Bronze Age Collapse and the adoption of the alphabet by the Greeks). This provides at least some evidence for the existence of divisions between different epistemic domains which also exhibit an internal unity and organisation.

Section 5.3 – Second response (2): other dimension of value involved.

The second way of responding to this objection attempts to make space for the presence of different value properties in Hurka’s example. This requires that we reframe Hurka’s example such that, though the scientific understanding is
epistemically and all-things-considered better than the historical understanding, the latter is better than the former in terms of another dimension. If so, then VPP could explain the rationality of regretting forsaking the worse option in the same terms as the examples of section 3.

There are two ways we could attempt to implement this strategy. The first tries to introduce one of the other value properties introduced in Chapter 4. For example, perhaps one of the instances of understanding we are choosing between is not only epistemically valuable, but also aspiratively valuable. If so, it is not qua understanding that forsaking historical understanding for scientific understanding is regrettable, but rather qua achievement (or constitutive of or contributory to achievement), which cannot be compensated by a gain in understanding. However, this approach encounters a few problems. To begin with, if this is not to be question-begging, it must rely on convincingly casting Hurka’s cases in this light. But this seems unlikely to work: after all, even if we are attending each course merely out of curiosity and there are no prospects of significant achievements (except completing the course itself, but this is a property shared by both options), it still seems rational to regret the forsaken option.

The second approach that I suggest entails postulating another candidate dimension. This value is also epistemic in nature, though without being a sub-epistemic dimension within the general epistemic value property. This approach suggests that, from the beginning, we missed a plausible dimension of value which, as it happens, can also be categorised as broadly epistemic. For instance, while our original epistemic value property concerns the veracity and aptness of our picture of the world – with understanding as its associated good – our other value property might instead relate to how well we operate as epistemic agents (e.g. how we consider evidence, how we actively search for it) – with intellectual virtue as its associated good. Call this the intellectual dimension.
This suggestion mirrors a distinction within virtue epistemology. Epistemic trait virtues, such as intellectual humility, objectivity, and inquisitiveness, are qualities that make an agent more epistemically responsible (Baehr 2011; Code 1984; Zagzebski 1996). While being epistemically responsible may lead an agent to be more reliable in acquiring epistemic goods such as understanding, this agent’s beliefs, while resulting from the epistemic trait virtues, are not necessarily veridical. After all, following Montmarquet (1987), it would be difficult to distinguish Aristotle, Newton or Einstein in terms of inquisitiveness or objectivity, even though the veracity of their respective understanding differs substantially. This suggests a basis for drawing a distinction between epistemic goods and the good of being an epistemically responsible agent and, hence, for positing a dimension for each: the *epistemic* and the *intellectual* dimension.

This approach is not, in principle, implausible. After all, the suggested list of prudential value properties presented at the end of Chapter 4 was only a first proposal based on the simplified SP-VPM OLT from Chapter 1. It is not only plausible that we missed some value properties, but even probable. And given that, as we already saw, the suggested *intellectual* dimension seems to come apart from the original *epistemic* one, we may have also identified a plausible candidate value property to add to our theory. This, then, avoids the main concern with the first response we discussed (i.e. fragmentation) in that it does not risk either an *ad hoc* fragmentation of dimensions of value or a slippery slope of further and further pervasive fragmentation. Instead, it merely points to the possibility of independently plausible value properties we may have conflated with *epistemic* value.

However, responding by appealing to a different approach encounters an issue with regards to its ability to explain the problem cases in question. For an appeal to a distinction between *epistemic* and *intellectual* dimensions of prudential value, each option in the cases in question must be higher than the other with regards
to one of these dimensions but lower in the case of the other. But, just as with an appeal to aspirative value, it does not seem possible to ensure that this is the case for all cases where it is rational to regret not choosing the epistemically and all-things-considered worse option. To return to Hurka’s example, though the all-things-considered worse historical understanding may well be intellectually better than the alternative, scientific understanding, there is no reason that it must be so. The question then becomes whether or not we would still deem it rational to regret not choosing the historical understanding if it were intellectually worse than the scientific one. Whether this is the case is less clear to me and would require a more extended treatment of Hurka’s case than there is space for here, especially considering the fact that there are two further responses open to RP. That being said, I take it that it still offers a possible, productive approach to the issue.

Section 5.4 – Second response (3): doubt and inscrutability of epistemic consequences.

Finally, we can turn to the third approach, which attempts to account for rational regret in problem cases without appealing to different value properties. This may seem surprising, given the present argument for RP based on conflict and rational regret. However, regret is not justifiable only when two value properties are involved. It is also rational to regret our choice when we chose the worse option. As stated, regret may result from reevaluating the choice situation: if we choose option A over option B and later realise that B was better than A, it is of course rational to regret not choosing B. However, at least in some cases, it may also be rational to regret when we doubt our choice (and hence the original evaluation), without in fact endorsing a full reevaluation of the options. If it is rational to regret the forsaken option under such conditions (i.e., conditions of insecurity) then we might be able to explain the problem cases as follows.
The choice between instances of different kinds of understanding is not merely a choice between how each option improves our understanding of its particular domain. Rather, it is also a choice between which of these two domains we are going to make headway into. Gaining a key piece of understanding has repercussions on our understanding of the domain which we can hardly foresee. This is true in two key regards. First, it is hard to predict the cascading effects new understanding will have on subsequent connections between beliefs, the novel evidence we can uncover, and the development of our relevant rational capacity. Second, we can interpret this in the stronger sense that we cannot foresee the epistemic consequences of an instance of understanding, precisely because to do so would first require the understanding in question.

Therefore, even if we are sure that, say, the scientific understanding is better, in itself, than the historical one, we may wonder about their more extended, instrumental value (i.e. their *fecundity*). For instance, we may wonder whether the historical understanding of peasant revolts in the Middle Ages will not help clarify other aspects of the period, as well as of related domains (e.g. systems of control and class consciousness). Moreover, whether we gain these further pieces of understanding in the future, and which of them we do, will depend on a number of contingencies: e.g. whether we choose to pursue them, which we choose to pursue, and whether we do so successfully (which could be thwarted both by a failure to gain understanding and by misunderstanding some details). Therefore, it may be this uncertainty and indeterminacy in the *instrumental* value of the instances of understanding on offer which is at the base of the rationality of regretting the non-instrumentally worse of the two: it is unclear which is *instrumentally* better.

This objection, then, allows both VPP and VPM to explain the rationality of regretting not choosing worse instances of understanding than the one we do choose in terms that cannot then be turned to undermining the argument for the
RP theory of well-being. After all, it seems unlikely that pervasive doubt of this kind is key in either the evaluations or the rationality of regret in the cases from section 3.

It is not clear which of these responses is best for the prospects of the RP theory. That being said, the fact that a plurality of these is available should be cause for comfort, as they provide a welcome degree of flexibility in addressing the issue. Furthermore, though considerations of conflicting values and the rationality of regret has raised some concerns for RP, it remains true that it is better-placed than VPM accounts of welfare in explaining a phenomenon which has been largely ignored in discussions of well-being. Therefore, ultimately, the fact that a conflict in values (established by considerations of the rationality of regret) arises from options bearing putatively different dimensions of value remains strong support for an RP characterisation of prudential value.
Conclusion

In conclusion, though some initial lines of argument for the RP theory of well-being fail to support it convincingly, the argument from conflict and regret appears to supply a much more solid basis for the theory. In discussing cases of putative conflict between RP dimensions of prudential value, it was found that we can rationally regret not choosing an option that is *all-things-considered* worse for us. As VPM theories cannot explain this phenomenon and only VPP can, this line of argument for the RP theory of well-being proved convincing, given a prior acceptance of SP.
Chapter 7. Applications of the Radical Pluralist Theory to Topics in the Philosophy of Well-Being.

