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Past Desires and Well-being

Kazunobu Narita

I take it that a person's well-being is the state of things going well for him. There are several views about what this sense of well-being consists of. The desire fulfillment theory (hereafter 'the desire theory') is one of them. The basic tenet of this theory is that a person's well-being consists only of fulfillment of his desires. According to this theory, things go well for a person to the extent that his desires are fulfilled, and things go badly for him to the extent that his desires are frustrated.

Some desires are conditional on their persistence. Call them 'p-conditional desires'. Some desires are not conditional on their persistence. Call them 'p-unconditional desires'. There are desires that a person had in the past but has already lost. Call these desires 'past desires'. There are past desires that have as their object what happens at present. Call them 'past desires for the present'. Some desire theorists take the view that fulfillment of a person's past p-unconditional desires for the present contributes to her well-being.⁽¹⁾ The aim of this paper is to show that desire theorists have a compelling reason to admit that this view is false.

In order to attain this aim, I consider a case in which a person had a p-unconditional past desire D1 for the present and has a present desire D2 for the present, and D1 is more intense than D2. I present arguments with which desire theorists will have to agree, and I demonstrate that these arguments lead desire

(1) H.E.Baber clearly holds this view (Baber 2010). Mark Vorobej expresses sympathy with this view (Vorobej 1998).

theorists to the conclusion that it is prudentially rational to fulfill D1 rather than D2. Then, on the basis of the fact that this conclusion is counter-intuitive, I show by a *reductio ad absurdum* that desire theorists have a compelling reason to admit that fulfilling D1 does *not* promote the person's well-being.

I. The desire theory

Several things should be noted to give a clearer picture of the desire theory I will argue against. First, the desire theory regards fulfillment of desires as an *underived* element of well-being in the sense that fulfillment of a person's desire promotes his well-being *solely* because it is fulfillment of a desire. If fulfillment of a person's desires promotes his well-being *because* it serves to promote other things that constitute well-being, it is not an underived element but a derived element of well-being. In this paper whenever I use the phrase 'fulfillment of a desire promotes well-being' and its synonyms, I mean 'fulfillment of a desire promotes well-being as an *underived* element'.

Second, according to the desire theory, fulfillment of a desire is sufficient for promoting well-being but awareness of the fulfillment is not necessary. Thus, even if a person does not know that her desire is fulfilled and thus is in no way mentally affected (say, feels satisfied) by the fulfillment, the fulfillment makes her better off.

Third, the desire theory restricts the relevant desires (i.e. the desires whose fulfillment promotes well-being) to *end-desires* (i.e. a person's desires for what he regards as an end). Fulfillment of means-desires (i.e. a person's desires for what he regards as mere means to fulfillment of his other desires) can contribute to his well-being, but just by serving to fulfill his end-desires.

Fourth, the desire theory restricts the relevant desires to rationally considered and well-informed desires. What are the criteria of a desire being rationally considered and well-informed is an issue. But I will not get into this problem here.

II. Conditional desires and unconditional desires

A desire can be understood as a propositional attitude. When I want to visit Rome next summer, the object of this desire can be understood as the proposition ‘I visit Rome next summer,’ where I have an attitude of wanting directed toward this proposition. When I want a beer, the object of this desire can be understood as, say, the proposition ‘I drink a beer,’ where I have an attitude of wanting directed toward this proposition.

Desires are divided into two kinds: conditional and unconditional desires. Conditional desires are desires of the form ‘I desire that Q , on the condition that P ’, where Q and P are propositions, Q is the object of the desire, and P is the condition. There are three types of conditional desires: ‘I desire that Q , if P ’, ‘I desire that Q , only if P ’, and ‘I desire that Q , if and only if P ’. I regard all of these types as having the form ‘I desire that Q , on the condition that P ’. Consider the desire ‘I want to attend that party, on the condition that N attends it’. Its object is the proposition ‘I attend that party’, and its condition is the proposition ‘N attends that party’.

