

ARTICLES

Felt-Quality Hedonism, Alienation, and the Spirit of Resonance

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Abstract

The resonance constraint holds that something can benefit someone only if it bears a connection to her favoring attitudes. It is widely taken as a decisive reason to reject objective views of well-being since they do not guarantee such a connection. I aim to show that this is a mistake and that felt-quality hedonism about well-being can in fact meet the constraint. First, I argue that the typical way of putting the constraint is misguided in its demandingness. I then introduce alternatives and argue that the most plausible among them are compatible with felt-quality hedonism. I proceed to show that the same considerations which animate traditional resonance concerns motivate another kind of resonance which the hedonist is well-positioned to accommodate. One upshot is that the constraint does not provide us with a reason to favor subjective views of well-being, as they are traditionally formulated, over objective ones.

Keywords: Pleasure; well-being; hedonism; resonance; alienation

Introduction

For many of us, the feeling of pleasure adds richness and enjoyment to our lives which would otherwise be intolerably monotonous. But what if a person does not mind that monotony? Is the prudential value of pleasure in any way dependent on one's attitudes toward it? Theories of well-being can be classified into one of two camps, depending on whether – and to what extent – they allow a person's warrantless attitudes to ground their prudential value (Sobel & Wall 2025). The relevant attitudes are warrantless when they are not merited or correct in light of the independent value of their objects (521). Fully subjectivist views are ones according to which one's warrantless attitudes confer value to their objects in a way that is not constrained by values that exist independently of the subject. On these views, prior to the introduction of the relevant attitudes, the world contains no prudential value (539). A theory is objective, on the other hand, to the extent that it asserts stance-independent value. Some such views hold that something is good for someone regardless of whether she has a favoring attitude toward it. Such is the

case for fully objective versions of felt-quality well-being hedonism, which claim that there is a phenomenal character such that when a person experiences it, it benefits her (even if she lacks a favoring attitude toward it).¹

One seemingly persuasive reason to endorse a subjective account of well-being is the concern that objective accounts alienate a person from what is purported to be good for her. That pleasure, knowledge, achievement, friendship, or any other putative objective good might benefit someone who does not – and will never – care for it strikes many as unacceptable. The thought is simply that a person could never be so completely disconnected from her welfare goods. This intuition – that what is good for a person must resonate with her – is widely seen as a reason to favor subjective views of well-being over objective ones.²

Although the thought that one's welfare goods must resonate with her is powerful in its appeal, there is no consensus in the literature regarding precisely how this constraint on theories of well-being ought to be formulated. For now, suffice it to say that the resonance constraint holds that the things that are basically beneficial to a person must have a connection to her favoring attitudes.³ In what follows, I hope to show that typical interpretations of the resonance constraint are mistaken, that we should adopt a more ecumenical version, and that once we do, felt-quality hedonism can meet the constraint. I conclude by noting that the same considerations that give rise to the resonance constraint also give rise to an affective constraint, and that, surprisingly, felt-quality hedonism is better positioned than subjectivism (as it is traditionally formulated) to capture the spirit of resonance.

1. The Objection Against Felt-Quality Hedonism

Let us start by sorting out some terminology. There are two importantly different views of pleasure which might be the focus of hedonism about well-being. Externalist theories of pleasure hold that something is a pleasure for a person only if it is connected in the right way to her desires or other attitudes. There are both attitudinal versions of such theories and motivational ones.⁴ These accounts deny that pleasure is constituted by a qualitative phenomenal character. Instead, they hold that a state is a pleasure either because it involves attitudinal enjoyment of the intrinsic features of a feeling, object, or state of affairs (which may or may not be motivating) or because it is a state that the subject desires for its own sake.⁵ On these views, a pleasure is a pleasure because the agent likes, desires, enjoys, prefers, favors, or values the experience in question. (I will henceforth use the inclusive term “favoring attitude” to include all such mental states, regardless of whether they are motivational.) Because, on these accounts, favoring

¹I follow Carson (2000) in using the term “felt-quality” to describe both distinctive feeling and hedonic tone varieties of hedonism. For rhetorical ease, in what follows, I drop the “well-being” qualifier when referring to felt-quality well-being hedonism.

²The exceptions to this are Alwood (2023), Bruno-Niño (2023), Fanciullo (2025), Fletcher (2013), Hawkins (2019), Kauppinen (Unpublished Manuscript), and van der Deijl (2023), all of whom have recently argued that the constraint should not be taken as support for subjective views over objective ones.

³I take “basically” here to mean that the goods in question directly benefit the person non-derivatively; their prudential goodness does not depend on how they might be related to her other welfare goods.

⁴For the attitudinal approach, see Feldman (2004); for the motivational one, see Carson (2000) and Heathwood (2006).

⁵Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

attitudes are necessarily involved in pleasure, theories of well-being that employ them can easily meet the resonance constraint.⁶

By way of contrast, internalist – or “felt-quality” – theories of pleasure hold that what determines whether an experience is a pleasure is the felt quality of the experience. There are at least two different types of felt-quality theories of pleasure, the distinctive-feeling view and the hedonic tone view.⁷ The differences between those views do not matter for our purposes. What is important is that both felt-quality approaches reject the claim that a person’s attitudes directly determine whether a particular experience is a pleasure.

Felt-quality hedonism about well-being – also sometimes referred to as “objective hedonism” – is the view that a person is doing well to the extent that she experiences felt-quality pleasure and that she is doing poorly to the extent that she experiences felt-quality pain.⁸ Since the view holds that each instance of pleasure is good for a person regardless of her attitudes, it is easy to see how it might be dismissed by anyone compelled by the constraint.⁹ I detail this in section 3, but for now, suffice it to say that the typical interpretation of resonance is that in order for a token good *g* of the kind *G* to benefit *S*, she must have a favoring attitude toward *g*. If a person’s favoring attitudes can come apart from her experiences of pleasure and if each instance of pleasure is prudentially good for her, then that leaves room for unwelcomed prudentially beneficial pleasures, which is a violation of the constraint as stated. Felt-quality hedonism simply does not guarantee a connection between a person’s favoring attitudes and each token instance of pleasure. I elaborate on this point in the next section.