In this chapter I further elaborate the radical pluralist (RP) theory of well-being, exploring three important issues within the theory of well-being on which the RP theory can shed some light. In each case, RP offers a way out of an apparent impasse, thus further strengthening the case for the theory.

The first concerns the distinction between enumerative and explanatory claims discussed in Chapter 2. Section 1 starts by restating previous comments on the topic and argues that the RP theory of well-being offers a new outlook on the formulation of explanatory claims and second-order explanatory theories in particular. I will argue that RP offers a diagnosis of current difficulties in articulating satisfactory explanatory claims as well as an interesting way forward. Section 2 focuses on the debate between invariabilists and variabilists, first noting two interpretations of these notions. I will then argue, for each of these, that RP offers a via media between the two extremes by being variabilist at one level (all-things-considered) and invariabilist at another (that of the individual dimensions). Finally, section 3 presents two sets of cases – alienation and idiosyncrasy – which I will argue plague, respectively, subject-transcendent and -dependent theories. RP will be shown to have the resources to deal with both of these cases in virtue of, on the one hand, its objectivist account of the evaluative grounds of individual goods and, on the other, the importance it places on the characteristics of the subject, as well as the wide scope for the characterisation of each value property, given the fact of their plurality.
Section 1 – Enumerative and Explanatory Claims.

An important current topic in the philosophy of well-being is the issue of the distinction between enumerative and explanatory claims made by theories of well-being. In this section I outline how RP contributes to some of the questions surrounding this distinction, particularly regarding difficulties with formulating explanatory claims.

In Chapter 2, I noted a possible point of confusion relating to how we should understand the enumerative-explanatory distinction. Lin (2017) argues that it is a distinction between claims about which particular states of affairs are good (and bad) for us and claims about what makes these particulars good (and bad) for us (i.e. what are the prudential good- and bad-makers). However, Fletcher (2013) employs the distinction to articulate a classification between kinds of theories, and, as noted in Chapter 2, Lin’s understanding of the distinction cannot support this (as he himself claims). I then suggested that we can capture what is most plausibly underpinning Fletcher’s use of the distinction in terms of Prinzging’s (2020) distinction between first- and second-order theories. From this I articulated a distinction between first- and second-order good-makers (and bad-makers): between what explains a particular x being good for s and what accounts for that. For example, on the one hand, most versions of Hedonism (monist OLT) claim that x is good for s because x is an instance of pleasure, thus identifying a first-order good-maker; on the other hand, Epicurean Hedonism (at least under Annas’s, 1993, and Haybron’s, 2008b, interpretation) claims that being-an-instance-of-pleasure is a (first-order) good-making property because we are the kinds of beings whose nature is fulfilled by experiencing pleasure.¹ This second account provides an explanation of why pleasure is a basic good, and thus is making a second-order explanatory claim where self-fulfilment, in Haybron’s

¹Note that this is in the sense of ataraxia, i.e. the static pleasure experienced after a need or desire is fulfilled as a removal of pain that is not a mere absence of it (Annas 1993).
(2008b, 2016) terms, is a second-order good-making property. The latter kind of claim is less common than the former, but it is often assumed that a theory which can offer such claims is preferable, other things being equal, than one which cannot (e.g. Prinzing 2020, Bradford 2021).

My concern here is with Fletcher’s use of the terms. After all, it seems incontrovertible that all theories of welfare must make both enumerative and explanatory claims in Lin’s sense: just making enumerative claims in this sense would mean listing particular states or objects (i.e. not kinds of states or objects), something which would hardly explain anything about the nature of well-being (though it might explain other things, e.g. why a certain action is morally good or right). By contrast, in what I argue to be Fletcher’s sense, some theories may very well only make one of the two claims. In particular, a theory that only enumerates basic goods (e.g. pleasure), but does not explain why these are basic goods, is still a theory of welfare, as it does offer an account of the nature of well-being. Namely, it provides an account of the grounds of the value of particulars and of the constituents of well-being by offering first-order good-makers (e.g. being-an-instance-of-pleasure). However, it still does not provide any second-order good-makers. Therefore, if we interpret Fletcher’s use of the distinction between enumerative and explanatory claims in the sense the distinction between first- and second-order explanatory claims (and thus good-makers), this can form the basis for a means of categorising theories of welfare.

Another thing noted in previous chapters (especially in Chapter 3), is that providing a second-order explanatory claim seems quite difficult. What was perhaps not clear at the time was that this difficulty only seems to arise given certain assumptions about what the first-order good-makers are. For example,

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2 Of course, we might think that explanations of this second-order kind are not available. For example, if we say that value supervenes directly on the identified properties, then we are both not explaining why this is the case (it just is) while having a principled reason for not providing this explanation.
given a list of first-order good-makers of pleasure, understanding, achievement, and friendship, Perfectionism gave a good account of understanding, achievement, and even friendship, but it failed to do so for pleasure. However, theories which restrict their first-order good-makers to a more limited catalogue do not face the same difficulties, such as Annas’s (1993) and Haybron’s (2008b) interpretation of Epicurean Hedonism (see above). Though there are clear reasons to think that this theory is inadequate (including because it leaves out some important constituents of well-being), it at least provides a second-order explanation of pleasure as a first-order good-maker. We are therefore at an impasse between the need for a plurality of first-order good-makers and the difficulty in providing a single second-order good-maker for all of these.

At this stage the RP theory of well-being offers an interesting solution to this problem. As it postulates a different value property for each good, it opens the possibility for a different second-order explanation being true for each value property (see Chapter 3, section 6 for a similar point). Thus, something like the Epicurean second-order explanation may be true of pleasure, without this committing us to either the same second-order good-maker accounting for all other plausible first-order good-makers or the rejection of all other first-order good-makers. For instance, the Perfectionist explanation may be true of goods such as achievement, while some other second-order account may be true of friendship. In fact, the assumption of value property monism (VPM) on the part of theories of welfare can now be identified as a likely reason for the ongoing difficulties in providing a convincing (second-order) explanatory theory: it meant explaining all welfare goods in the same terms, when it seems that these are far too varied for this to be the case – not just too varied in the sense of there being a plurality of such goods (i.e. substantive pluralism – SP), but too varied in the way that they are good for us.
Section 2 – Variabilism and Invariabilism.

In this section I will explore how the RP theory of well-being relates to the debate between variabilism and invariabilism. Ultimately, I will argue that it does not relate to these positions in the manner in which other theories do. Namely, it neither is clearly a variabilist theory nor an invariabilist one as it can both make sense of intuitions which are usually taken to support the former, while also being compatible with accounts of the grounds of prudential value which support the latter.

Section 2.1 – Prudential invariabilism and variabilism: two forms of the distinction.

In Chapter 6 Section 1.3 I introduced the distinction between variabilism and invariabilism in terms of value simpliciter rather than prudential value. However, when translating this in terms of prudential value, a possible interpretative ambiguity arises. To see this, I will begin by repeating the value simpliciter definition from Chapter 6.

\[(\text{invariabilism}) \text{ “for any } x, \text{ the intrinsic value of any valuable } x \text{ is the same in any context in which it appears” (2010, p162);}\]

\[(\text{variabilism}) \text{ “for any } x, \text{ the intrinsic value of any valuable } x \text{” (Fletcher 2010, p 162) may be different in different contexts, such that it can have more or less value, no value, or be disvaluable in different contexts.}\]

Because prudential value is relational, there are two way in which we can understand prudential invariabilism-variabilism based on these definitions. The first of these is the one with which Fletcher (2009) is concerned and simply introduces a relational property in the original definition: “the intrinsic value \([for subject s]\) of any [prudentially] valuable \(x\) is the same in any context in which it
appears” (prudential invariabilism 1 – PI1), while prudential variabilism 1 (PV1) is the denial of this claim. Thus, under PI1, if pleasure is good for s then any instance of pleasure is good for s in any context and it is so to the same extent given the same quantity; under PV1, if pleasure is good for s then different instances of pleasure may vary in their value for s given different contexts, including bearing negative or no value.