If the condition of a conditional desire is not met (i.e. if P is false), the desire is neither fulfilled nor frustrated. It is not fulfilled even if its object is realized (i.e. if Q is true) and it is not frustrated even if its object is not realized (i.e. if Q is false).⁽²⁾ Suppose that I have the desire ‘I want to attend that party, on the condition that N attends it’. If N does not attend the party, I will not feel satisfied if I attend it, and I will not feel disappointed if I do not attend it. If N does not attend the party, it does not matter to me whether I attend it or not. This indicates that the desire will

(2) I owe this idea to McDaniel and Bradley (2008). They insist that the reason why conditional desires are neither fulfilled nor frustrated if their conditions are not met is that the desires are then cancelled. According to them, a conditional desire is cancelled ‘when it is neither satisfied nor frustrated’ (McDaniel and Bradley 2008, p. 274), and a conditional desire is neither satisfied nor frustrated when its condition is not met (McDaniel and Bradley 2008, pp. 274–278).

neither be fulfilled nor frustrated, if N does not attend the party.

Unconditional desires are desires that are conditional on nothing. They are of the form ‘I desire that Q ’. They are fulfilled if their objects are realized (i.e. if Q is true), and they are frustrated if their objects are not realized (i.e., if Q is false). I want my children to remain healthy throughout the future. This desire is unconditional. I want my children to remain healthy no matter what happens. If my children remain healthy throughout the future, then the desire is fulfilled, and if they do not, then the desire is frustrated.

III. P-conditional desires and p-unconditional desires

I have the desire ‘I want to have a beer later’. Spelled out, this desire is ‘I want to have a beer later, on the condition that then I want to have a beer’. Derek Parfit calls this kind of desires ‘a desire that is conditional on its own persistence’ (Parfit 1984, p. 151). Call these desires ‘p-conditional desires’.

Since p-conditional desires are conditional, they have the form ‘I desire that Q , on the condition that P ’. We can fill out details of Q and P in a p-conditional desire as follows. Let t_1 be a particular time and R be a state of affairs. Then, the content of Q can be paraphrased as ‘ R obtains at t_1 ’ and the content of P as ‘at t_1 I desire that R obtains at t_1 ’. Thus, a p-conditional desire can be spelled out as follows.

(PCD) I desire that R obtains at t_1 , on the condition that at t_1 I desire that R obtains at t_1 .

Suppose that t_1 is ‘later’, and that R is ‘I drink a beer’. Then, we have the desire ‘I want to have a beer later, on the condition that then I want to have a beer’.

There are also ‘desires that are not conditional on their own persistence’ (Parfit 1984, p. 151). They can be spelled out as follows.

(PUCD) I desire that R obtains at t_1 , regardless of whether at t_1 I desire that R obtains at t_1 .

I want Japan to refrain from taking part in any wars throughout the future. I want this, regardless of whether in the future I want it or not. Call this kind of desires ‘p-unconditional desires’. A p-unconditional desire is fulfilled if its object is realized, regardless of whether the subject of the desire wants the object at the time of the object being realized. If Japan never takes part in any wars throughout the future, then my desire is fulfilled, regardless of whether in the future I want nonparticipation of Japan in any ways.

IV. P-conditional past desires for the present and p-unconditional past desires for the present

What I call ‘past desires’ are the desires a person had in the past but has already *lost*. In my childhood I wanted to be a train conductor when I become an adult, but I have already lost that desire. That desire is a past desire. A desire a person had in the past and still has now is not a past desire. Suppose that now I still have the desire I had in my childhood to be a train conductor when I become an adult. That desire is not a past desire. A desire had in the past by a person who no longer exists is also not a past desire. The desire does not exist now. But this is *not* because she *lost* the desire; it is because she no longer exists. It is like a stain had in the past by a piece of paper that has been burnt to ashes. That stain does not exist now. But this is not because the paper lost that stain; it is because the paper no longer exists.⁽³⁾

There are past desires that have as their object what happens at present. Call them ‘past desires for the present.’ I am now an adult. So the desire I had in my childhood to become a train conductor when I become an adult is a past desire for

(3) Fumitake Yoshizawa suggested this analogy to me.

the present.

