

Feldman on the nature and value of pleasure

By: Michael J. Zimmerman

[Zimmerman, Michael J.](#) Feldman on the Nature and Value of Pleasure, *Philosophical Studies*, 136 (3) (2007): 425-437. DOI: 10.1007/s11098-006-9042-3

The original publication is available at www.springerlink.com or <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11098-006-9042-3>

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Abstract:

Fred Feldman is the Roger Federer of philosophy. His strokes are crisp and clean, his shots deep and penetrating, his finesse dazzling. And he makes it all look so easy! *Pleasure and the Good Life* is just the latest in a long line of works that are peerless in their combination of insight, rigor, subtlety, and clarity. There is a great deal in the book that seems to me absolutely right and about which I will therefore have nothing to say. In this comment, I will focus on points that continue to trouble me, despite Feldman's best efforts at setting me straight.

Keywords: Feldman - Hedonism - Pleasure - Intrinsic value

Article:

The nature of pleasure and pain

Feldman draws a distinction between sensory and attitudinal pleasure and pain. According to him (pp. 79–80¹), a sensory pleasure is a feeling or sensation such that the person who experiences it takes intrinsic attitudinal pleasure in the fact that he (or she) has it; likewise, a sensory pain is a feeling or sensation such that the person who experiences it takes intrinsic attitudinal pain in the fact that he has it. (To take intrinsic pleasure or pain in a fact is to take pleasure or pain in it for its own sake.) All sensory pleasure or pain thus involves attitudinal pleasure or pain. But attitudinal pleasure and pain need not involve sensations; one can take such pleasure or pain in just about any kind of fact, and, if no sensation is involved, then no feeling is involved.

I think the distinction between sensory and attitudinal pleasure and pain is of first importance, but I disagree with some of the details of Feldman's characterization of these phenomena. That there is such a distinction to be drawn is indicated by the fact that the word "pleasure" in English has two antonyms, "pain" and "displeasure," that are certainly not themselves synonyms. For some reason, Feldman does not make use of the term "displeasure," although it is well suited to what he calls attitudinal pain. In what follows, I will reserve the term "pain" for what Feldman calls sensory pain and use "displeasure" to refer to what he calls attitudinal pain. For want of better terminology, "pleasure" will continue to do double duty.

Feldman's account of what it is for a sensation to be a pain strikes me as mistaken. First, it seems too broad. Lots of sensations that I mind having (itches, feelings of nausea, etc.) are not pains.² Second, it seems too narrow. Feldman appears to accept the possibility that two people have qualitatively identical sensations that we would normally call pains but which only one of them minds having. In such a case, he would say, only the person who minds having the sensation actually experiences pain. I disagree; I think both of them do. Feldman claims (p. 82) that his position does justice to our sense that "if it is a pain, it must hurt." But I find this indecisive, since the assertion "it hurts, but I don't mind" seems to me perfectly coherent, even when it is stressed that "I don't mind" is understood to mean that the person takes no *intrinsic* displeasure in being hurt. It is hard to know how this matter might be conclusively resolved, especially since I have no account of pain (other than, perhaps, that something is a pain if and only if it hurts) to offer in place of Feldman's, but perhaps one test is how best to conceive of masochism. Feldman insists that masochism involves both attitudinal

pleasure and pain. I agree. Given his account of pain, though, he is committed to saying that masochism involves both attitudinal pleasure and displeasure. He says, more particularly (p. 89), that masochism involves taking intrinsic displeasure in a sensation and taking intrinsic pleasure in one's displeasure. I suspect (but it is no more than a suspicion) that this is false. It seems to make masochism too cerebral. Feldman says (p. 59) that, if one takes pleasure in a certain state of affairs, one must believe it to be true. I am not sure that this claim is right, but if there are any exceptions to it (such as pleasures in fiction—an issue that Feldman explicitly addresses), “ordinary” masochistic pleasures would not seem to be among them; so let us grant it. Feldman also says³ that believing a state of affairs requires being able to conceive that state of affairs, which seems right. I take this to require in turn being able to grasp the state of affairs in question. If so, his account implies that a masochist must be able to grasp the fact that he is taking intrinsic displeasure in the fact that he is experiencing some sensation. This is pretty sophisticated. I think it probably precludes masochism in, say, monkeys. But I see no reason to think monkeys incapable of masochism. An alternative account of masochism is simpler. It says that masochism involves taking pleasure in certain sensations that hurt. (I suspect that this is too simple as it stands, and that the circumstances must be “right” for the masochist to enjoy the sensations. But let that pass.) This account would seem to allow for masochism in monkeys, while properly distinguishing between masochists and, say, fakirs, who (I suspect) are not hurt when they lie down (carefully) on a bed of nails.