However, there is a different invariabilist-variabilist distinction discussed in the literature (e.g. Woodard, 2013, and Lin, 2018) regarding whether the valuable x is good for all subjects or not. Thus, prudential invariabilism 2 (PI2) asserts that if any x is valuable for some subject s, then it is good for any subject, while prudential variabilism 2 (PV2) denies this claim, allowing for some x being valuable for a subject s₁ but not for another subject s₂. This means that, under PI2, if pleasure is good for a subject s, then it is good for all subjects, and that, under PV2, if pleasure is good for a subject s, then it does not follow that it is good for all subjects.

PI1 and PI2, and hence PV1 and PV2, are clearly different claims. In fact, PI1 could be true while PI2 is false (e.g. pleasure is always and to the same extent good for s₁ but not for s₂), and therefore PV2 could be true while PV1 is false (e.g. pleasure is good only for certain subjects, but for these it is always good to the same extent in any context). However, what the falsehood of PI1 entails for PI2 depends on the further interpretative question of whether PI2 can be understood in terms of a prima facie claim: if some x is prima facie good for a subject s₁, then it is prima facie good for any subject s₂. If so, then PI2 is compatible with PV1; if not, then PV2 follows from PV1. In the rest of this section I will assume that we

3Note that we may also think that the magnitude of value varies with quality. I assume, though, that this is compatible with PI1, so I will ignore this point henceforth.
4Also Sumner (1996), under the term generality.
5Ross (1930) claims something of the sort with regards to pleasure, which he takes to be prima facie good with regard to all subjects.
can understand PI2 in terms of *prima facie* value. Moreover, I will discuss each of PI1-PV1 and PI2-PV2 separately.

*Section 2.2 – RP and the plurality of kinds of prudential subjects.*

What seems to be a key supporting intuition for PI2 is the fact that *x* being good for *s* must in some sense be grounded in the intrinsic properties of *x*. That is, for it to be the case that *x* enters into the *good for* relation with *s*, it must be that something about *x* is such that the relation obtains. If so, then any instance of *x* should be prudentially valuable, no matter the subject involved. For example, if an episode of pleasure is good for a subject in virtue of it being an instance of pleasure (i.e. *being-an-instance-of-pleasure* is a first-order good-maker), then this must be true for any episode of pleasure and any subject. Of course, the same circumstances may not be pleasant for all subjects, but this merely means that the relevant experiences of some subjects are pleasant while those of others are not. PI2, thus, seems to follow from this simple but compelling picture of the grounds of prudential value.6

However, a complication is presented by cases where these intrinsic properties cannot be appropriately instantiated in the lives of certain subjects. That is, even if the fact that some *x* is prudentially valuable follows from its intrinsic properties, a subject who cannot obtain *x* is one, we might think, who cannot enter into the prudential value relation with *x*. After all, well-being is a relation between an object and a subject, and even if the object is appropriate for entering into the *good for* relation, the subject may not be. This would undermine the case for PI2, as it

6Lin (2018) argues that something similar is the case under his interpretation of Desire Satisfaction theories (DS), where the property of *x* in question is *satisfying-one-of-*s*'s-desires* (Lin 2017, 2018, p322), such that *anything* that has the property of *satisfying-one-of-*s*'s-desires* would then be good for *s*. Note though that, in this case, these would be *extrinsic* properties of the object, which supervene over their intrinsic properties in virtue of a subject’s desiring these.
would mean that even if understanding is good for a subject \( s_1 \), it would not follow that it is good for \( s_2 \) if \( s_2 \) cannot obtain instances of understanding (e.g. an animal or human infant). Lin (2018) offers a response to this challenge to PI2 by arguing that all that the above cases show is that the subjects in question cannot benefit from \( x \), not that \( x \) is not good for them. That is, the intrinsic properties of \( x \) ensures its prudential value, according to Lin, but because certain subjects cannot obtain \( x \), they cannot benefit from it. Thus, under this view, it is not that understanding is not good for infants, but rather that they cannot obtain instances of this good and thus cannot benefit from it. He supports this response by considering that if subjects of this kind were able to obtain the instances of these goods, they would benefit from them.7 Hence, just as we would not say that pleasure is not good for a subject who is in a depressive state where they cannot experience pleasure but merely that they cannot obtain something that is good for them, we should say the same thing about goods such as understanding and subjects such as animals.

It is not clear to me how convincing this retort is, but all that matters for our purposes is the conception of prudential subjects in relation to valuable objects that is implicit in the picture above. That is, by providing an account of the grounds of prudential value solely in terms of the properties of the object, the result is that prudential subjects are taken to enter into the good for relation with these objects automatically – so long as they are the kind of subject for whom things can go well and poorly, something with the right kind of intrinsic properties will make their life go well or poorly. My claim here is not that this is an incoherent or even unjustified account. In fact, as I already noted, it seems to follow from an attractive account of the grounds of prudential value.8 That being said, I take it that the PV

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7I am here using language of obtaining in a loose way that is not meant to imply that instances of goods exist and are good independently of the subject for whom they are good, who then attempts to take possession of these (see Korsgaard, 2013, against this conception of the relation between subjects and bearers of prudential value).

8Indeed, in section 3.2 we will see a set of problems which suggest that something of the kind is necessary.
characterisation of the relation between goods like understanding and subjects such as animals (i.e. that understanding is not good for such subjects) is more intuitive that Lin’s (i.e. understanding is good for such subjects, but they cannot obtain and thus benefit from it), and therefore that the main reason for rejecting the former in favour of the latter is the former’s theoretical implications – the undermining of the picture of the grounds of prudential value outlined above.

The RP theory of well-being, however, offers the opportunity for quite a different take on this issue, one which accepts the attractive picture of the grounds of prudential value upon which PI2 seems to rely, without its counterintuitive implications. That is, given the fact that there is a plurality of prudential value properties under RP, it does not follow from the fact that a subject s is a prudential subject that they can stand in any of these relations. That is, s may be able to stand in some of these relations with appropriate objects (e.g. in the experiential relation with instances of pleasure), but not in others (e.g. the epistemic relation). This is because it is in fact wrong under the theory to say that someone or something is a prudential subject simpliciter. Instead, we must specify what kind of prudential subject they are: an experiential, epistemic, aspirative, or social subject. An experiential subject will be one for whom things can go experientially well or poorly, an epistemic subject one for whom things can go epistemically well or poorly, and so on for the other prudential relations and subjects. Thus, it may be that some subjects that are prudential in one sense are not prudential in another. If so, and if each good is prudentially valuable in a different way from other goods, some prudential subjects will not be able to stand in the relevant prudential relation with some prudential goods. For example, understanding may not be good for s as s is an experiential prudential subject but not an epistemic prudential subject. RP would then be able to analyse the cases raised against PI2 above in these terms: understanding is not good for dogs, as they are not epistemic subjects, and thus cannot enter into the epistemic relation with instances of understanding.
This has an interesting consequence for how PI2 relates to RP. That is, it seems that PI2 is false about the prudential domain in general (and thus PV2 is true about it), but, at the same time, PI2 can still be true of each prudential dimension. To see this, consider the following. Under RP, it is not true that any \( x \) that is good for a subject \( s \) is good for any other prudential subject, as it could be that the value relation which \( x \) bears is one into which certain prudential subjects cannot enter. For example, \( x \) may be epistemically good for \( s_1 \) (meaning that \( s_1 \) is an epistemic subject), while a subject \( s_2 \) is not an epistemic prudential subject, but only an experiential one. Thus, PI2 is false as a claim about prudential value in general, and therefore PV2 is true at this level. However, it does not follow from this that PI2 is false at the level of each value property: any \( x \) that is experientially good for an experiential subject \( s \) is good for any other experiential subject (PI2\(_e\)); any \( x \) that is epistemically good for an epistemic subject \( s \) is good for any other epistemic subject (PI2\(_k\)); and so on for the other prudential relations. I will refer to the former interpretation of PI2 and PV2 as generally PI2 and PV2, while the latter as separately PI2 and PV2.