2. The Possibility of Unwelcomed Pleasures

Before I show how felt-quality hedonism respects resonance, I will argue that existing attempts to establish this unnecessarily rely on contentious claims that many find unpromising. One way to try to make the case is to stipulate that, even though felt-quality accounts of pleasure hold that an experience is a pleasure in virtue of its phenomenal character, all well-being subjects nevertheless necessarily have a favoring response toward each instance of that felt quality. Hawkins (2019: 103), for instance, writes,

I suggest we think of this ‘welcoming’ response as an involuntary affective response, one that operates at a different level from more cognitively sophisticated attitudes. It is this immediate, low-level reaction to pleasure—what I am calling the welcoming

⁶This is an oversimplification. Whether they can in fact respect the constraint arguably depends on the details. It might, for instance, matter what precisely is of benefit: the object of the favoring attitude or the combination state of the attitude with the object. Those details do not affect the overall argument here. For a defense of the object view, see van Weelden (2019). Lin (2022) argues that neither approach is preferable to the other.

⁷To the best of my knowledge, the only person to have explicitly advocated for the distinctive-feeling theory is Bramble (2013). In footnote 2, p. 202, Bramble cites Moore (1903, §12) as a possible exception. For discussions of the hedonic tone view, see Broad (1930), Crisp (2006), Duncker (1941), Kagan (1992), and Smuts (2011).

⁸I prefer the terms “felt-quality pleasure” and “felt-quality hedonism” over “internalist pleasure” and “objective hedonism” because there are other debates in the philosophy of well-being that use the terms “internalism,” “externalism,” “objective,” and “subjective.”

⁹It is possible to hold a felt-quality view of pleasure that requires an attitude if the feeling is to benefit. See Pallies (2021) for a discussion of this kind of view. For rhetorical ease, I will set this possibility aside. In what follows, when I refer to felt-quality views, I mean to refer only to views that do not require such an attitude.

response—that seems to underwrite our sense that experiences of pleasure satisfy [the resonance constraint]. Moreover, the welcoming response is something we reliably have whenever we experience pleasure, and it lasts only for as long as the pleasure lasts. Thus pleasure naturally and easily satisfies the [resonance constraint]: for the hedonist, pleasure is good whenever S experiences it, and whenever S experiences it, S has a positive (welcoming) response to it at that time.

Alwood (2023) and van der Deijl (2023) employ similar strategies. The claim that experiences of a certain phenomenal character necessarily elicit a welcoming response is a highly controversial one of which many are skeptical.¹⁰ The concern is this: we can understand the proposed welcoming response as either involving a favoring attitude or not. If it involves a favoring attitude, then it is not clear why we should think that it necessarily accompanies each experience of a certain felt quality (as would need to be the case if felt-quality hedonism is to meet typical interpretations of the constraint). While I think that it is overwhelmingly plausible that when most people feel pleasure, they almost always have at least a low-level welcoming attitude toward it, I see no reason to think that it must *always* be so for all welfare subjects. It is not unreasonable to think that it is possible for one to, at least sometimes, experience a certain qualitative character without having a favoring attitude toward it.¹¹ One interpretation of pain asymbolia – a condition characterized by a person's indifference to their own experiences of sensory pain – holds that the person fails to have a disfavoring attitude toward the felt-quality of pain. I do not think it too much a stretch to hold that sensory pleasure could be subject to a similar kind of severance between the felt quality and the typical attitudinal response. We might also fail to have a favoring attitude toward very intense pleasures, very mild pleasures, very long-lasting pleasures, unnoticed pleasures, or pleasures from objectionable sources. But, if any one of these states is possible, then we do not yet have a reason to think that felt-quality hedonism respects resonance.

If, on the other hand, there is no attitude involved in the proposed welcoming response, then felt-quality hedonism is still in trouble. Even if we grant for the sake of argument that there is a non-attitudinal welcoming response to each instance of the phenomenal character of pleasure, we should doubt that this suffices to address resonance concerns. For this proposal to be able to respect resonance, the constraint would have to be framed in terms of positive responses, more broadly, rather than in terms of favoring attitudes. It is almost univocally formulated attitudinally, and there is arguably good reason for that.¹² To adequately connect the concerns of a person to her goods, it seems as though her attitudes matter, at least to some extent. Positive affective responses, if understood non-attitudinally, do not establish that connection. It may be said that what we respond positively to says a lot about who we are as individuals, but if we do not analyze positive affect attitudinally, the worry is that the so-called “positivity”

¹⁰See Langsam (2011), Mørch (2017, 2020, (Unpublished Manuscript)) and Pallies (2022) for thorough defenses of the claim. I am sympathetic to these arguments, but I think it is a mistake to think that whether felt-quality hedonism can meet the constraint depends on their soundness.

¹¹See Sobel (2005: 444-5) for a nice articulation of a similar point.

¹²For exceptions, see Alwood (2023) and Hawkins (2019). Kelley (2025a) argues that there is an affective, desiderative, and cognitive component to resonance. While the desiderative and cognitive components seem to be straightforwardly analyzable in terms of attitudes, it is less clear to me whether the affective component is best understood in this way. Fanciullo (2025) offers an affective engagement constraint on well-being, which may or may not involve attitudes.

of that affect is simply a certain flavor of phenomenal experience (one that the subject herself might dislike). In essence, on this approach, we have the occurrence of one flavor of sensation – the felt-quality of pleasure, which our subject may not have a favoring attitude toward – followed by another flavor of sensation – the affective response, which our subject may not like or welcome.¹³ If that is how the positive response should be understood, then there is no reason to think that this picture is compatible with resonance concerns. The fact that a flavor of sensation arises as a response to another flavor of sensation (without reference to the subject's attitudes) does not forge the connection that is sought by the resonance constraint.

Before we proceed, consider another strategy for establishing that felt-quality pleasures are necessarily liked, at least at a low-level. Van der Deijl (2023: 696) writes that since felt-quality views of pleasure hold that pleasurable feelings are those feelings that feel *good*, they must be attractive to the subject *qua* feeling. So, he argues, felt-quality views of pleasure which hold that pleasure feels good are ones that can meet the constraint. This argument seems to me to rely on an important ambiguity. One way of interpreting what felt-quality hedonists mean when they say that pleasure feels good is that the phenomenal character of pleasure is one that is necessarily liked. As I noted above, this is a contentious claim. Another way we might disambiguate the claim that pleasure feels good is as follows. It might be said that the feeling is valuable (independent of any response), and thus it is a feeling of that which is in fact good (regardless of the subject's take on it).¹⁴ But if this is how we interpret what feeling good amounts to, then we, again, are left with no reason to think that the feeling itself is favored by the subject.¹⁵ Based on what we have been given so far, felt-quality hedonism comes up short when it comes to resonance.