As reported above, Feldman claims (p. 56) that attitudinal pleasures and displeasures that involve no sensation involve no feeling. I find this misleading. The term “feeling” is elastic and is applied just as properly to moods and emotions as to sensations. While reading what Feldman has to say about attitudinal pleasure and displeasure, I often got the impression that he conceives of these attitudes as being purely cognitive, devoid of any affective component. I must immediately add, however, that this is an issue that he does not explicitly address, and so my impression may well be mistaken. At any rate, it seems to me that an adequate account of the nature of attitudinal pleasure and displeasure must make reference to their affective aspect, and that an adequate account of the value of these attitudes must also make reference to this aspect. It is possible to be “thinly” pleased or displeased about something, that is, to *be* pleased or displeased without *feeling* pleased or displeased. (There is an analogous distinction to be drawn between being angry and feeling angry, between being afraid and feeling afraid, and so on.) For example, I may be quite pleased in the decline in unemployment and yet feel no pleasure at all. I do not have any precise account to offer of the nature of either thin or thick pleasure or displeasure, but I would say that thick pleasure (*feeling* pleased about something) involves something like elation or euphoria, while thick displeasure (*feeling* displeased about something) involves something like depression or dysphoria, although these terms are surely too strong when it comes to describing the affective aspect of low-intensity pleasures and displeasures. And I would note two further points. First, it would seem possible to feel elated or depressed without being pleased or displeased about anything. Second, when it is said that there is value in pleasure or disvalue in displeasure, it is surely *feeling* pleased or displeased that is usually intended. It is chiefly the euphoric aspect of (thick) pleasure that makes such pleasure pleasant and the dysphoric aspect of (thick) displeasure that makes such displeasure unpleasant. There would seem to be no great personal benefit to be derived from being pleased when this involves no euphoria, no great personal cost in being displeased when this involves no dysphoria.

One might retort on Feldman's behalf: just as it is possible not to take pleasure in sensations that are normally described as pleasant and not to take displeasure in sensations that are normally described as unpleasant, so too it is possible not to take pleasure in a feeling of euphoria and not to take displeasure in a feeling of dysphoria. And just as there is nothing good about a sensation unless one takes pleasure in it and nothing bad about a sensation unless one takes displeasure in it, so too there is nothing good about euphoria unless one takes pleasure in it and nothing bad about dysphoria unless one takes displeasure in it. Such pleasure and displeasure must (on pain of regress) themselves be thin. Thus, at bottom, it is thin, and not thick, pleasure and displeasure that account for what is of value and disvalue here.

I reject this argument. Perhaps there is no value in euphoria if one takes no pleasure in it and no disvalue in dysphoria if one takes no displeasure in it, but that is perfectly consistent with euphoria and dysphoria being critical aspects of other phenomena that are *themselves* valuable and disvaluable. Surely, one need not take

pleasure in being pleased in order for being pleased to be valuable; that would launch a vicious regress. So, too, one need not take pleasure in feeling pleased in order for feeling pleased to be valuable. And it is feeling pleased, rather than merely being pleased, that would seem to be especially valuable. Likewise, it is feeling displeased, rather than merely being displeased, that would seem to be especially disvaluable.⁴

Two types of value

I have just talked of the value and disvalue of pleasure and displeasure. Such talk needs to be refined. There are a number of distinctions to draw.

Feldman's main question in *Pleasure and the Good Life* is what makes for a good life. He is aware that the word "good" in this context may be construed in a number of ways. He distinguishes (pp. 8–9) between a morally good life, an instrumentally good life, an aesthetically good life, a good example of a distinctively human life, and a life that is good in terms of the personal welfare or well-being of the one who lives it. It is with the last of these that he is concerned. He uses the phrase "a life that is good in itself for the one who lives it" to capture the relevant idea. He contrasts (pp. 135–36) what is good for a person, in this sense, with what is good "for the world." In so doing, he is drawing a distinction. It is not entirely clear to me, however, just what this distinction is supposed to consist in.

One possible view, View 1, is this. There are two types of value, which I will call "personal" and "impersonal." In principle, all sorts of things may have one or the other or both of these values. For example, an episode (e.g., an episode of pleasure) might be personally good but impersonally bad; so too, a life composed of many and various episodes might be personally good but impersonally bad; likewise, a world composed of many and various lives (among other things) might be personally good but impersonally bad.