Past desires for the present are divided into p-conditional and p-unconditional ones. Now, p-conditional past desires for the present (logically) cannot be fulfilled. Suppose that a person has a p-conditional past desire for the present. Since this desire is a p-conditional, it has the form ‘I desire that R obtains at t_1 , on the condition that at t_1 I desire that R obtains at t_1 ’. Since it is a desire for the present, t_1 must be the present. Since it is a past desire, the person does not have it at present. This means that at t_1 he does not desire that R obtains at t_1 . Therefore, the condition of the desire (logically) cannot be met. As I pointed out in section II, if the condition of a conditional desire is not met, it is not fulfilled even if its object is realized. Therefore, p-conditional past desires for the present (logically) cannot be fulfilled. Thus, according to the desire theory, p-conditional past desires for the presents are not relevant to well-being.

As I mentioned in section III, a p-unconditional desire is fulfilled if its object is realized, regardless of whether the subject of the desire wants the object at the time of the object being realized. So a p-unconditional past desire for the present is fulfilled if its object is realized, regardless of whether the subject of the desire wants the object now. I will argue in the rest of this paper that desire theorists have a compelling reason to admit that fulfillment of a p-unconditional past desire for the present does not promote well-being. That is, I will argue for the following.

- (N) Desire theorists have a compelling reason to admit that fulfillment of a person’s p-unconditional past desire for the present does not promote her well-being.

Before setting out to argue for (N), one thing should be noted about how I use the phrase ‘promote well-being’ and its synonyms such as ‘make ~ better off’. The promotion of well-being under discussion here is the promotion caused by

fulfillment of a person's desire *as such*, taken in abstraction from its influences on fulfillment of her other desires. Fulfilling the desire may prevent her other desires from being fulfilled, whether they may be past, present or future desires. In this case, on the desire theory, fulfilling the desire may not promote her well-being *in total*, though fulfilling the desire as such, taken in abstraction from its influences on fulfillment of her other desires, promotes her well-being. Or fulfilling the desire may serve to fulfill her other desires. In this case, on the desire theory, fulfilling the desire promotes her well-being better *in total* than fulfilling the desire as such does. When I say a desire 'promotes well-being' and the like, I do not take into account this kind of derivative influences of fulfilling the desire on well-being. I am only concerned with the promotion of well-being caused by the desire's fulfillment as such.

V. The argument for (N) in case attitudinalism is correct

In order to argue for (N), I consider the following kind of case.

(C) A person S had a p-unconditional past desire D1 for the present and has a present desire D2 for the present, and D1 is more intense than D2.

Here is an example of (C).

Study: Naoko wanted to construct her own philosophical theory of well-being, and for twenty years dedicated herself to complete such a theory. She wanted to complete it regardless of whether she would later continue to have this desire. However, for the last couple of months she gradually lost interest in studying well-being, and now she completely lacks the desire to complete her theory, though she can now complete it with just a little more effort. Instead she has recently developed a desire to practice playing the piano. This desire

is not as intense as was her past desire to construct a theory of well-being.

Naoko's desire to construct a theory of well-being is a p-unconditional past desire for the present, and her desire to practice playing the piano is a present desire for the present.

Now there are two views about what temporal part of a person's life is made better by fulfilling one of his desires.

<Attitudinalism>

If fulfilling a person's desire promotes a temporal part of his life, it is the temporal part at which he has the desire.

<Fulfillmentism>

If fulfilling a person's desire promotes a temporal part of his life, it is the temporal part at which the desire is fulfilled.

I will not be concerned here with which of these views is true. Instead I will argue that (N) is true no matter which of them turns out to be true.