The success of the existing arguments for the claim that felt-quality hedonism can meet resonance depends on highly contentious claims. I shall now propose an alternative avenue for the felt-quality hedonist. I argue that typical interpretations of resonance are seriously misguided and that there are better ways to understand the constraint. I hope to show that once we employ one of my proposed alternatives, we will not only be closer to the heart of resonance concerns, we will also see that felt-quality hedonism can in fact respect the constraint.

3. Resonance and the Core Intuition

Some think that we should not accept resonance as a constraint on theories of well-being. For the purposes of this paper, though, I am going to assume that any plausible theory of well-being must respect some version of it. Though the constraint plays a central role in determining which theories of well-being get off the ground, pinning down exactly what it requires is notoriously difficult. Here is Railton's seminal statement on the subject:

... it does seem to me to capture an important feature of the concept of intrinsic value to say that what is intrinsically valuable for a person must have a connection

¹³I borrow the term "flavor of sensation" from Sobel (2005).

¹⁴Thank you to David Sobel for this framing.

¹⁵Moreover, Sobel (1999) argues that there is no coherent middle ground between the view that pleasure is a particular kind of sensation (which may not be liked) and the view that pleasure is desirable consciousness.

with what he would find in some degree compelling or attractive, at least if he were rational and aware. It would be an intolerably alienated conception of someone's good to imagine that it might fail in any such way to engage him (1986: 9).

We can say, then, that a person is intolerably alienated from a good if it does not bear a connection to her favoring attitudes. When such a connection does exist, the good resonates with the subject.¹⁶

Rosati is another spearhead of the thought that welfare goods must be suitably connected to the person's attitudes. She adds that a person's goods must be "made for" or "suited to" her, and that a good can only satisfy those criteria if it "lies within her motivational capacity" (1996: 298-9). The trouble is that this rather vague intuition leaves open several important questions with regard to how the details ought to be fleshed out. For instance, we might wonder about which attitudes should count, the degree to which these attitudes must be present, the kind of connection relevant for our purposes, etc. These questions have been largely neglected in the literature until recently.¹⁷ No one set of answers enjoys consensus or dominance. It is therefore somewhat misleading to refer to "the" resonance constraint when what we really have is more like a set of various constraints that are motivated by the amorphous intuition that a person cannot be intolerably alienated from her welfare goods; that her attitudes must have something to do with what is good for her. Call this the "core intuition." What is important, then, is not whether a view of well-being respects one of the existing iterations of the constraint, but whether it respects the core intuition. So, we should sort out what the core intuition actually amounts to, insofar as doing so is possible. Our aim is to unearth the common idea that gives rise to various ways that the constraint has been made precise. We want a grip on the specific requirements of the unified and general resonance intuition. There is something that it means to be in the ballpark of resonance and the core intuition should draw the boundaries of that park. (In what follows, when I refer to resonance, I mean to refer to the core intuition rather than to any particular version of it.) So, what does the core intuition specifically require of theories of well-being? To get it into view, it will be helpful to set forth desiderata for an account of resonance worthy of our assent.

The most important thing that the core intuition must be able to do is to capture the spirit of resonance. It should account for the thing that people have been gesturing toward when they appeal to it. Thus emerges our first desideratum:

Desideratum 1: The core intuition must capture the spirit of resonance.

Next, because the widespread intuitive pull of resonance is an essential part of what makes it so powerful, it should, to some extent, be compatible with a variety of theories of welfare. If our understanding of the core intuition were to support only one very particular view of well-being, this would be evidence that it is a mistaken understanding, given how many different views take resonance concerns seriously. Consider, for instance, what the core intuition should say about which attitudes to count. Imagine that

¹⁶Kelley (2025b) argues that disfavoring attitudes can render a person intolerably alienated from her good, even if she also has a favoring attitude toward it. While I agree with the claim that disfavoring attitudes contribute to alienation, I do not think they can render a person *intolerably* alienated from a good toward which she also has a (suitably strong) favoring attitude.

¹⁷See Alwood (2023), Bruno-Niño (2023), Dorsey (2017a, 2017b), Fanciullo (2025), Hawkins (2019), Kelley (2025a, 2025b), Raibley (2010), Tiberius (2018), and van der Deijl (2023) for the most thorough existing examinations of resonance and alienation since the seminal texts by Railton and Rosati.

we were to specify that only relatively cognitively sophisticated valuing attitudes matter to resonance. Fleshing out resonance in this way would mean that a subjective view like desire satisfactionism does not meet the constraint. Since a person can desire that which she does not value, desire satisfactionism leaves room for the possibility that a person is benefited by something that, on this proposal, does not resonate with her. But that should give us pause.¹⁸ Desire satisfactionism is a paradigmatic subjective view. Resonance concerns are “the beating heart” of subjectivism (Dorsey 2017a: 196). Because the constraint is taken to support subjectivism, it should be compatible with most subjective theories. Insofar as there is a common thread between the various views that are thought to respect resonance, the core intuition should aim to get at it. This gives us the next desideratum:

Desideratum 2: The core intuition must have widespread intuitive appeal.