Another possible view, View 2, is this. There is just one pertinent type of value that episodes can have, but how episodes contribute value to the lives that contain them differs from how they contribute value to the worlds that contain them. For example, certain episodes of pleasure might be such that a life full of them is good whereas a world full of them is bad.

I don't know what to make of View 2, because I don't know what type of value is supposed to be at issue. Feldman sometimes writes as if it is this view that he embraces. For example, he says (p. 136):

I am suggesting that there may be no necessary link between the amount of intrinsic value contributed by a certain episode of pleasure *to a life* and the amount of intrinsic value contributed by that same episode *to the world*.

This suggests that it is the items evaluated that account for the difference in evaluations, rather than the types of value in terms of which the evaluations are made. Later (pp. 192 ff.) Feldman addresses an objection to hedonism raised by W. D. Ross. Ross imagines two worlds qualitatively identical with respect to the pleasure and pain contained in the lives led by the people who populate the worlds, but different in that, in one world, those who receive pleasure are virtuous and those who receive pain are vicious whereas, in the other, those who receive pleasure are vicious and those who receive pain are virtuous. Ross's objection is that hedonism declares the worlds equally valuable, whereas the former is in fact better than the latter. Feldman agrees with Ross's evaluation of the worlds but claims that it may nevertheless be the case that lives containing equal amounts of pleasure are equally good, and that lives containing equal amounts of pain are equally bad, no matter whether the people who live these lives are virtuous or vicious. He adds (p. 195): "I am therefore proposing that the evaluation of worlds and the evaluation of lives make use of different considerations." This again suggests that it is the items evaluated that account for the difference in evaluations, rather than the types of value in terms of which the evaluations are made. Despite such passages, I believe that Feldman actually subscribes to View 1 (a view that I endorse⁵), according to which both lives and worlds are equally open to evaluation in terms of personal value and to evaluation in terms of impersonal value. I will now undertake a brief elaboration of this view and a brief assessment of Feldman's endorsement of hedonism interpreted in light of it.

Let us attend, first, to the distinction between what I have called personal and impersonal value. As Feldman says, something is personally good—good for some particular person—if and only if it is good in terms of the welfare or well-being of that person. To get a fix on this type of value, Feldman proposes (pp. 9–10) a “crib test”:

Imagine that you are filled with love as you look into the crib, checking on your newly arrived firstborn child... You might think of various ways in which the baby’s life could turn out... Your concern for the baby might express itself in the hope that, whatever he does, things will turn out well for him. You might hope that this baby gets a good life – a life good in itself for him. That hope...is a hope about the topic of this book.

As Feldman notes, this test might not always work, since even very strong love might not guarantee that a parent is concerned solely for the welfare of the child when thinking about what might be a “good” life for, or involving, the child; but it is helpful.

What I call impersonal value is quite different. It is (I think) what people usually have in mind when they talk about “intrinsic value.” Intrinsic value is to be contrasted with extrinsic value; the former is (supposed to be⁶) value that is nonderivative, the latter value that is derivative. But, as I understand it, most discussions of intrinsic and extrinsic value are not concerned just with any type of nonderivative and derivative value; they are concerned with one particular type, which I call impersonal value. The label “impersonal value” is not ideal. Although it draws the appropriate contrast with personal value, it does not provide any positive characterization of the type of value that is at issue. In my view, a better label would be “ethical value.” When Ross and Feldman, for example, say that the world in which the virtuous prosper and the vicious suffer is better than the world in which the reverse is true, they are (I believe) looking at matters from an ethical standpoint. It is *ethically* fitting that personal goods and evils be distributed as they are in the first world, *ethically* unfitting that they be distributed as they are in the second world; hence, an ethically sensitive person would, *ceteris paribus*, prefer the first world to the second. Feldman does not express himself in these terms, but I think he sympathizes with this claim.⁷ I hasten to add that the label “ethical value” is not ideal, either. First, it is controversial whether intrinsic value (in the present, impersonal sense) is to be understood (as I have claimed) in terms of how an ethically sensitive person would respond to such value. Second, I am not maintaining that the first world is *morally* better than the second, at least not in the sense in which this claim is usually understood. This is not because I am drawing any distinction between ethics and morality; it is simply that we must be careful to distinguish two claims, whether put in terms of ethics or morality. The point is this. There is just as much virtue in the second world as in the first, just as much vice in the first as in the second. Thus there is a sense in which the two worlds are morally (or ethically) on a par, despite the fact (as I see it) that an ethically (or morally) sensitive person would, *ceteris paribus*, prefer the first to the second.⁸