Of course, PV2 may well also be true at the separate level. However, by allowing PI2 at the separate level, RP can retain the attractive picture of the grounds of prudential value that supported PI2 in the first place: the fact that \( x \) is, for example, epistemically good for \( s \) is grounded, on \( x \)'s side, in its intrinsic properties (being-an-instance-of-understanding). On the other hand, the fact that for \( x \) to be epistemically good for \( s \) requires that \( s \) meet certain conditions that not all prudential subjects will (i.e. being an epistemic subject), tempers some of the excesses of PI2 by making the theory generally PV2. It therefore can account for goods not being good for all prudential subjects, such as is the case with understanding or achievement not being good for subjects such as dogs. Hence, RP seems to be able to find a via media between PI2 and PV2 that allows it to have the advantages of each and the disadvantages of neither.
In response to this, a supporter of PI2 that is not convinced by this mediation, may here object that we are ignoring an important possibility.9 This is that it is sufficient that a subject is a prudential subject of *some* kind for them to be a prudential subject of *all* kinds (i.e. *s* being an *experiential* subject ensures that they are an *epistemic* subject). But there do not seem to be any reasons under RP to maintain this position. First, RP does not abandon the attractive account of the grounds of prudential value, and thus denying that being a prudential subject of *some kind* ensures that we are prudential subjects of all kinds involves no theoretical burdens. Second, its characterisation of the relation between goods such as understanding and subjects such as animals is more intuitive than the PI2 one offered by Lin.

Third and finally, it can rebuff two connected considerations a PI2 theorist, such as Lin, could raise in support of his position. The first point is that it seems reasonable to think that if a *non-*epistemic subject (e.g. a dog) were to become able to obtain understanding (e.g. by some sci-fi process, as in Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog*) it would benefit them. This suggests that all it is for some subject *s* to do well *epistemically* is for them to obtain understanding. But this would mean that the dog already was an *epistemic* subject insofar as, if they could obtain understanding, things would go well for them *epistemically*. However, this does not quite work. Having the ability to understand involves a slew of other changes in the subject, such as the ability to receive and process information in the requisite way. Thus, when we are saying that the dog *would* be benefited by understanding if it could obtain it, we are failing to keep constant the *kind* of subject that the dog is. This is because the only possible world in which the dog can obtain understanding is one where it is different enough from what it currently is like that it would be a different kind of subject entirely. Contrast the dog’s inability to obtain understanding with that of an adult human who is obstructed from

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9I of course do not mean to actually attribute this claim about RP to Lin. He may well agree that, in the case of a welfare theory of this kind, PI2 is false in the sense specified above.
obtaining the information necessary for understanding. For one, the human but not the dog likely does understand other issues, and so is able to obtain understanding more generally; they also likely misunderstand a number of issues if they lack significant-enough amounts of information. This is because humans make sense of their world in a way that, we are assuming, animals such as dogs do not. Unlike the human, the dog is not just prevented by a lack of information from obtaining understanding, but by the very kind of thing it is.

Turning to the second point open to Lin, he might point out that his approach has an easier time making sense of the fact that some subjects who currently cannot be benefited by certain goods can gain the ability to do so: human infants. As they grow, they gain the ability to, among other things, understand and achieve, and when they do they are benefited by obtaining these goods. PI2 theories can easily make sense of this insofar as it is simply a matter of obtaining something that, under their account, was always good for these subjects. By contrast, we might worry that PV2 theories must, but cannot, account for how a subject can change such that something that was not good for them now is. However, once again, this response does not undermine RP’s case. After all, RP avoids dealing with the potentially problematic explanandum of how a kind of thing can go from not being valuable to being valuable. The reason for this is that RP maintains that understanding or achievement never change their status. At any given point they are such that they could be (epistemically and aspiratively, respectively) good for a subject of the requisite kind. What is different is the fact that the subject changes in kind such that they can now enter into these relationships. This is, precisely, what seems to be true of infant humans, who do not simply gain an ability to obtain the relevant goods, but themselves change in kind.

Thus, RP offers an interesting way of approaching the PI2-PV2 debate. In the next subsection I will discuss how it relates to the second invarabilism-variabilism distinction.
Section 2.3 – RP and two levels of evaluation.

Turning to the PI1-PV1 distinction, it is worth reiterating what this consists in. PI1 and PV1 differ with regards to whether they take what is good for a particular subject, and to what extent it is, to vary depending on context. For instance, PV1 will assert that even if instances of pleasure are prima facie good for a subject s, some instances will be less good for s than others are and some may not be valuable at all (or disvaluable), even keeping the quantity of pleasure fixed. By contrast, PI1 will deny that this is possible.10

PV1 views receive support from cases such as that of the apparent variation in value between different kinds of pleasure: the fact that the same amount of virtuous or intellectual pleasure is better than the same amount of a purely physical pleasure (and that a malicious pleasure may even be disvaluable). However, not only can PI1 proponents undermine these intuitions by appealing to alternative explanations (see footnote 10), but they can appeal to a similar picture of the grounds of prudential value as PI2 does in order to justify PI1. That is, if we account for something being a bearer of prudential value in terms of its intrinsic properties, then it would follows that anything with the same intrinsic properties will also be prudentially valuable. Moreover, insofar as the magnitude of value of said bearer is determined by the amount of the value-determining property, the same amount of said property should account for the same magnitude of value in any context.

10 PI1 theories may try to account for intuitions supporting PV1, such as the example above, by appealing to the presence of other prudential goods or the fact that non-prudential values are also involved and affect our evaluations.
Again, RP offers an interesting perspective on this controversy. This is because it involves two broad levels at which something can be good or bad for us. On the first, things are good or bad for us in terms of some particular prudential dimension. This is the sense in which an instance of pleasure is *experientially* good for us, while an instance of failure is *aspiratively* bad for us. Of course, at this level things are good and bad for us in different kinds of ways, as instances of different goods bear different value properties. Moreover, their magnitude of value is expressible in terms of a numerical value along a cardinal scale, though said scale is different for each value property.

By contrast, the *all-things-considered* level of evaluation takes into consideration all dimensions of prudential value. However, the *all-things-considered* attributions of value or disvalue are not expressible in terms of a numerical value along cardinal scale. Instead, they correspond to a non-cardinal or imprecisely cardinal magnitude or an ordinal ranking relative to other bearers (Griffin 1986, Parfit 1984, Chang 2002a, 2016 – see Chapters 4 and 5, and Appendix 1) reflecting considerations from all relevant dimensions. This has the consequence that the *all-things-considered* value of an instance of a good may vary depending on the broader *evaluative* context: if an instance of pleasure is also an instance of ignorance, then it is *experientially* good and *epistemically* bad, and thus will have an *all-things-considered* value which reflects both of these aspects. Hence, an instance of pleasure of this kind may in fact be *all-things-considered* bad for us.