While the constraint must be broad enough to support different versions of subjectivism, it must be sufficiently distinct from subjectivism itself. Dale Dorsey (2021: 80) classifies any view as subjective if it accepts what he calls the “Good-Value Link,” which roughly says that *g* is good for *S* only if and (at least in part) because *S* has a favoring attitude (under the right conditions) towards *g*.¹⁹ But that is remarkably close to the typical interpretation of resonance.²⁰ They are, of course, somewhat distinct from one another. The constraint is only a necessary condition on prudential goods, whereas subjectivism aims to give us both necessary and sufficient conditions for prudential benefit. But still, the two are so similar that to use that formulation of the constraint to provide independent support for subjectivism provides very little dialectical advantage.²¹ If the constraint too closely resembles the view for which it is meant to provide independent support, the support it can offer is quite limited. It would be better, in this respect, for there to be distance between subjectivism and the constraint itself. Imagine if a felt-quality hedonist were to tell us that it is a point in favor of their view that it can

¹⁸Dorsey (2017a, 2017b, 2021) defends the view that, for valuers, resonance requires a connection to valuing attitudes. I argue here that we should not employ his version of the constraint because it rules out paradigmatically subjectivist views. He, of course, argues that there are *good reasons* for favoring a version of resonance that specifically requires a valuing attitude over one that more broadly allows just any favoring attitude (Dorsey 2017: 201). Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for this point. I do not have the space here to give his argument the careful consideration that it deserves, so for now, suffice it to say that insofar as there is a general consensus about what the core intuition holds, valuing attitudes, specifically, are not required. Given that the desideratum at hand aims to get at the common intuition to which people appeal when they invoke resonance, I think it is important to be ecumenical with respect to attitudes. Moreover, I take his position to be too demanding an interpretation of a constraint that is meant to have widespread intuitive appeal. (I expand on this more in section 5.) I think it is a more promising approach to take the considerations that he offers to show that it is an advantage of his view that it provides more resonance than what the core intuition guarantees.

¹⁹Dorsey does not mention favoring attitudes when he puts forth the Good-Value Link; he puts it in terms of valuing. While that difference was important with respect to the previous desideratum, it is unimportant here. For rhetorical ease, I am employing favoring attitudes where Dorsey employs values.

²⁰Dorsey (2017b: 688) makes this same point in footnote 8.

²¹See, again, Dorsey (2017b: 84). It seems to me that the best way of understanding the subjective/objective divide is the one defended by Sobel & Wall (2025), as discussed at the beginning of this paper. But I do not think their view – that a theory is subjective to the extent that it allows warrantless attitudes to ground prudential benefit – affects the main point I am making here, which is that, regardless of the best interpretation of the divide, there needs to be some distance between subjectivism itself and the constraint. Sobel & Wall explicitly tie their definition of subjectivism to their interpretation of resonance such that there is no such distance (see especially 528–31).

meet a constraint on theories of well-being which holds that in order for something to benefit someone, that thing must involve felt-quality pleasure. This proposal is so similar to hedonism itself that one should not expect anyone not already committed to the view to find it persuasive. I take the ambitions and potential of the regular constraint to be greater than that. It can and should provide substantive support for the views that can meet it because there is a real and intuitively significant difference between views that require that putative goods bear some connection to what one cares about and those that do not. If we are able to formulate the constraint in a way that allows breathing room between it and subjectivism while still adequately meeting the other desiderata, we should do so. Relatedly, to avoid vacuousness, the intuition cannot be so broad as to support all views of well-being. We should be able to rule out some theories by appealing to the constraint. Our last two desiderata are thus as follows:

Desideratum 3: There should be theoretical distance between the core intuition and subjectivism itself.

Desideratum 4: The core intuition must rule out some views of well-being.

4. The Typical Interpretation

Given the vagueness of the core intuition, it is not obvious how, precisely, to flesh it out. What is clear is that if a theory can properly be said to respect resonance, then it must ensure a connection between a person's favoring attitudes and that person's basic welfare goods. These considerations have been taken to support a strict version of the constraint – one which closely mirrors the subjectivist picture. On this subjectivist reading – to which I will henceforth refer as “the typical interpretation” – a person must have a favoring attitude toward each token welfare good. Many versions of the constraint are inclusive with respect to which specific attitudes are relevant for resonance, so both the typical interpretation that I lay out here and the alternatives that I put forth in the next section will be ecumenical on this front.

The Typical Interpretation: A token instance *g* of the kind *G* is basically good for *S* only if *S* has a favoring attitude toward *g*.²²

I think we should reject the typical interpretation in favor of a view of resonance which leaves open the possibility that a person can benefit from a token good toward which she does not have a favoring attitude, provided she is suitably attitudinally connected to it in another respect.

5. Against the Typical Interpretation

The typical interpretation of resonance is too demanding. To see why a more lenient version fares better, I consider each desideratum in turn.

²²I contend that the preponderance of people who appeal to resonance implicitly assume something like this. This interpretation is also relevantly similar to and essentially compatible with those who are explicit about what the constraint is traditionally taken to require. Where there are differences, they do not matter to my overall argument, unless otherwise indicated. Heathwood (2021: 13) defines it in the following way: “a thing, *x*, is basically good for some subject, *S*, only if *either* *S* has a satisfied positive attitude toward *x* or *x* itself involves *S*'s having a satisfied positive attitude toward something.” He says something quite similar in Heathwood (2014: 203). See also Dorsey (2017b: 637), Kelley (2025b: 805), and Wall & Sobel (2021: 2846) for discussions of ways of formulating the constraint that are roughly compatible with what I say here.

5.1 *Desideratum 1: The Spirit of Resonance*

The biggest hurdle in moving from the typical interpretation to something more permissive is the concern that, in doing so, we lose an important facet of the spirit of resonance. The worry is that the spirit of the constraint really does require a favoring attitude toward each token instance of benefit, and to give that up would be to betray the intuition that was so compelling in the first place. I aim to show that we need not worry.

Consider the following case:

Knowledge Lover: Imagine that David deeply values acquiring knowledge. After careful consideration, he concludes that knowledge acquisition is an essential part of a good life for him. He structures his life so as to increase the chances that he will gain knowledge: he buys encyclopedias and leaves them around the house in order to encourage himself to read them when the opportunity presents itself, he makes a point to do an hour of research every night before sleeping, and he maintains friendships only with people who are particularly fond of imparting knowledge over coffee. He has been doing this for years, and he is unwaveringly pleased with himself for living his life the way that he has. In almost every case, when he learns something new, he is glad and enthusiastic about it. One day, though, he is sick and tired with the flu, and after having read an entry in one of his encyclopedias, he lacks a favoring attitude of any sort toward having learned. Perhaps he fails to adopt any kind of attitude at all, or perhaps he adopts one of equanimity. Contrast David with Joe, who is never even remotely interested in learning anything new.