The terms “intrinsic value” and “extrinsic value” are not always used to refer to the sort of impersonal value that I have just characterized as ethical value. Sometimes they are used, more broadly, to refer to any (or, at least, more than one) type of nonderivative and derivative value. Feldman himself uses them in this more liberal fashion.⁹ As I have already noted, he talks about what I have called nonderivative personal value in terms of what is “good (or bad) in itself for” the person in question; sometimes (e.g., p. 11) he talks instead of what is “intrinsically good (or bad) for” the person. I have no quarrel with this, as long as the distinction between personal and impersonal value is maintained. There is a danger, however, of blurring the distinction, especially if the “for” in “intrinsically good (or bad) for” is omitted, as is very often the case in what Feldman writes.¹⁰

If we keep the distinction between personal and impersonal value clear, though, another puzzle arises: why should we take seriously any of the “adjustments” to intrinsic attitudinal hedonism (IAH, p. 66) that Feldman discusses? What IAH (understood as a thesis about personal rather than impersonal value) says is roughly this: all and only episodes of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure are nonderivatively personally good for the person who experiences them, and all and only episodes of intrinsic (attitudinal) displeasure are nonderivatively personally bad for the person who experiences them. In response to objections raised against hedonism by other writers,

Feldman discusses various possible adjustments to IAH. There is, for example, AAIAH (p. 75), that adjusts the values of episodes of pleasure (but not, for some reason, of displeasure) according to how “high” or “low” the attitudes involved are in terms of the suitability of their objects. DAIAH (p. 121) is concerned with much the same thing (although it adjusts the values of episodes of displeasure, too). TAI AH (p. 112) adjusts the values of episodes of pleasure (but not of displeasure, for reasons that Feldman discusses on p. 111) according to whether the pleasures are taken in true or false objects. These adjustments are supposed to demonstrate the “plasticity” of hedonism: they can be acknowledged and accepted without abandoning hedonism; hedonism can absorb them. That may be true (whether it is true is something I will discuss in Sect. 4), but a more important question is why we should bother with the adjustments in the first place, since the objections seem, often at least, to stem from *ethical* concerns. For example, someone who disapproves of a life full of “low” pleasures is likely, I think, to be questioning the *ethical* value of such a life, rather than the claim that such a life is good in terms of *personal* welfare.¹¹ But, if this is so, then the proper response to the objection is not to absorb it by adjusting one’s theory but to reject it outright as misdirected, since it concerns ethical value and not the sort of personal value with which IAH has to do.¹²

My impression is that Feldman is inclined to endorse the response just mentioned. On several occasions (e.g., pp. 39, 42, 110 ff., 189) he indicates that he is underwhelmed by the objections, as I think he probably should be. A clear emphasis on the distinction between personal and impersonal (ethical) value would have helped both to explain and, I think, to justify such a response. Still, this is not to deny that there might nonetheless be reason to claim that IAH is too rough an account of personal value, and it is helpful to see how in principle adjustments to the account can serve to refine it.

The bearers of value

According to Feldman, the bearers of value (whether personal or impersonal) are states of affairs that may either obtain or not. I think that this is incorrect and that the bearers of value are concrete entities. I will not try to spell out here what I take to be the nature of the concrete entities in question,¹³ but I will give some reasons for doubting Feldman’s position.

First, consider the sort of state of affairs to which IAH would assign basic intrinsic value. (Basic intrinsic value is what constitutes the basis of assignments of intrinsic value to “larger” entities, such as lives or worlds.) Feldman gives this example (p. 176):

B4: At noon on Tuesday, October 16, 2001, Bob takes intrinsic attitudinal pleasure of intensity +8 in the fact that Bob’s beer is frosty cold.

IAH declares B4 intrinsically good. I find this odd, since B4 may not obtain. If it does not obtain, it represents nothing of value (whether personal or impersonal) in Bob’s life or in the world. There *would* be something valuable if B4 *did* obtain, but that is not to say that B4 itself *is* valuable.

Feldman has a response to this kind of objection.¹⁴ He says that what makes a life or world valuable is not the basic intrinsic value states that *exist* in that life or world but the basic intrinsic value states that *obtain* in it. This seems to me an inadequate response. Perhaps something like this formula is correct when computing the values of lives or worlds in terms of their components, but it still leaves us with having to say that a state of affairs (or life, or world) *itself* has intrinsic value even when *it* does not obtain. Feldman can say that, if B4 does not obtain, it contributes nothing of value to *Bob’s life* or *the world*, but he is still committed to saying that it *itself* is good. This seems to me especially odd in those cases in which B4 fails to obtain because Bob does not exist. How can there be anything in B4 that is either impersonally good or personally good for Bob, if Bob does not exist?