RP then offers a similar approach to the debate between PI1 and PV1 as it did with PI2 and PV2. That is, it allows for PV1 to be true about *all-things-considered* evaluations while PI1 can still be true for individual dimensions. Thus, the value of instances of particular goods can vary with context at the *all-things-considered* level. For example, a pleasure’s *all-things-considered* value changes depending on whether the relevant bearer is good or bad for us in different senses: an ignorant pleasure will also be *epistemically* bad for us and thus *all-things-
considered less good for us than a pleasure that is neutral along other dimensions; while the pleasure of a friend’s company will also be socially good for us, and hence all-things-considered better than a similar pleasure that is neutral along other dimensions. On the other hand, PI1 can remain true at the level of each dimension. After all, that the experiential value of an instance of pleasure changes with context (e.g. depending on whether it is also epistemically good or bad for us) doesn’t follow from the fact that the epistemic disvalue of an instance of pleasure will affect its all-things-considered value; if experiential value (whether it is realised and to what extent) is just a matter of certain intrinsic properties being instantiated by an object, then it seems reasonable to assume that an ignorant pleasure and a pleasure of friendship will have the same experiential value if they involve the same amount of pleasure. As a consequence, RP can once again enjoy the advantages of both positions (the PV1 explanation of variance in value between pleasures, the account of the grounds of prudential value in terms of the intrinsic properties of bearers) without the disadvantages of each.

It should be noted, though, that something superficially similar can be said by SP-VPM theorists. This is that an instance of pleasure may be bad for us in virtue of the fact that it is also an instance of ignorance, which, under this kind of account, is an ill that bears the same value property as pleasure. However, under SP-VPM an instance of pleasure would remain, qua pleasure, valuable. By contrast, under RP, at the all-things-considered level, the pleasure qua pleasure may well be bad for us. That is, the fact of taking pleasure in something that is epistemically bad (or aesthetically or morally, for that matter) could mean that said pleasure is all-things-considered bad for us. This is not to say that, at the same time, it does not remain good for us experientially, but this is a different kind of evaluation from the all-things-considered one. Indeed, the fact that the all-things-considered level

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11 If the disvalue of this bearer qua ignorance outweighs its value qua pleasure then it is overall bad for us, while if it does not it is overall good for us (but less so than a similar pleasure that was not also an instance of ignorance).
of RP seems to be characterisable in terms of PV1, while the individual level of each dimension can remain PI1, highlights this distinction.

Therefore, just as with PI2 and PV2, RP offers an interesting perspective and approach to PI1 and PV1, seemingly managing to find a middle ground between them, espousing one at the level of individual dimensions of value and the other at the *all-things-considered* level.
Section 3: Alienation and Idiosyncrasy.

Another issue in the literature on which the RP theory can offer some a new perspective is the debate between subject-dependent and subject-transcendent theories. According to Tiberius & Hall (2016), these are, respectively, theories which make what is good for a subject independent of the subject’s individual features (e.g. OLTs), and ones which do make it dependent of said features (e.g. DS). It should be noted that a similar distinction is made by a number of authors, though they refer to it by different terms – e.g. subject-relativity (Sumner 1996) and internalism-externalism (Rosati 1996, Velleman 2000, Railton 2003, Haybron 2008a). However, subject-dependence is broader (and hence subject-transcendence is narrower) than some of these. This is because some uses of internalism (e.g. Rosati 1996, Railton 2003) are equivalent to subjectivism. By contrast, Tiberius & Hall (2016) explicitly make space for some objectivist subject-dependent views, such as Kraut’s (2007) Developmentalism and Haybron’s (2008a) Eudaimonism. However, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, I will be restricting my discussion to subjectivist subject-dependent theories. Much of what I will be saying about subjectivist theories qua subject-dependent can be said, mutatis mutandis, about objectivist ones.

Section 3.1 – Alienation.

There is an important class of cases that is leveraged in the literature in support of subject-dependent theories: alienation (Railton 1986, 2003, Rosati 1996, Sumner 1996). These cases present a problem for subject-transcendent theories insofar as they appear to involve instances of kinds which are, generally

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12I will concern myself with this issue as it relates to theories of well-being exclusively, but note that these concerns can also be articulated with reference to objectivist theories within other evaluative domains, e.g. moral philosophy (Railton 1984).
speaking, prudentially valuable, but which, in these particular cases, do not in fact seem good for a subject. These issues are then diagnosed by subject-dependent theorists in terms of the fact that subject-transcendent theories attribute prudential value to objects independently of the particular individual features of the subject involved.

There are two important kinds of cases which are relevant here: (1) ones where particular instances of a putative good do not appear to be valuable for a subject, but other instances of the same are; (2) ones where no instances of some putative good appear to benefit a subject, even though instances of the same good are prudentially valuable for subjects in general. I will discuss each of these in turn.

Starting with (1), cases of this sort are ones where, for example, instances of some kind $K$, generally speaking, benefit a subject $s$, but a particular instance $i$ does not benefit $s$. In the literature, the most common, plausible OLT good facing such issues is understanding. For example, Fletcher (2009) gives two illustrative examples: the first concerns the understanding of why gorillas cannot swim, and the second concerns the understanding of why there is a particular number of black pens, say 100 thousand, in the Pentagon (2009, p29 – note that Fletcher formulates these in terms of knowledge). These instances of understanding really do not seem valuable, and, insofar as we think that an adequate subject-transcendent OLT should include understanding as a basic good, this suggests some deeper failure on part of such theories. The problem for such views is compounded by the fact that these same instances may well seem valuable to us under slightly different conditions: e.g. when we care about or desire them (e.g. if we want to understand why gorillas can’t swim, understanding why this is does seem valuable). But these are precisely the kind of consideration regarding the specific, individual characteristics of a subject which subject-dependent theories

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13 Examples of this kind seem easy to generate, so problems cases seem both numerous and, thus, hard to debunk.
take as fundamental to the grounds of prudential value. Therefore, it would seem that we need a *subject-dependent* approach rather than a *subject-transcendent* one.

Turning to (2), cases of this kind have already been discussed in section 3.2. There it was argued that there are subjects for whom no instances of an otherwise plausible good appear to be good. For example, animals and human infants (or children) do not seem to be able to benefit from goods such as understanding and achievement. Moreover, the same seems to be possible, at least in principle, for certain adult humans for whom achievement only matters instrumentally. Again, *subject-transcendent* views face a problem here insofar as instances of achievement bear the kind of properties that are supposed to ground their value; yet, they do not appear to in fact be valuable.

There are, it should be noted, *subject-transcendent* attempts to deal with the problem presented by *alienation*. A first approach that I will immediately set to a side is that of appealing to some kind of *variabilist* framework. As is, I think, clear, some of the concerns raised here mirror issues raised in section 2 regarding both PI1-PV1 and PI2-PV2. Though I take it that these discussions are connected, as is RP's relation to them, they remain distinct. In particular, Lin (2017, 2018) interprets the *subject-dependent* DS in PI2 terms (and PI1, it can be supposed), while Fletcher (2009) seems prepared to interpret the *subject-transcendent* OLTS in PV1 terms. As such, I will not discuss possible appeals to either PI1-PV1 or PI2-PV2 in addressing some of these intuitions.

A second kind of response is supported, in different forms, by both Sarch (2012) and Fletcher (2016). Both argue for including on our OLT list only goods that, in some sense, are attitude-dependent (Fletcher calls this the *constitutive strategy*, 2016 p157). For example, Fletcher argues for a list that includes on it only goods that are constituted by the “agent’s affective states and volitions” – e.g. pleasure,
happiness, friendship, and achievement. Though this is an interesting approach which I will discuss again below, Fletcher acknowledges that it leads to something of an impasse. That is, though the view allows for what particulars are in fact good for us to vary with the subject's attitudes, what kind of thing is good for us remains determined independently of them under the account (i.e. they remain subject-transcendent in this sense). The impasse arises insofar as it is not clear whether this leaves enough space for alienation. For example, if a subject were not interested in achievements of any kind, this would not mean that these are not good for them under Fletcher's suggestion. But a defender of subject-dependence might argue that if they do not value achievement, it cannot be good for them. Hence, searching for a different approach is, at least, warranted.