Compare a theory which holds that a token instance of the acquisition of knowledge is good for David – but not Joe – even when he fails to have a favoring attitude toward it with one that tells us that it also benefits Joe. A salient difference between these two views is that the former is sensitive to the subject's interests and likings and that the latter is not. Acquiring knowledge resonates far more with David, despite his current illness and mood, than it does with Joe. Moreover, it seems unnecessarily stringent to hold that this unfavored instance of learning is *intolerably* alienating to David. Knowledge acquisition is central to his values and interests. The connection referred to by Railton is surely there. A version of the constraint which requires a favoring attitude toward each token instance of a putative good cannot capture, illuminate, or explain this fact. If this is true, then the typical interpretation is wrong.²³

Any of the following three alternative interpretations of the constraint can accommodate the intuition that the token instance of knowledge in *Knowledge Lover* resonates with David:

- (a) *Token of a Favored Kind Resonance*: a token *g* of the kind of thing *G* is basically good for *S* only if *S* has a favoring attitude toward either *g* or *G*;
- (b) *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance*: a token *g* of the kind of thing *G* is good for *S* only if either *g* or *G* bears a non-accidental connection to *S*'s favoring attitudes.
- (c) *Capacity to Care Resonance*: a token *g* of the kind of thing *G* is basically good for *S* only if *S* can care about either *g* or *G*.²⁴

²³Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for some of this phrasing and framing.

²⁴Though I do not think that this is an exhaustive list of the other ways that resonance might be fleshed out, I do take these to be the most plausible approaches. We might also consider a disjunctive constraint, according to which a theory respects resonance if it ensures that in each instance of benefit, any one of the three variants obtain.

I contend that if, instead of the typical interpretation, we take resonance to be captured by one of these less demanding constraints, we are *better* able to capture the spirit of resonance. The constraint need not – and indeed should not – require that a subject have a favoring attitude toward each token putative good.²⁵ These alternative versions explain why we think the token knowledge in *Knowledge Lover* resonates with David. They are also more in line with the seminal statements on resonance put forth by Railton and Rosati. In the *locus classicus* of the resonance constraint, Railton requires only “a connection” between a person’s favoring attitudes and her good.²⁶ Rosati requires one’s welfare goods to be “made for” or “suited to” her. The three alternatives to the typical interpretation that are outlined above are all compatible with these comments. Neither theorist formulates resonance as requiring a connection between each token good and the relevant attitudes. In fact, Rosati explicitly rejects the typical interpretation.²⁷ She argues that we must understand the required connection to favoring attitudes counterfactually, which is a deliberate attempt to avoid an overly demanding view of what is required by resonance. While *Capacity to Care Resonance* is obviously based on Rosati’s thoughts here, her comments more generally support something less demanding than is commonly assumed.

But perhaps we should not put so much weight on these statements. Even so, I contend that we have good reason to opt for an alternative to the typical interpretation. I think that *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* and *Capacity to Care Resonance* are preferable to *Token of a Favored Kind Resonance*. To see why, consider the following case (which directly supports *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance*, but which is also compatible with *Capacity to Care Resonance*):

Bee-Keeping: Imagine a person, Bea, who always feels calm and at peace while bee-keeping. She welcomes this feeling of calmness, but she does not like bee-keeping itself. She thinks it’s pointless and a waste of time. Since her parents were bee-keepers, she’s been keeping bees since she was a girl and is very familiar with each step of the process. She peacefully zones out while completing the daily chores, but she wishes that she did not have to do them. She is annoyed by the fact that other activities do not allow her to feel a sense of calm in the way that bee-keeping does. She inherited the hive from her parents and so feels an obligation to maintain it, but she does not like, desire, or value it for its own sake.

This is a case in which the agent does not have a favoring attitude toward either bee-keeping generally, nor toward any particular instance of bee-keeping. Engaging in the activity causes her to feel calm and she likes and desires *that* feeling, but she does not have a favoring attitude toward any aspect of bee-keeping itself. I think that bee-keeping nonetheless resonates with Bea. It fits her in a way that it would not fit a person, let’s call

²⁵Fanciullo (2025) similarly thinks that the type of concerns that motivate resonance permit a less direct connection between a person’s favoring attitudes and her good.

²⁶In fact, the connection required by Railton might be even more tenuous than I imply here. In the above quoted passage, he seems to allow for an indirect connection between a person’s favoring attitudes and her putative good. He might be read as holding that the putative good *x* must have a connection with another thing *y* that the subject would find in some degree compelling or attractive under the proper conditions. Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

²⁷Rosati (1996: especially 301 and 307).

her “Cici,” who is like Bea in every way, but who feels only frustration while keeping bees. One explanation for this that is not captured by the typical interpretation or by *Token of a Favored Kind Resonance* is that bee-keeping bears a non-accidental connection to Bea’s favoring attitudes. It is no coincidence that her favoring attitudes and bee-keeping are coinstantiated; she feels “at home” and familiar with it in a way that is not true of Cici. It fits her (even if it is rather itchy).

We can further illuminate this special kind of non-coincidence by fleshing out Cici’s case a bit more. Imagine that every time that Cici engages in bee-keeping, even though she feels frustrated the whole while, her partner massages her back throughout the process, which she very much welcomes. Cici now, too, experiences a positive attitude (toward her massage) associated with bee-keeping, but this connection does not seem to bear on resonance in the way that the welcomed feelings of calmness associated with bee-keeping do for Bea. That is plausibly because Cici’s positive attitudes are only accidentally connected with bee-keeping.

For our purposes, we can define what it means for some putative good to be non-accidentally connected to a person’s favoring attitudes in one of the two following ways.

Explanationist Non-Accidentality: x is non-accidentally connected to S ’s favoring attitudes if some feature intrinsic to x directly or indirectly explains the occurrence of S ’s favoring attitudes.