A second problem concerns Feldman’s account of basic intrinsic value states. Consider B4 again. Letting “b” function as a rigid designator for Bob, “t” for the time at issue, and “c” for the content of Bob’s pleasure, and

using “P” as a four-place relational predicate that expresses intentional attitudinal pleasure, Feldman represents the logical structure of B4 as follows (p. 176):

$$B4' : Pb, t, +8, c.$$

It is important on this account that there be a term designating the content involved in B4, as well as terms designating the person and time involved. Thus, where c' is distinct from c , the state of affairs represented by “ $Pb, t, +8, c'$ ” is distinct from that represented by $B4'$. And so, in a situation in which both these states of affairs obtain, two distinct episodes of pleasure, each with its own value, should and can be acknowledged. It is in this way that Feldman seeks to accommodate the fact (p. 60) that a person can take intrinsic attitudinal pleasure in more than one thing at once, and thus to avoid undercounting value. I think this effort fails, though; it threatens both to overcount and to undercount value.

Consider Bob, who is delighted that his beer is frosty cold. I think his being so probably entails that he is also delighted that his beer is cold, that his beer is not warm, that his beer is not hot, and so on. Each of these is a distinct object of pleasure and thus, according to Feldman, a component of a basic intrinsic value state distinct from $B4'$. Given that each distinct basic intrinsic value state bears its own distinct value, Feldman’s account thus overestimates the value involved in Bob’s pleasure. Feldman could reply that my premise is mistaken, and that the entailments just mentioned do not hold. I suppose that this might be correct, if it is occurrent pleasure that is at issue (which presumably is the case). Occurrent pleasure involves contemplating the fact in which one takes pleasure, and perhaps it is the case that contemplating that one’s beer is frosty cold does not entail contemplating the facts that one’s beer is cold, not warm, etc. But even if this is the case, it provides only for a local “fix.” After all, Bob *could* contemplate both the fact that his beer is frosty cold and the facts that it is cold, not warm, etc.; surely this would not increase the value of his enjoyment. Moreover, Feldman’s general account of basic intrinsic value states is supposed to apply to all axiologies, including the (admittedly odd) axiology according to which it is not just occurrent but dispositional pleasure that has value. In the case of dispositional pleasure, the entailments mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph seem to hold.

Feldman’s account also appears to undercount value, since a person can experience two pleasures with identical content and intensity at once. For example, Bob could be intrinsically delighted in two different ways in the fact that his beer is frosty cold, in which case there would seem to be two basic intrinsic value states involved, not just the one represented by $B4'$. Feldman could respond: in that case, the basic intrinsic value states at issue are not properly represented by $B4'$; rather, one may be represented by “ $P_1b, t, +8, c$ ” and the other by “ $P_2b, t, +8, c$,” where “ P_1 ” and “ P_2 ” express the types of pleasure that are at issue. But this will not do. Feldman claims¹⁵ that every basic intrinsic value state constitutes a “pure attribution” of some “core” value-making property or relation. This is a sensible condition to impose; a *basic* value state should contain no “information” (p. 174) beyond that which is strictly relevant to the determination of value. In the case of IAH, however, “ P_1 ” and “ P_2 ” do not meet this condition, since the different ways in which one may be pleased are, on this theory, irrelevant to the value generated by pleasure.

Another response that Feldman could make is this: the basic intrinsic value states at issue are, again, not properly represented by $B4'$, but nor are they to be represented as suggested in the last paragraph; rather they may be represented by “ $Pb, t, +8, w_1, c$ ” and “ $Pb, t, +8, w_2, c$,” where “ w_1 ” and “ w_2 ” designate the ways of being pleased that are at issue. This response preserves the purity of “P,” but I think it is still unsatisfactory. Note, first, that “P” is now being treated as a five-place predicate. Note, second, that no criterion for distinguishing ways of being pleased has been provided. It would seem possible that a person be pleased twice in the same “way” but in different “subways” at once. If so, we must move from treating “P” as a five-place predicate to treating it as a six-place predicate. But that might not be the end of the matter; perhaps we must distinguish “subsubways” of being pleased, and so on.

In my view, the difficulties just mentioned regarding overcounting and undercounting value can be avoided if the bearers of value are treated as concrete entities of a certain sort. Once again, however, I will not pursue the point here.