Finally, we might, in response, shift to a Hybrid theory (Raz 1986, Kraut 1994, Tiberius 2008, Kagan 2009, Lauringer 2013), where the subject-transcendent, objectivist account of the grounds of prudential value is joined with a subject-dependent component: either an enjoyment component (e.g. Kagan 2009) or a desire (e.g. Woodard 2016).\(^{14}\) Thus, some instance of understanding \(u\) is good for a subject \(s\) only if \(s\) enjoys or has a pro-attitude towards \(u\) and understanding is a basic good. However, though Hybrid theories are promising, they also face a number of problems which undermine reliance on these. For reasons of space, though, I will not discuss these issues here.\(^{15}\)

\(^{14}\)Note that there is disagreement among different formulations regarding whether the two components of Hybrid accounts provide jointly necessary conditions for something being good for us (Woodard 2013), or whether the objectivist side provides an account of the grounds of prudential value while the subjectivist side offers a condition on being benefited by something that is good for us (Tiberius 2008).

\(^{15}\)I will very briefly note two objections. One important problem is the objection from missing desires (Lauringer 2013), where an apparently-valuable \(x\) has the requisite objective properties but the subject does not desire it. A related but more convincing issue is raised by Kagan (2014) relating to Hybrid accounts of ill-being. That is, it seems that something that is bad for us according to the objectivist component (e.g. ignorance) is bad for us whether we enjoy it or not (or desire it or not), making the subjectivist component redundant for negative value.
Section 3.2 – Idiosyncrasy.

However, things are not quite as rosy for subject-dependent views as the case against subject-transcendence might make us think. After all, they also face a series of serious concerns, which I will here refer collectively as the problem of idiosyncrasy.\(^{16}\)

The problem of idiosyncrasy arises in relation to certain cases where, though we clearly desire something, the satisfaction of this desire does not seem good for us.\(^{17}\) The first two are both introduced by Parfit (1984). The first concerns cases of addiction, where we form a desire for a drug, a desire which the drug itself then sustains. Taking the drug satisfies our desire, but does not seem non-instrumentally good for us. The second case postulates that a subject meets a stranger on a train. As they start talking, the subject learns that the stranger is on their way to an interview for their dream job. On hearing this, the subject forms a desire for the stranger to do well in the interview and get the job. The two never see or hear from each other again, but the stranger does do well in the interview, gets the job, and thrives, thus satisfying the subject’s desire. However, this does not seem good for the subject, thus providing another counterexample to DS. Finally, the third case is that of the grass-counter (Rawls 1971). That is, imagine a subject who has an overriding desire (i.e. stronger than other, conflicting desires) to count the blades of grass in a field.\(^{18}\) If they do so, they satisfy this desire and should therefore be benefited under DS (indeed, if the desire is overriding it should be overall good for the subject). However, this does not seem to be the case, thus providing a further counter-example to DS.

\(^{16}\)This moniker is meant as a counterpart to alienation.

\(^{17}\)Note that some but not all of these should also affect Kraut’s (2007) and Haybron’s (2008) objectivist subject-dependent accounts: Kraut seems to only be affected by the grass-counter case or versions thereof, while Haybron by both that and the addiction cases.

\(^{18}\)Note that this is neither to discover the actual number of blades nor to discover something about why there is a particular number of blades of grass in the field.
I refer to these different objections in terms of a common term – *idiosyncrasy* – not only because they all purport to identify counter-examples to the theory (and so propose the same kind of objection), but because we can articulate a common diagnosis for all of these cases of non-valuable desire satisfaction: the fact that DS imposes no limitations on the kind of desire which might determine what is a constituent of someone’s well-being (i.e. it permits idiosyncratic desires to determine what is good for us). But the counterexamples above suggest that there must be some such constraint on what *kinds* of things can be good for us. As there are no subject-independent (i.e. objective) constraints on what can be good for us and to what extent it can be, there is no clear way in which DS can answer this kind of issue.\(^{19}\)

Attempted solutions, moreover, do not seem to adequately answer the problem of *idiosyncrasy*. A restriction of welfare-determining desires to Broad’s (1971) *self-regarding* desires,\(^ {20}\) for instance, may well help in the case of Parfit’s stranger (i.e. \(s_1\) desires that \(s_2\) does well for \(s_2\)’s sake), but not with some of the other cases – both the addiction and grass-counter cases seem to involve self-regarding desires. Similarly, attempts to rule-out some of these desires because they are in conflict with some second-order desire (Frankfurt 1971) may help deal with cases such as that of addiction (though a committed, willing addict is not inconceivable), but it cannot help with the others, as there is no reason to believe that these *must* involve a conflict with a second-order desire. Finally, appeals to *informed* desires (e.g. Sobel 2009) also do not help in these cases, as they involve desires that

\(^{19}\)Note that there are other problems with DS theories, such as difficulties with accounting for the harm of depressive states (e.g. Tully 2017) and the goodness of undesired transformational events which we later come to value.

\(^{20}\)i.e. desires *for-oneself* rather than *self-referential* ones, whose object merely refer to the subject – e.g. a desire that my friends do well. Note also Williams’s (1973c) related distinction between *I-desires* and *non-I-desires*. 
may be conceivably retained even under conditions where the subject is ideally well-informed about non-evaluative facts.

There may well be other ways in which subject-dependent views can defend themselves from idiosyncrasy cases, including biting the bullet. For our purposes, though, I will bracket these possibilities and assume for the sake of argument that idiosyncrasy constitutes a serious challenge to this kind of theory. This will allow us to explore the alternative via media offered by RP.

Section 3.3 – RP’s answer to alienation and idiosyncrasy.

Confronted with alienation on the one hand and idiosyncrasy on the other, it seems that theories of well-being are caught in something of a dilemma: on the one hand, they need a subject-dependent approach to deal with alienation, while on the other they also need a subject-transcendent one to deal with idiosyncrasy. RP can once again thread the needle between these two unwelcome outcomes.  

Starting with idiosyncrasy, it is I think clear why RP does not face this concern. Namely, it imposes subject-transcendent conditions on the kind of things which can be good for us: the only things that can be good or bad for us along each dimension are objects bearing the right kind of intrinsic properties. For instance, the only things that can be experientially good for us are pleasures. Counting grass involves none of the goods identified by the theory and is thus not good for us along any of the prudential dimensions (remember that the grass-counter does not come to understand or achieve anything through their endeavour), especially if we further postulate that there is no significant pleasure involved. Similarly, even if we thought that the social dimension permitted some sense in which the well-

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21 Note that Hybrid theories approach the issue in an analogous way.
being of friends was good for us, the stranger is not such a friend, and their success therefore involves none of the goods of RP. Finally, the case of addiction is somewhat harder to explain. Of course, the desire-based version of the case involves no RP goods, but this is not clearly the case if we characterise it in hedonic terms: taking the drug is reliably and greatly pleasant, with not experiential side-effects. However, RP can appeal to this being bad for us along different dimensions, such as the aspirative one, if taking the drug prevents us from successfully pursuing our projects. If, on the other hand, we further postulated, in an attempt to circumvent this response, that there are no such epistemic or aspirative side-effects, then there is no reason to think that the pleasure caused by the drug would not be all-things-considered good for us. Therefore, RP is not subject to concerns with idiosyncrasy.

Turning to alienation, RP also explains cases of kind (2) quite easily. In fact, we have already seen how the theory achieves this in section 2. That is, RP is not committed to the claim that any prudential good is good for any prudential subject. Both goods and subjects are not prudential simpliciter, but always of some particular kind. This means that cases of kind (2) can be explained in terms of the good in question being valuable in terms of a dimension which does not concern the subject. Thus, for example, a subject may be an experiential one, who can be benefited by experiential goods (i.e. pleasure), but not an aspirative subject, such that achievement is not good for them (and failure is not bad for them). This explains alienation cases of kind (2) as these involve precisely this kind of situation: subjects who are in general not benefited by otherwise plausible goods such as achievement.