Modalist Non-Accidentality: x is non-accidentally connected to S ’s favoring attitudes if, in a sufficient proportion of a restricted set of counterfactual worlds, S ’s favoring attitudes and x would covary.²⁸

According to *Explanationist Non-Accidentality*, bee-keeping is non-accidentally connected to Bea’s favoring attitudes because some feature intrinsic to bee-keeping explains her feelings of welcomed calmness. Bee-keeping is not similarly non-accidentally connected to Cici’s favoring attitudes because there is no intrinsic property of bee-keeping that explains the occurrence of Cici’s welcoming attitude.²⁹

If, instead, we go by *Modalist Non-Accidentality*, then bee-keeping is non-accidentally connected to Bea’s favoring attitudes just in case bee-keeping modally tracks those attitudes. In other words, if there are enough relevantly similar possible worlds in which Bea feels welcomed calmness as a result of bee-keeping, then her favoring attitudes are non-accidentally connected to it. There are many details of this analysis that would need to be filled in for a full picture. For instance, I have said nothing of how we might restrict the set of counterfactual worlds, or of what proportion of worlds counts as sufficient. For our purposes, though, this sketch will suffice. It seems right that any plausible way of fleshing out these details will result in Bea’s favoring attitudes – but not Cici’s – being non-accidentally connected to bee-keeping.

If the constraint were to require a non-accidental connection between a person and her good, it would accommodate the intuitive difference with respect to resonance

²⁸For an excellent overview of explanationist and modalist accounts, see Heering (2022). Faraci (2019) puts forth a case for an explanationist account of epistemic coincidence over a modalist one. Mortini (2022) defends modalism over explanationism.

²⁹Of course, much depends on what it means for x to explain y . While analyzing this relationship is important, doing so is outside the scope of this paper. For now, I will, perhaps unsatisfyingly, rely on our intuitive understanding of what this might amount to.

between the cases of Bea and Cici, regardless of whether we employ an explanationist or a modalist account of non-accidentality. Neither the typical interpretation nor *Token of a Favored Kind Resonance* are up to the task.

Capacity to Care Resonance also handles this case well. It is plausible that Bea, but not Cici, is capable of caring about bee-keeping. We do not know enough about the case to know why exactly they think that bee-keeping is a waste of time, but we can imagine that if Bea were to drop that belief, she would feel quite differently about it. If we understand one's capacity to care about something counterfactually (as Rosati suggests we should), we might say that she can care about it if, in a restricted set of relevant possible worlds, she would care about it.

Capacity to Care: S can care about x if, in a sufficient proportion of worlds within a restricted set of relevant counterfactual conditions, she would care about it.

I will assume that if the counterfactual conditions in which a person cares about the putative welfare good are ones in which her psychology is unrecognizable, then she does not have the capacity to care about it.³⁰ Admittedly, much will depend, again, on the details, but this sketch gets us going in the right direction.

Finally, we do not have to look far to consider further support for favoring *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* and *Capacity to Care Resonance* to the typical interpretation. Idealizing subjectivists typically hold (roughly) that a subject can benefit from something only if she *would* have a favoring attitude toward it if some set of idealized conditions were realized (usually rationality and full-information are required). Note that this view is incompatible with the typical interpretation of resonance and with *Token of a Favored Kind Resonance*.³¹ Because a person can fail to have an actual favoring attitude toward that which her idealized counterpart has a favoring attitude, idealizing subjectivists must say that she can be benefited by a putative good toward which she has no favoring attitude.

Whether we should think that standard idealizing views ought to count as respecting resonance is a matter of considerable debate. There is at least one idealizing view, however, that was formulated in large part as a direct response to the worry that idealization risks intolerable alienation. Rosati (1996) argues for "two-tier internalism," an idealizing view which allows that something can benefit a person even if she fails to have an actual favoring attitude toward her good, but which nonetheless centers resonance concerns. Rosati's view holds, very roughly, that a subject must care about the conditions of idealization in order for her idealized attitudes to have normative prudential import.³² If an interpretation of the core intuition tells us that two-tier internalism fails to respect the constraint, then that consideration alone should cause suspicion. Not only was the view explicitly formulated with resonance concerns in the

³⁰Of course, for a full account, we would also have to flesh out the notion of unrecognizability. For now, I take it to imply roughly that the change in the person's character or psychology would have to be such that it would elicit confusion from someone who knows our subject very well.

³¹For a defense of the view that someone's actual favoring attitudes can be radically different from her attitudes under idealized conditions, and that idealizing thus risks intolerable alienation, see Rosati (1995) and Sobel (1994).

³²See Rosati (1996: 307). It is worth noting here that the idea that the welfare subject in her actual conditions must care about what her counterpart would desire under idealized conditions does not directly feature in Rosati (2006).

foreground, but the paper in question is widely regarded as authoritative when it comes to resonance; it is very frequently cited alongside the Railton paper as providing the guiding principles for theorizing about the constraint.³³ This gives us some reason to think that the version of resonance that we accept should accommodate the way in which the goods in two-tier internalism resonate with their subjects. *Capacity to Care Resonance* is easily able to do so, since it so closely resembles the constraint around which Rosati designed two-tier internalism.

It also seems to me that *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* is able to count the putative goods in two-tier internalism as resonating, regardless of whether the explanationist or modalist account of non-accidentality is employed. According to the explanationist account, for there to be a non-accidental connection between a person's favoring attitudes and that toward which her idealized counterpart has favoring attitudes, some feature intrinsic to the latter must either directly or indirectly explain the former. Let's say that Ari's idealized counterpart has a favoring attitude toward taking dancing lessons, but that Ari herself does not. For dancing lessons to bear a non-accidental connection to Ari's actual favoring attitudes, on the current proposal, some feature intrinsic to dancing lessons should directly or indirectly explain Ari's actual favoring attitudes. It is not immediately clear what to say here, since, by stipulation, Ari does not have any actual favoring attitudes toward dancing lessons. But perhaps she need not. One way we might try to forge the required connection would be to say that some feature intrinsic to dancing lessons explains Ari's counterpart's prudentially relevant favoring attitudes, which are themselves non-accidentally connected to Ari's actual favoring attitudes, thus providing us with the required connection (an indirect one, to be sure). Two-tier internalism guarantees that Ari's counterpart's prudentially relevant favoring attitudes are partially explained by Ari's actual favoring attitudes.³⁴ That they are prudentially relevant attitudes is, on this proposal, explained by the fact that Ari cares about them. So, *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* which employs an explanationist analysis of non-accidentality can account for the distinctive way in which two-tier internalism meets resonance.