A third problem has to do with Feldman's characterization of the value that concerns him (whether personal or impersonal) as "intrinsic value." He means the term to be taken seriously. He claims (p. 26):

The intrinsic value of a thing is a component of its value that depends on the intrinsic features of the thing rather than on its relations. Thus, for example, the intrinsic value of an episode of pleasure must depend on facts about that episode of pleasure itself (such as [its intensity], or its duration...) and not upon extrinsic features (such as its cause, or its effects...).

It is now widely acknowledged, though, that it cannot be assumed without argument that the sort of value with which Feldman is concerned—"final value," as it is often called (the term is intended to capture the idea that something that has such value is valuable for its *own* sake, *nonderivatively*)—must depend entirely on the intrinsic features of its bearers.¹⁶ Feldman is aware of this issue. He claims (p. 177) that his account of basic intrinsic value states implies that their intrinsic value (their final value) depends entirely on their intrinsic features. Consider again B4'. Its value is fixed by the intensity and duration of the pleasure that it involves; nothing external to it is relevant.¹⁷ Or, at least, so Feldman says. I think that there is reason to accept what he says when it is final *impersonal* value that is at issue, but final *personal* value is another matter.

What is the final personal value of B4'? When introducing IAH, Feldman proposes (pp. 65–66) that the amount of attitudinal pleasure in an episode is determined by its intensity and duration, and that the intrinsic value of an episode of pleasure is equal to the amount of pleasure it involves. On this approach, the "intrinsic" value of B4' would be $(8 \times 1 =) 8$.¹⁸ But remember that this is supposed to be the final value that B4' has *for Bob*. There is no need to think that the final value that B4' has for someone *other* than Bob is 8. Thus the final personal value of a state of affairs would seem to depend not just on its intrinsic features but on its relation to the person whose personal value is at issue. In pointing this out, I am not criticizing Feldman's account of how final personal value is to be computed; I am merely casting doubt on his characterization of such value as intrinsic value, where the term "intrinsic" is taken seriously.

A final issue concerning bearers of value has to do with Feldman's claim (p. 175) that the intrinsic value of basic intrinsic value states is always fully determinate, whatever axiology is at issue. Whereas this may be so on IAH, I do not think we can assume that it is so for all axiologies. Suppose that some axiology declares courage to be intrinsically good (whether personally or, more plausibly, ethically). We can distinguish degrees of courage, but there may be limits even in principle to the precision with which we can do so. For suppose that being courageous requires (as I think it does) having a belief that one is in danger, and that, on some particular occasion, Bob has such a belief, but that there is simply no precise degree such that Bob believes that he is in danger to that degree. Then, I believe, it may well be that Bob is courageous to no precise degree. If so, I see no reason to think that his being courageous is good to any determinate extent.¹⁹

Is it really hedonism?

Feldman has obviously often faced the objection that the various adjustments to the simple theories that clearly warrant the label "hedonism" result in theories that do not warrant this label, and he takes some time (pp. 172 ff.) to respond in detail to this charge.

I should say first of all that, even if the objection is successful, it is of small significance. In the end, it does not matter what label we affix to some axiology; what matters is whether the axiology is true. Feldman apparently agrees (pp. 186–87).

Still, once the issue has been raised, we might as well deal with it. Feldman's criterion of hedonism is this (p. 177):

H4: T is a form of hedonism if and only if all the basic intrinsic value states according to T are pure attributions of some sort of pleasure or pain.

On this account, which seems reasonable, IAH is a form of hedonism, since the basic states (such as B4) that it recognizes are all pure attributions of pleasure or displeasure. Feldman claims that this is also the case with certain adjustments to IAH, such as DAIAH, according to which the value of episodes of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure or displeasure is a function in part of the degree to which the objects of pleasure or displeasure deserve to be such objects. A proponent of DAIAH might claim, for example, that Bob's taking pleasure of a certain intensity (say, +8) and duration in the fact that Federer has just hit another fabulous shot is better than his taking pleasure of equal intensity and duration in the fact that Hewitt has just hurled more invective at a linesman. Suppose that the object of the former pleasure deserves to degree +5 to be an object of pleasure, whereas the object of the latter pleasure deserves only to degree +1 to be the object of pleasure. Then Feldman would say that the former pleasure may be represented by "Pb, t, +8, p, +5," while the latter may be represented by "Pb, t, +8, q, +1." Here "P" stands for a five-place relation, the fifth term being a measure of the pleasure-worthiness of the object of pleasure. Like B4', these are supposed to be representations of pure attributions of pleasure, and so DAIAH qualifies as a form of hedonism.