Let us begin by supposing that attitudinalism is correct. Consider the following argument about (C).

<Argument A>

- (1) Fulfillment of D1 makes a temporal part of S's life better off.
- (2) Fulfillment of D2 makes a temporal part of S's life better off.
- (3) Fulfillment of D1 makes the past part of S's life at which she had D1 better off.
- (4) Fulfillment of D2 makes the present part of S's life better off.
- (5) If fulfilling a person's desire makes a temporal part of her life better off, the

extent to which it does so is in proportion to the desire's intensity.

- (6) D1 is more intense than D2.
- (7) Fulfillment of D1 promotes S's momentary well-being better than fulfillment of D2.
- (8) Fulfillment of D1 contributes more to S's lifetime well-being than fulfillment of D2.
- (9) It is prudentially rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2.

Two notes about terminology: 'A person's momentary well-being' means 'the well-being of a temporal part of her life'. 'Prudential rationally' means 'rational from the point of view of a person's *lifetime* well-being'.

Attitudinalism allows us to derive (3) from (1). It also allows us to derive (4) from (2). It is clear that (7) is derived from (3), (4), (5), and (6). (8) follows from (7), and (9) follows from (8). So I claim that the argument is valid.

(5) is hard to deny for anyone who holds the desire theory. We are assuming that (6) is true. But conclusion (9) is so contrary to our intuition that it is hard to accept. Think of the example of *Study*. It seems quite counter-intuitive to say that it is prudentially rational for Naoko to fulfill her past desire to complete her theory of well-being, rather than fulfilling her present desire to practice playing the piano, given the fact that she has already lost the former desire. So I claim that the following is true.

- (MI) It is not prudentially rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2.

Given that argument A is valid, and that (MI) is true and thus (9) is false, desire theorists are forced to deny at least one of (1) and (2). And a case of promotion of a person's momentary well-being by fulfilling his present desire for the present is a paradigm case of what desire theorists would say contributes to his momentary

well-being. Thus it is unreasonable for desire theorists to deny (4) rather than (3). Now, as I just mentioned, (3) is derived from (1), and (4) is derived from (2). Hence, it is unreasonable for desire theorists to deny (2) rather than (1). Therefore, desire theorists have a compelling reason to admit that (1) is false. I thereby conclude that if attitudinalism is correct, they have a compelling reason to admit that fulfillment of a person's a p-unconditional past desire for the present does not promote her well-being; that is, that (N) is true if attitudinalism is correct.

VI. Objections to the argument for (N) in section 5 and my replies

In this section I will defend the argument I developed for (N) in the previous section by replying to objections that can be raised against it.

<Objection 1>

The inference from (7) to (8) presupposes the following two things.

- (a) A person's lifetime well-being is the aggregate of all his momentary well-being.
- (b) Each of a person's momentary well-being contributes to his lifetime well-being in proportion to its amount, regardless of its temporal location.

But (a) is false. A person's lifetime well-being is not determined by the aggregate of all his momentary well-being, but by the narrative structure of his entire life. (b) is also false. To what extent each of a person's momentary well-being contributes to his lifetime well-being at least partially depends on the meaning of the momentary well-being provided by the narrative structure of his entire life. Therefore, (8) does not follow from (7).⁽⁴⁾

(4) This objection is based on the narrative structivist view of lifetime well-being provided by David Velleman (Velleman 1991).

<Reply>

To admit that the narrative structure of a person's life determines her lifetime well-being is to admit that there is a factor that determines well-being other than fulfillment of desires. Therefore, desire theorists are not in position to raise this objection.

It may be said, however, that desire theorists can adopt a bifurcated desire theory which insists that a person's momentary well-being is determined by fulfillment of her desires whereas her lifetime well-being is determined by its narrative structure.