Finally, dealing with alienation cases of kind (1) is more complicated, and it is less clear that RP can avoid the challenge they present. Ultimately though, I will maintain that it manages to do so. The reason for this is, once again, the fact that it has at its disposal a plurality of value properties. However, unlike with cases of
kind (2), this is not because of some formal feature of the theory, but because of the fact that having such a plurality of value properties enables a more fine-grained characterisation of each dimension. A demonstration of this was provided in Chapter 4, when the theory was first introduced, and in Chapter 6 section 5.2, where a possible characterisation of the epistemic dimension was discussed. What this means is that our characterisation of at least some of the dimensions can introduce an element of subject-dependence. For example, if epistemic value is a matter of the subject being integrated into or attuned to their world, this means that what can constitute the epistemic well-being of the subject is partly constituted by an individual feature of theirs. This is because what counts as a subject’s world will depend at least in part on their individual characteristics. For example, most people’s world will not involve primate biology as one of its constituent parts, but it might for a zoologist.

Furthermore, something similar can also be true with regards to the other dimensions. The characterisation of the aspirative dimension from Chapter 4, for example, involved the realisation of an ideal of oneself (an aspiration). However, unlike the Perfectionist understanding of this ideal, which is shared by all (human) subjects, what ideal a subject aspires to live up to and realise will depend on their own interests and individual characteristics. For example, one subject may aspire to some kind of artistic fame or accomplishment; another, by contrast, to contribute quite anonymously to some great collective achievement within an organisation. These do not seem to aspire to the same ideal (e.g. achievement in general) by different means, but rather to quite different ones.

Moreover, it should be noted that all apart from the epistemic dimension can also deal with this form of alienation in the same way as OLTs do on Fletcher’s (2016) constitutive strategy. That is, all of these dimensions involve goods whose instances depend on the subject’s attitudes and should therefore be able to avoid cases where the subject is alienated from something the theory posits as good for
them. But, RP’s adoption of this strategy does not face the same consequences that OLTs did. This is because, though the goods remain objectively good for *appropriate* subjects, whether they are in fact good *for a particular subject* depends, precisely, on whether the subject is of the appropriate kind or not: achievement is objectively good for *aspirative* subjects, but whether it is good for a particular subject, *s*, depends on whether *s* is an *aspirative* subject or not. \(^{22}\) Therefore, RP avoids the kind of case that created a problem for a standard OLT. After all, it can make space for a subject that not only doesn’t happen to care about achievement, but for whom it genuinely does not matter – i.e. a *non-aspirative* subject that can nonetheless obtain instances of a good.

Thus, RP seems to offer an account that is sensitive to the requirements imposed by both sides of a prudential value relation: the valuable intrinsic properties of the object and the properties of the subject which account for their being benefited by the former. By doing so, the resulting account is one which appears to fit in neither the *subject-dependent* nor *transcendent* camp, or at least allows particular value properties to have both.

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\(^{22}\)Note though that whether a subject is of an appropriate kind may be due to a species-specific or socially-determined property.
Conclusion.

In conclusion, RP appears to offer interesting insights into current issues in the well-being literature. In each of the cases discussed above it provided a way out of apparent impasses, which is a particularly promising outcome for the theory, as this kind of dialectical stalemate is precisely suggestive of the need for the introduction of new notions and frameworks into the discussion.
Conclusion

To summarise, this thesis has formulated and argued for the adoption of a radical pluralist (RP) theory of well-being. To accomplish this goal, Chapter 1 established the need for theories of well-being to supply an account of ill-being. After developing a pluralist objective list theory (OLT) account of ill-being, consisting in a list of basic ills, it was argued that resulting plausible pluralist OLTs exhibited a particular phenomenon: pairing. That is, that each good is specially related to a particular ill (and vice versa), such that goods and ills organise into pairs. After exploring some of the main features of this pairing relation and developing a prototype OLT of both goods and ills, I maintained that pairing is a pervasive phenomenon within such theories, one which they must explain.

Chapter 2 argued that pluralist OLTs are not able to account for this pairing. In particular, even though they can supply accounts of how paired goods and ills are related, OLTs cannot explain why they are related in this way. Given the proliferation of such pairs, this is a problem for these theories. This limitation was diagnosed as being due to the fact that OLTs do not provide second-order explanatory claims, which, it was then maintained, are needed in order to organise goods and ills into pairs.

Chapter 3 begun by clarifying what the requirements are for a second-order explanatory claim to account for pairing within a value property monist (VPM) framework. Perfectionism was found to meet these requirements. Following this, two different versions of perfectionism (the bipartite and tripartite views) were explored and found to be able to explain pairing. However, it was then argued that in both forms perfectionism fails to appropriately account for the value of pleasure and pain. This problem is not only a serious concern for perfectionism in its own right, but also points to a stronger kind of pluralism (e.g. value property pluralism, VPP). That is, it was argued that the problem facing perfectionism could be
addressed by appealing to a plurality of eudaimonist explanatory claims (including the perfectionist capacity-fulfilment), each accounting for a different good-ill pair. Though this does not entail a stronger form of pluralism, it is heavily suggestive of it, thus providing a further argument in favour of appealing to frameworks such as VPP.

Chapter 4 explored the distinction between different forms of pluralism, understood in terms of Heathwood’s system of classification. A theory of well-being subscribing to RP was articulated, including, programmatically, an experiential, an epistemic, an aspirative, and a social dimension of prudential value. This included appealing to RP’s resources to explain pairing: paired goods and ills bear a different value property from goods and ills of other pairs, such that, e.g., pleasure and pain are paired in virtue of being good for us in the same kind of way (experientially), while other goods and ills are good for us in other kinds of ways (e.g. aspiratively).

In Chapter 5, a serious problem for the RP theory of well-being was articulated. This relied on the joint premises (1) that such a theory implies the incomparability of items bearing different kinds of value properties, and (2) that items that according to the RP theory bear different kinds of value properties are, in fact, comparable. In response, a two-level account of the normative relations between incommensurable prudential values was developed, from which an account of non-cardinal (or imprecisely cardinal) comparisons is feasible. The first level provided an account of how these normative relations structure considerations of different values at an all-things-considered level. In particular, this account provides a discontinuity-based account of the comparative relations between distributions of values, which then serves as a basis for the comparative relations between options in terms of their place within a pattern of choices realising a particular distribution. The second level, on the other hand, appealed to a metaphorical characterisation of the grounds of these normative relations first
offered by Ruth Chang. This, then, was further developed to provide a general account of why normative relations between value subsist.

Chapter 6 then turned to arguments in favour of the RP theory of well-being. After raising and dismissing two arguments derived from prominent lines of argument in the literature, I focused on the central case for the proposed theory. It was maintained (1) that it can be rational to regret not choosing a lesser prudential option in cases where, under RP, these would be good or bad for us in different ways, (2) that VPM accounts cannot explain this, and (3) that only VPP accounts can do so. This line of argument was then defended against possible objections, focusing on the objection inspired by an example by Hurka (1996). Three possible ways in which RP could respond to said objection were developed, showing the variety of possible responses open to RP.

Finally, Chapter 7 applied the RP theory of well-being to three issues within the philosophy of well-being: the formulation of explanatory theories, the variabilism-invariatibilism debate, and the problem of alienation facing objectivist theories. In each case, RP offered a novel and promising way out of each impasse: by allowing a plurality of second-order explanatory claims; by offering both variabilist and invariabilist elements, retaining the strengths of each but none of the drawbacks; and by allowing for a limited degree of subject-dependence within a broadly subject-transcendent framework, which avoids that the subject is alienated from posited bearers of value.