I have two doubts. First, there seems to be an intuitive sense (that I do not know how to specify) in which an attitude of pleasure has been "fully specified" once its duration, intensity, and object have been specified. Simply adding a fifth term to the original four-place relation masks the fact that information that is not essential to the specification of the attitude is being imported. There is therefore reason to think that, despite the apparent purity of "P," the new formula does not constitute a pure attribution of pleasure after all.²⁰ One way to try to capture this point is to imagine an alternative route to the development of DAIAH. Consider the theory of "intrinsic attitudinal desertism" (IAD), according to which, roughly, all and only objects worthy of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure are intrinsically good, and all and only objects worthy of intrinsic displeasure are intrinsically bad. Basic intrinsic value states, according to this theory, may thus be represented by formulas such as "Dp, t, +5" and "Dq, t, +1," where "p" and "q" designate possible objects of pleasure, "t" a time at which the objects are deserving of being such objects, and "+5" and "+1" degrees to which they are so deserving. Suppose that someone were to object: "There cannot be any value in pleasure-worthy objects unless they receive the response they deserve." Such a person could be construed as advocating a hedonically adjusted version, HAIAD, of the original theory. According to this version, basic intrinsic value states may be represented by formulas such as "Dp, t, +5, b, +8" and "Dq, t, +1, b, +8," where "b" and "+8," designate the person (Bob) who gives the object the response it deserves and the degree to which he does so. And now suppose the proponent of the original theory, IAD, were to say: "Your adjustment to desertism is fine with me, since it meets the condition that all basic intrinsic value states constitute pure attributions of desert." How should we assess this claim? Are the attributions in question pure? I fail to see how they could be. As far as I can tell, HAIAD is exactly the same theory as DAIAH; the basic intrinsic value states are the same on each theory. Such states cannot constitute both pure attributions of desert and pure attributions of pleasure; hence they constitute neither.

My second doubt is this. Some form of desertism strikes me as plausible. More cautiously: an axiology that includes (but is not necessarily restricted to) basic intrinsic value states that constitute pure attributions of desert strikes me as plausible.²¹ I think that there can indeed be value in the existence of pleasure-worthy objects, even if no pleasure is taken in them. Why should this be a problem for Feldman? Well, consider DAIAH, to which he appears to have some inclination to subscribe. This theory presupposes that some objects deserve to have pleasure taken in them (and that some objects deserve to have displeasure taken in them). What is the *basis* of such desert-claims? Feldman mentions (pp. 121–22) the possibilities that *beauty* and *truth* may warrant a pleasurable response. Perhaps so, but there is another obvious candidate: an object's being *intrinsically good* may account for its being deserving of having pleasure taken in it (and an object's being intrinsically bad may account for its being deserving of having displeasure taken in it).²² This is something that Feldman could accept. He could say, for example, that an intrinsically good episode of pleasure is something that itself deserves, in virtue of its intrinsic goodness, to have pleasure taken in it, and that it of course remains intrinsically good even if no pleasure is taken in it. But there is reason to think that we should cast our net more

widely than hedonism allows. Consider, for example, a display of athletic excellence, such as Federer's feathery drop-shot. It is surely plausible to say that this deserves the sort of positive response in which pleasure consists. Why? One answer that I find attractive is: because it is intrinsically good. So too with displays of artistic excellence, love, friendship, intelligence, understanding, and virtue of various sorts: they warrant our pleasure because they are intrinsically good. If this is so, then, in order to accommodate what is essential to the pleasure-worthiness of such objects, we must break free from the strictures of hedonism.

One final observation: there may be another way in which hedonism, as formulated by Feldman, is too restrictive. IAD and its adjustments limit (basic) intrinsic value to episodes of *intrinsic* attitudinal pleasure and displeasure. I think there is reason to find intrinsic ethical (even if not personal) value in episodes of *extrinsic* attitudinal pleasure and displeasure. Compare two people who take intrinsic pleasure in some worthy object. The first also takes extrinsic pleasure in some means to this object, whereas the second does not. There is something fitting about the former's extrinsic attitude that is missing in the latter's, which may be reason to say that the former's is intrinsically better than the latter's.²³

Footnotes

¹All in-text page references will be to Feldman (2004).

²Sumner makes this point in Sumner (2005), p. 86.

³Feldman (2002), p. 607.

⁴The foregoing remarks borrow from Zimmerman (2001), Sect. 6.2. There are hints in Feldman's text that he has some sympathy with what I have just said. Although he officially draws a distinction between attitudinal pleasure and enjoyment (p. 62, n. 14), he nevertheless couches a good deal of his discussion of attitudinal pleasure in terms of enjoyment. As I understand it, enjoyment is an attitude that has an affective component. If you enjoy something, you feel good.