But this bifurcated desire theory faces a problem. It is not clear why only lifetime well-being is determined by its narrative structure. Shorter periods, such as adolescence, a certain year, a certain month, a certain week, and even a certain day in a person's life, also have a narrative structure. Why is the well-being of those periods not determined by their narrative structure?⁽⁵⁾

Bifurcated desire theorists might concede that the well-being of those shorter periods is also determined by their narrative structure whereas the well-being of periods that do not have a narrative structure, such as a minute and second, is determined by fulfillment of desires. But given attitudinalism, this view implies that the only desires we have for a very short time (such as a minute and a second) contributes to well-being. This forces the bifurcated desire theorists to restrict the relevant desires so narrowly that they cannot be called *desire* theorists any more.

<Objection 2>

(MI) is not always true. It may be true that if S's p-unconditional past desire D1 for the present is transient and S did not endeavor to fulfill it, then its fulfillment does not promote her lifetime well-being better than the fulfillment of her present desire

(5) A similar objection to the bifurcated view is made by Bradley (Bradley 2009, p. 29).

D2 for the present, even if D1 is more intense than D2. But if D1 is long-lasting and S made much effort to fulfill it whereas D2 is recently acquired and S has not made so much effort to fulfill it, then fulfilling D1 contributes more to her lifetime well-being than fulfilling D2. Think of the example *Study*. Naoko had the desire to construct a theory of well-being for twenty years, and put much effort into it during that period. On the other hand, she recently acquired her desire to practice playing the piano, and thus she has not expended much effort on it. Furthermore, she can fulfill her desire to construct her theory of well-being with just a little more effort. Therefore, in this case, fulfilling this desire makes her life better than fulfilling her desire to practice playing the piano.⁽⁶⁾ This indicates that it is prudentially rational to fulfill D1 rather than D2 if D1 is long-lasting and S made much effort to fulfill it whereas D2 is recently acquired and S has not made so much effort to fulfill it.

(6) Mark Vorobej suggests that this conclusion fits people's intuitions by referring to the following example provided by Parfit.

[F]or fifty years, I not only work to try to save Venice, but also make regular payments to the Venice Preservation Fund. Throughout these fifty years my two strongest desires are that Venice be saved, and that I be one of its saviours. These desires are not conditional on their own persistence. I want Venice to be saved, and myself to be one of its saviours, even if I later cease to have these desires. ... I do cease to have these desires. Because my tastes in architecture change, I cease to care about the city's fate. (Parfit 1984, p. 152)

Vorobej writes:

[I]t is also clear that many people find something odd in the suggestion that desires which have been held for fifty years and have so profoundly shaped one's life could suddenly lose all normative force or significance. (Vorobej 1998, p. 307)

I take it that the 'normative force or significance' of the desires in this remark is based on the contribution their fulfillment makes to well-being. Thus, I interpret Vorobej as saying that people have the intuition that Parfit's desires regarding Venice have such normative significance because Parfit had them for a long time and endeavored greatly to fulfill them.

<Reply>

This objection has some intuitive appeal. But I think that the appeal can be explained in one or both of the following two ways.

(R1) We are inclined to assume that people usually have a present desire that no significant periods of their lives end up being fruitless. This leads us to implicitly assume that S has this present desire. Now, if D1 is a long-lasting and self-dedicating desire whereas D2 is a recently acquired desire that S has not made much effort to fulfill, then fulfilling D1 rather than D2 serves to fulfill S's present desire not to make her significant parts of her life fruitless. As a result, we are led to think that S's life is made better for her by fulfilling D1 than by fulfilling D2.

(R2) We are inclined to think that accomplishment is an important constituent of well-being. Fulfillment of a person's long-lasting past desires she strived to fulfill usually brings about accomplishment. Thus, if D1 is a long-lasting and self-dedicating desire whereas D2 is a recently acquired desire that S has not put much effort to fulfill, we are led to think that fulfilling D1 makes her life better for her than fulfilling D2.