To conclude, I will briefly highlight and discuss two avenues for future research offered by the proposed RP theory of well-being. The first concerns questions about the relation between the philosophy of well-being and discussions about the nature of subjects. As was discussed in this thesis (Chapter 7), the fact that certain value properties apply to particular subjects appears to depend on their being subjects of an appropriate kind (e.g. things being epistemically good for us.
depends on our being *epistemic* subjects). Hence, the RP theory makes questions of prudential value partly dependent on questions about the self and the kind of organisms that particular subjects are. In turn, this raises questions regarding whether the relevant kinds are essential or acquired (e.g. Korsgaard’s self-constitution, 2009), or indeed whether some very general conception of subjects imposes higher-order restrictions on which identities can be legitimately acquired (and, hence, which value relations a subject can come to stand in). For example, Lee (2021) proposes a higher-order prudential norm based on an *autopoietic* enactivist account of organisms (e.g. Varela, Thompson, & Rosch 2017), which identifies and critiques adaptations if they restrict future adaptations of the organism to their environment.

The second topic concerns our prudential strategies: how to live a good life. Previous discussions seemed to broadly assume what we might call an accumulative model under which subjects pursue their well-being primarily by seeking to obtain instances of goods. Though the RP theory does not deny the importance of this kind of consideration, it draws attention to alternative strategies. For instance, the fact that realisations of different values are sometimes incompossible even across a range of options (see chapter 6), means that these values can be in conflict. Thus, the accumulative model ignores one of the main limitations to the quality of our lives: the fact that obtaining one good may mean accepting an uncompensated loss with regards to some other prudential dimension. Though RP cannot change this entirely, it points towards what we might call a *turn inwards*. For example, RP may recommend a focus on asserting our agency over what particulars realise different dimensions such as to harmonise them. This, involves a shift in our concerns, as *harmonisation* requires exerting agency over what kind of subjects we are, rather than merely on what we have.
These are, I take it, new outlooks and approaches to questions central to the philosophy of well-being, making the RP theory a promising focus for future inquiry.
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Appendix 1: Non-Cardinal Relations

This appendix entry is referred to in Chapter 5, Section 1, relating to the argument in favour of the thesis that instances of incommensurable values are incomparable. A first argument for this thesis relied on the claim that no cardinal relation can hold between magnitudes of incommensurable values (as these cannot be expressed along a common cardinal scale). This was rebuffed by noting that there are models of non-cardinal comparative relations and that, hence, the connection between incommensurability and incomparability could not be asserted on the basis of this first argument.

This appendix briefly outlines the three main accounts of such non-cardinal relations: Griffin’s (1986) rough comparability and Parfit’s (1984, 2016) and Chang’s (2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2016) imprecise comparability.¹

The first step in understanding these conceptions of non-cardinal relations is in articulating the relations in which instances of incommensurable value can stand towards one another when they are neither better, worse, nor equal to each other (i.e. incomparability under the trichotomy thesis). Thus, to use Chang’s example,² Michelangelo and Mozart are neither better nor worse than the other, but also cannot be said to be equal. As Chang points out, if we assume the trichotomy thesis of comparative relations (i.e. there are only three comparative relations, better, worse, and equal), this would mean that no positive comparative relations hold between these items and, therefore, these are incomparable. To resist this move, each of the authors above introduces a similar notion of a comparative relation which can hold between items that appear to be incomparable: parity (Chang, 2002a, 2002b), rough equality (Griffin 1986), and imprecise equality

¹Parfit and Chang differ in some important respects – see the following discussion.
²See Chapter 5, Section 1.2.
(Parfit 1986, 2016). While the latter two take these to be particular conceptions of equality, Chang (2002a, 2002b, 2016) understands *parity* to be a fourth *sui generis* relation. She is thus committed to denying the standard *trichotomy* thesis of comparative relations (better, worse, and equal to) and to assert the *tetrachotomy* thesis (i.e. which adds *parity* as a fourth relation).

We can now turn to how we can conceptualise these relations other than in terms of the precise cardinal relation between the numerical values of magnitudes on a ratio cardinal scale. Starting with Griffin (1986), he does so by appealing to the notion of an ordinal scale. An ordering is an organisation of items into a ranking according to some specified rule (e.g. being at least as good as, Griffin 1986, p93, p95). Thus, items *x*, *y*, and *z* are organised into an ordering according to the rule “at least as good as” based on their comparative relations. Thus, if *x* is better than *y* and *z*, and *y* is better than *z*, they are ordered such that *x* has a ranking of 1, *y* of 2, and *z* of 3. He then understands an ordering which permits items to be *roughly equal* to one another as involving areas of *vagueness*: where items are *roughly equal*, it is neither clearly true not false that they are *better*, *worse*, or *equal* to each other. Griffin (1986, p98) calls the resulting ordering a partially transitive weak one, though we should bear in mind that it is also a vague ordering.

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3 Hurka (1993), Sen (1987), and Seung & Bonevac (1992) also discuss similar approaches.

4 We can understand the difference between *parity* and *equality* as follows: *equality* involves a zero difference between items; *parity* involves a *non-zero* difference between items that does not amount to a *biased* difference (Chang 2001) – i.e. *better* or *worse*. See below on how we can understand this.

5 Chang (2002a, 2016) identifies two ways of understanding *parity*. First in terms of the difference between items as constituted by an interval range of legitimate evaluations (e.g. Chang 2002a, pp146-147, Gert 2004); second, in terms of a supervaluational interval model, where there is a plurality of legitimate rankings of items that are on a *par* – according to some, one item is *better*; according to others, it is *worse*, and according to the remaining, the two items are *equal* (e.g. Chang 2002a, pp147-149, 2016, Rabinowicz 2008, 2012).

6 Note that if *parity* is a *sui generis* relation and conceived in this sense, it is symmetric (if *x* is on a *par* with *y*, then *y* is on a *par* with *x*) but neither reflexive nor transitive: *x* cannot be on a *par* with itself, but only *equal*; if *x* is on a *par* with *y* and also with *y*+, where *y*+ is a slight improvement on *y*, it does not follow that *y* is on a *par* with *y*+ (Chang, 2016, p195).

7 This means that the ordering is one for which neither completeness nor transitivity is true: (respectively) if *x* and *y* are *roughly equal*, and *x*+ is a slight improvement on *x*, it may still be true that *x*+ is roughly...
By contrast, neither Parfit nor Chang appeal to ordinal scales in this way (though this point is sometimes missed, e.g. Boot 2017). This is because both take *parity* and *imprecise equality* to be a matter of *imprecise cardinality*. Chang takes *imprecisely cardinal* comparisons to be ones which permit of a difference in magnitude (*cardinality*) between the elements of a resulting ordered pair (a *comparison*), albeit one which cannot be measured in terms of a unit of measure (2016, p188). Thus, she understands items that are on a par (as well as *imprecisely* better and worse) to be ones between which there is an evaluative difference with magnitude, but where said difference “does not favour one alternative over the other – it has no direction” (Chang 2016, p195). I suggest we understand this, based on Chang’s Michelangelo-Mozart example (2016, p195), as reflecting the fact that items that are good or bad *in different ways* will of course differ in their value. So, this is the sense in which there is a difference between $x$ and $y$, where $x$ has $25v_1$ value and $y$ has $35v_2$ value and they are on a *par*: both are valuable in ways the other isn’t, but this difference does not bear on the choiceworthiness of one over the other.

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equal to $y$, such that $x$ is not better than $y$, $y$ is not better than $x$, and $x$ is not (precisely) equal to $y$ (Griffin 1986, p96 – also see Chang on the argument from small improvements, 2002b); just because some $x$ is roughly equal to both $y$ and $z$ it does not follow that $y$ and $z$ are also roughly equal, as $x$ can be roughly equal to both $y$, and $y^+$ (where $y^+$ is a slight improvement on $y$), but $y$ and $y^+$ are not roughly equal ($y^+$ is by definition better than $y$)