⁵As does Sumner, who calls the two values at issue "prudential" and "ethical" in Sumner (1996), pp. 20 ff.

⁶There are complications here that I will address in the next section.

⁷Cf. Feldman (1986), pp. 36–38, where it is claimed that whether an act is overall morally obligatory is determined solely by whether it is performed in a world accessible to the agent such that no accessible world is "intrinsically" better. This is actually a stronger claim than the one I am presently making. In my view, what has intrinsic value (in the present, impersonal, ethical sense) morally requires some sort of response, but other factors (such as moral rights) might also morally require some sort of response independently of any intrinsic value that they might involve, so that an agent's overall moral obligation might not be determined solely by the relative intrinsic values of the worlds accessible to him. On the ethical nature of intrinsic value cf. Lemos (1994), pp. 12 ff., in which the discussion of intrinsic value is couched in terms of "ethical requirement"; cf. also Sumner (1996), p. 48, in which the sort of intrinsic value with which Moore is concerned is called intrinsic ethical value.

⁸See Zimmerman (2001), pp. 24–25 and 88–90 for further discussion.

⁹As does Sumner in Sumner (1996), p. 48.

¹⁰All his official formulations of hedonism, from the simplest (DH, p. 27) to the most qualified (such as DAIAH, p. 121), that have to do with personal value, are put in terms of what is "intrinsically good" and "intrinsically bad," with no "for" explicitly attached. Other formulations of hedonism (such as SDAIAH, p. 195), that have to do with impersonal value, are also put in terms of "intrinsically good" and "intrinsically bad." Feldman distinguishes between these kinds of hedonism by saying that the former have to do with the values of lives whereas the latter have to do with the values of worlds. This reinforces what I take to be the misleading impression that he subscribes to View 2 rather than View 1.

One question that might be raised about View 1 is this: what sense does it make to talk of the personal value of worlds? Well, suppose that Joe lives a pleasant life in some world W. Then, I assume, his life is personally good for him. I see no reason not to extend this assessment and say that W is therefore personally good for him. Of course, that does not mean that W is personally good for someone else. If Jane leads an unpleasant life in W, then W is not good for her. We might also want to talk of the "overall" personal value of W, which would somehow reflect the personal values of W for Joe, Jane, and others who live there.

¹¹In this light, consider again my assessment of the two worlds introduced by Ross, but now with the emphasis relocated: it is ethically fitting that personal goods and evils be distributed as they are in the first world, ethically unfitting that they be distributed as they are in the second world. This presupposes that the pleasures that the vicious people experience are indeed personally good, and that the pains that the vicious people experience are indeed personally bad. This presupposition seems right to me, although many people with whom I have discussed this issue claim to disagree. Following Mill (1863), ch. 2, they say such things as that it is “better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied” and claim thereby to be making a judgment about personal welfare. I wonder. I can certainly agree that, understood as a judgment about ethical value (whether intrinsic or extrinsic), what Mill says may well be true, but that of course is not the type of value at issue. How exactly is it supposed to be that Socrates is better off than the fool? To put the question in terms of Feldman’s crib test: why would love for Socrates incline one to prefer his discontentedly living a life of wisdom to his contentedly living a fool’s life? My suspicion is that, to the extent that one prefers the former life, one is letting something other than love for Socrates influence one’s judgment.

¹²Cf. Sumner (2005), pp. 93–94.

¹³I undertake to do so in Zimmerman (2001), ch. 3.

¹⁴See Feldman (2000), pp. 323 ff., 344 n. 25.

¹⁵Feldman (2000), p. 328.

¹⁶The seminal work here is Korsgaard (1983).

¹⁷The reason why no number is given to reflect the “size” of duration is that Feldman is working (p. 174) under the simplifying assumption that all basic intrinsic value states involve “minimal” time intervals.

¹⁸I assume that minimal time intervals (see the last note) constitute a single unit on the scale of duration.

¹⁹This paragraph borrows from Zimmerman (2001), p. 179.

²⁰Cf. Sumner (2005), pp. 95–97.

²¹More cautiously still: I would restrict this claim to ethical value. Also, I would say that there is something of value only if states worthy of pleasure or displeasure obtain, rather than merely exist. This repeats the first point about bearers of value made in the last section.

²²There are some who would go so far as to say that an object’s being intrinsically good just is its being deserving of having pleasure (or some other “pro-attitude”) taken in it. Cf. Scanlon (1998), pp. 95 ff., on what he calls the “buck-passing account” of value.

²³Many thanks to Ish Haji for comments on an earlier draft.

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