If the intuitive appeal of the objection can be explained in one or both of these ways, the desire theorists cannot make use of the intuitive appeal to reject (MI). For, D1 in (R1) is a *means-desire* for S's present desire not to make significant periods of her life fruitless. And fulfillment of D1 in (R2) is *not* an underived element of well-being since the reason its fulfillment promotes S's lifetime well-being is that its fulfillment brings about accomplishment — a different well-being promoting factor than fulfillment of desires. But, as I mentioned in section I, the desire theory is the view that the only thing that promotes well-being is fulfillment of *end-desires* as an *underived* element of well-being.

<Objection 3>

It is true that we have the intuition that it is not rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2. But the reason why we have this intuition is that we have the bias towards the present and the future: We care about only our present and future well-being, but not about our past well-being. This bias is so deeply imbedded in our mind that it directs our intuition about rationality.⁽⁷⁾ This is why we intuitively think that it is not rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2. However, the rationality mentioned in (MI) is prudential rationality. Prudential rationality is the rationality from the point of view of a person's lifetime well-being. So it requires a person to care about *all* of his momentary well-being, regardless of its temporal location in his life. Thus it excludes the bias towards the present and the future as irrational. Therefore, since our intuition that it is not rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2 is based on the bias, it does not support (MI).

<Reply>

It may be true that we have the bias towards the present and the future about what we *experience*, such as pleasure and pain. We usually care about our present and future pleasure and pain but not about our past ones. But, as several theorists point out, this bias does not extend to what we do not experience.⁽⁸⁾ We do not prefer being betrayed in the past to being similarly betrayed at present or in the future. We are equally glad about being admired behind the scenes regardless of whether it happens in the future, at present or in the past.

Now, the well-being that is supposed in the argument A to be promoted by fulfilling D1 and D2 consists only of fulfillment of those two desires. S might have certain experiences if she knows fulfillment of those desires. But these experiences are *not* a part of the well-being that is supposed in the argument to be promoted by

(7) Chris Heathwood insists that the bias is rational, and he bases his argument against fitting attitudes analyses of welfare on its rationality (Heathwood 2008).

(8) For instance, see Brueckner and Fischer (1993, pp. 224–225) and Luper (2009, p. 66).

fulfillment of those desires.

Furthermore, given attitudinalism, the well-being promoted by fulfilling D1 is located at the past time when S had D1. But the experience S might have by knowing its fulfillment is not located at that past time, because this experience occurs at present and thus is not something she could have had in the past. Therefore, that experience cannot be a part of the well-being promoted by fulfilling D1.

In view of these considerations, it is quite doubtful whether our intuition that it is not rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2 comes from the bias towards the present and the future.

<Objection 4>

It is true that we have the intuition that it is not rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2. But the reason why we have this intuition is that we accept the following principle.⁽⁹⁾

(P) How much concern a person is rationally required to have about the well-being of his particular temporal self (i.e. a particular temporal stage of his life) is determined by how strong psychological connectedness his present self has with his self in that temporal stage.

S's present self has stronger psychological connectedness with her present self that has D2 than with her past self that had D1. Therefore, according to principle (P), it is rational for S to care more about well-being of her present self that had D2 than well-being of her past self that had D1. This leads us to think that it is not rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2. But this rationality is the rationality from the point

(9) This principle is suggested by Parfit (Parfit 1984, pp. 313–314)

of view of S's present self. On the other hand, the rationality mentioned in (MI) is prudential rationality. Prudential rationality is the rationality from the point of view of a person's entire life. So it requires us not to take the point of the view of a certain temporal stage of his life. Therefore, our intuition that it is not rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2 cannot be evidence that (M1) is true.