Things are more straightforward if we appeal instead to a modalist explanation of non-accidentality. On this proposal, dancing lessons are non-accidentally connected to Ari's favoring attitudes if, in a sufficiently large proportion of a restricted set of counterfactual worlds, the two covary. If we restrict the set of worlds to ones which mirror the conditions of her idealization, then they would in fact covary. Ari's actual favoring attitudes could determine the set of worlds that counts as prudentially relevant – perhaps ones in which she is rational and fully informed – and, by stipulation, Ari has favoring attitudes toward dancing lessons in the nearby worlds in which she is rational and fully informed. *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* and *Capacity to Care Resonance* thus tells us that two-tier internalism – a view shaped by resonance concerns – respects the constraint. Neither the typical interpretation nor *Token of a Favored Kind Resonance* can do so.

My argument so far relies on the thought that *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* and *Capacity to Care Resonance* establish a sufficient degree of non-alienation. One might object that this is not so. The concern is that perhaps both of my proposed

³³Some papers that cite Rosati (1996) in this way include Alwood (2023), Bramble (2016), Brink (2008), Bruno Niño (2023), Dorsey (2017a, 2017b), Fanciullo (2025), Hawkins (2019), Kelley (2025b), van der Deijl (2023), Wall & Sobel (2021), and Yelle (2014).

³⁴This is arguably plausible for regular idealizing views as well (depending on who you talk to).

variants leave room for intolerable alienation; that, in order to properly capture the spirit of the constraint, the bar ought to be set higher.³⁵ The question at hand essentially boils down to what degree of alienation should be considered tolerable. Both variants of the constraint that I propose allow for a significant degree of alienation insofar as they allow something to count as good for someone who lacks a favoring attitude toward it, or even for someone who disfavors it. Why not think that capturing the spirit of resonance demands more?

One thing to note is that a person's being alienated – even substantively alienated – from a putative good is not enough to show that she is intolerably alienated from it. Consider Bea again, the person who feels welcomed feelings of calmness when bee-keeping, but who lacks a favoring attitude toward bee-keeping itself. I think it is obvious that Bea's favoring attitudes are importantly connected to bee-keeping. She is not estranged from it; she is comforted by it. She has a complicated relationship with bee-keeping, no doubt, but there is a prudentially salient connection there. This is admittedly a matter of intuition (one which I suspect is largely shaped by the view of well-being toward which one is already inclined). Even so, consider a further reason to think that the two variants of the constraint for which I am advocating do not allow intolerable alienation. It seems to me that the aim of the constraint is in large part to stave off views which allege that a person can be benefited by things from which she is utterly disconnected. There is a meaningful difference between views of well-being which do and do not ensure that a person's favoring attitudes bear some kind of connection to her good. It is exactly this that resonance aims to capture. The resonance constraint was not meant to – and should not aim to – ensure a tight, robust (suspiciously subjectivist) connection between a subject and her good. If one finds such a connection desirable, she can build it into her broader theory of well-being. It is one thing to think it an advantage of one's theory that it counts as prudentially beneficial only those goods that resonate with their subjects to a very high degree, but it is quite another to hold other views hostage to that same expectation. To do so illicitly privileges the subjectivist inclination to view attitudes as robustly authoritative and overlooks the very real difference between views that are and are not sensitive to the person's concerns. When it comes to pinning down resonance, it is a conceptual and dialectical mistake to presuppose that a person must have a favoring attitude toward each token good. Attitudes are no doubt important, but there are different ways in which a person's favoring attitudes might be relevantly connected to her goods. A move from the intuition that a person cannot be alienated from her goods to a constraint that so closely resembles subjectivism is unwarranted. That it is desirable that a theory of well-being guarantees a connection between a subject and her goods does not imply that a constraint whose formulation unwarrantedly privileges subjectivism is also desirable. The constraint should capture the thought that what is good for a person must have some connection to her favoring attitudes while being agnostic with regard to how a theory might satisfy it.

The above considerations give us good reason to think that the typical interpretation is wrong. The core intuition of resonance is not that a person must have a favoring attitude directed at each token instance of putative good. It is more forgiving than that. As a result, either of the alternative versions of the constraint that I put forth above does a better job capturing the spirit of resonance.

³⁵See Dorsey (2017a, 2017b, 2021), Kelley (2025b), Raibley (2010, 2013), Sobel & Wall (2025), and Tiberius (2018) for arguments to this effect.

5.2 Desideratum 2

The second desideratum holds that the core intuition must have widespread intuitive appeal. A surefire way that the core intuition could appeal to a wider variety of theorists is for it to be inclusive of more theories. Because my proposal is that the core intuition requires something less demanding than the typical interpretation, there is more room for it to accommodate a greater number of theories. In a short while, I will show how *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* and *Capacity to Care Resonance* are both compatible with felt-quality hedonism, but there is no reason to think that its expansion is limited to that. The less demanding the requirement, the easier it is to meet, and the easier it is to meet, the greater the number of theorists on board.

5.3 Desideratum 3

Desideratum 3 holds that there must be distance between the core intuition and subjectivism itself. By moving away from the typical interpretation to either *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* or *Capacity to Care Resonance*, the constraint gains argumentative traction. Both these variants are inarguably distanced from subjectivism, given that they each allow a token good to benefit a person who does not have a favoring attitude toward it.

5.4 Desideratum 4

The final desideratum holds that the constraint must be able to rule out some theories of well-being. I think that it is fairly obvious that neither *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* nor *Capacity to Care Resonance* are so permissive that they fail to rule out some views of well-being. Consider, for instance, an objective-list theory of well-being which holds that knowledge benefits a person even if she is constitutionally incapable of caring about it. Both of our variants of the constraint rule out this kind of view as there is no connection – accidental or otherwise – between the person's favoring attitudes and knowledge, and the person cannot be said to be capable of caring about it.

6. Hedonism and Resonance

I hope to have established that there is good reason to think that the core intuition of resonance is less demanding than the typical interpretation would have it, and that adopting either *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* or *Capacity to Care Resonance* is our best way forward. I now aim to show that once we abandon the typical interpretation in favor of either, felt-quality hedonism is well-positioned to meet the constraint. Though I cannot argue for this claim due to space constraints, I will note that if one is not persuaded by my arguments for the preferability of the two constraints for which I am advocating, some of the following considerations show that felt-quality hedonism could also meet *Token of a Favored Kind Resonance*.