<Reply>

The reason why we have the intuition that it is not rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2 is not that we accept principle (P). Principle (P) admits the possibility that it is rational to fulfill D1 rather than D2, if S had D1 quite recently and thus S's present self has quite *strong* psychological connectedness with S's past self that had D1, and the momentary well-being fulfillment of D1 gives S's past self is *far* larger than the momentary well-being fulfillment of D2 gives S's present self. But the intuition I am appealing to as the ground for (MI) rules out this possibility. We seem to have the intuition that it is not rational to fulfill D1 rather than D2, no matter how recently S had D1 and how larger the momentary well-being fulfillment of D1 gives S is than the monetary well-being fulfillment of D2 gives S. It is this intuition to which I am appealing as the ground for (M1).

VII. The argument for (N) in case fulfillmentism is correct

Next, suppose that fulfillmentism is correct. Consider the following argument about (C).

<Argument F>

- (1) Fulfillment of D1 makes a temporal part of S's life better off.
- (2) Fulfillment of D2 makes a temporal part of S's life better off.
- (3) Fulfillment of D1 makes the present part of S's life better off.
- (4) Fulfillment of D2 makes the present part of S's life better off.
- (5) If fulfilling a person's desire makes a temporal part of her life better off, the

extent to which it does so is in proportion to the desire's intensity.

- (6) D1 is more intense than D2.
- (7) Fulfillment of D1 promotes S's momentary well-being better than fulfillment of D2.
- (8) Fulfillment of D1 contributes more to S's lifetime well-being than fulfillment of D2.
- (9) It is prudentially rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2.

This argument is the same as argument A only except (3). The only difference between arguments A and F is that in argument A what fulfillment of D1 makes better off is the past part of S's life whereas in argument F it is the present part of S's life. This difference does not influence the validity of argument F. Fulfillmentalism allows us to derive (3) from (1). It also allows us to derive (4) from (2). (7) is derived from (3), (4), (5), and (6). (8) follows from (7), and (9) follows from (8).

(5) is hard to deny for anyone who holds the desire theory. We are assuming that (6) is true. But conclusion (9) is so contrary to our intuition that it is hard to accept. So I claim that the following is true.

- (MI) It is not prudentially rational for S to fulfill D1 rather than D2.

Given that argument F is valid, and that (MI) is true and thus (9) is false, desire theorists are, in the same way as I pointed out at the end of section V, have a compelling reason to admit that (1) is false. Therefore I conclude that if fulfillmentism is correct, desire theorists have a compelling reason to admit that fulfillment of a person's p-unconditional past desire for the present does not promote her well-being, that is, that (N) is true if fulfillmentism is correct.

VIII. Objections to the argument for (N) in section 7 and my replies

Objections 1 and 2 mentioned in section VI can also be raised against the argument for (N) in section VII, too. But the replies I presented to them in section VI apply here, too.

Objection 3 in section 6 does not apply to the argument in section VII. For, in the argument in section VII, fulfillmentism is assumed. Thus the momentary well-being that is supposed to be promoted by D1 and the momentary well-being that is supposed to be promoted by D2 are both the present well-being. Therefore, there cannot be any bias about the rationality of concern for momentary well-being created by a difference in temporal location of the well-being.

Objection 4 does not apply to the argument in section VII, either. For S's temporal self that enjoys the momentary well-being that is supposed to be promoted by D1 and S's temporal self that enjoys the momentary well-being that is supposed to be promoted by D2 are both her present self. Therefore, both of her temporal selves that are supposed to be made better off have the same psychological connectedness with her present self. Thus, there is no difference in the strength of psychological connectedness among the temporal selves in question that principle (P) requires us to take into account.

IX. Conclusion

In section V I presented an argument about case (C) according to which that (N) is true if attitudinalism is correct, and in section VII I presented a similar argument about case (C) according to which (N) is true if fulfillmentism is correct. In section VI and VIII I considered objections that can be raised against those arguments, and showed that those objections were not compelling. Therefore, I conclude that it is quite plausible to say that (N) is true — that is, that desires theorists have a compelling reason to admit that fulfillment of a person's

p-unconditional past desire for the present does not promote her well-being.

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