Let us start by considering *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance*. It is a fairly obvious truth that there are at least two ways in which a person's attitudes are non-accidentally connected to her pleasures. First, there is such a non-accidental connection between that from which a person derives pleasure and her likings, interests, values, and desires. When a person likes listening to music, they are likely to find pleasure in it. If they desire the taste of chocolate, eating it will almost certainly be a pleasant experience.

Should creating art be important to them, it will, at least sometimes, be a source of pleasure. Indeed, a person's attitudes are in large part *shaped* by what does and does not cause them to experience pleasure. In that sense, there is an important way in which pleasure as a kind is tightly and non-accidentally connected to that which one cares about. Moreover, the fact that people have favoring attitudes toward listening to music, eating chocolate, making art, or other things that we care about is very often in part explained by the fact that they are pleasant experiences. If that is true, then it is enough to satisfy the requirements of *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* on the explanationist picture of non-accidentality. Recall that this account of resonance tells us that a token *g* of the kind of thing *G* is good for *S* only if either *g* or *G* bears a non-accidental connection to *S*'s favoring attitudes. Applying that to our current concerns, we might say that a token instance of pleasure is good for a person only if either that instance of pleasure or pleasure as a kind bears a non-accidental connection to their favoring attitudes. Recall also that according to the explanationist account of non-accidentality, pleasure is non-accidentally connected to one's favoring attitudes if some feature intrinsic to the pleasure directly or indirectly explains the occurrence of the person's favoring attitudes. Some feature intrinsic to pleasure as a kind (namely, the way that it feels) clearly does explain the occurrence of many of our favoring attitudes (and sometimes even their content).

Perhaps more significant, though, is the fact that pleasure is not only intimately connected to other things that people care about, but is also something that we tend to like in and of itself. This is not to say that each and every time a person experiences pleasure, they necessarily have a favoring attitude toward that experience. It is simply to say that there is a clear disposition to like it. Note that this is true even for people who desire not to feel pleasure. We might imagine a temperate ascetic, for instance, who has a preference like this. But, crucially, the very reason it requires self-discipline to abstain from pleasure is precisely because it is liked – not necessarily in every instance, and not necessarily all-things-considered, but the connection we are after is there. Because something intrinsic to pleasure in part explains why people (a) tend to have favoring attitudes toward that which causes them pleasure, and (b) almost always have favoring attitudes toward their own experiences of pleasure, the explanationist account of non-accidentality tells us that a person's pleasure and their favoring attitudes are non-accidentally connected.

If we instead use the modalist account, we obtain a similar result. On this proposal, *x* is non-accidentally connected to *S*'s favoring attitudes if, in a sufficient proportion of a restricted set of counterfactual worlds, *S*'s favoring attitudes and *x* would covary. Again, here, much will depend on how we restrict the set of worlds in question, but, for the reasons previously mentioned, I take it to be relatively uncontroversial that any plausible way of doing so will result in covariation between a person's pleasure and their favoring attitudes.

Similar considerations give us some reason to think that *Capacity to Care Resonance* would also deliver the verdict that felt-quality hedonism meets the constraint. Recall that if the counterfactual conditions in which a person cares about the putative good are ones in which her psychology is unrecognizable, then she does not have the capacity to care about it. It seems fair to say that almost everyone does in fact care about their own pleasure; both their token pleasures and their pleasures as a kind. Importantly, though, this might not be true for all welfare subjects, given that we can imagine someone vehemently opposed to experiencing it. But even for such a person, her psychology is surely recognizable in a world in which she cares about pleasure. To see this, consider

the fact that pleasure plays an evolutionarily essential role in molding our favoring attitudes. It is no coincidence that we experience pleasure from eating, sleeping, having sex, etc., and that we have favoring attitudes toward how those experiences make us feel. We simply *are* beings who like pleasure. We do not necessarily like every instance of it, but we do necessarily like it, as a kind. Our very survival as a species depends on our being motivated to pursue pleasant sensations. It is the way that we are built. Our ability to experience pleasure is a built-in reinforcement mechanism that works only if we are attracted to it, at least most of the time; if we are the kinds of subjects who have the capacity to care about our own experiences of pleasure. Even though it is possible for subjects to sometimes fail to have a first-order favoring attitude toward pleasure or to develop a second-order attitude against it, a favoring attitude toward pleasure certainly lies within our motivational capacity. Humans – and relevantly similar beings – *can be* motivated by pleasure. Indeed, it is the way we are wired.

One might object that this discussion merely highlights that having the capacity to care about something is too thin a requirement and that resonance demands something more substantive. After all, we can imagine that almost anyone has the capacity to care about, say, listening to classical music without undergoing a change that renders them unrecognizable. But, of course, listening to classical music does not resonate with everyone, nor is it of basic benefit to someone who is (and always will be) utterly unmoved by and uninterested in it. We should want the constraint to rule out views of well-being that tell us otherwise and, so the objection goes, *Capacity to Care Resonance* cannot and should therefore be rejected.

I might respond to this worry in one of two ways. First, I might deny the premise that almost anyone has the capacity to care about classical music without undergoing a change that renders them unrecognizable. Much will depend on the details of our counterfactual analysis; details that I do not have the space to develop here. But I am hopeful that there is a way of drawing the borders of psychological recognizability in a way that delivers the verdict that everyone is recognizable in worlds in which they care about pleasure, but that the same is not true of worlds in which they care about classical music. Take someone with no interest in music, the arts, history, harmony, or anything else that might make an interest in classical music psychologically continuous with the subject. I think it is quite plausible to hold that the worlds in which they have favoring attitudes toward classical music are ones in which they are psychologically unrecognizable. Further, I think it quite implausible that the same story could be given about someone's disinterest in her own pleasure, given that our psychologies are the way that they are. Our pleasures and favoring attitudes are so bound up with one another that it is implausible that someone's psychology would be unrecognizable – whatever that amounts to – in a world in which she cares about pleasure. Given these considerations, I think that once we fill in the details of psychological recognizability, *Capacity to Care Resonance* will deliver the correct verdicts.

If one is not quite so optimistic that such an analysis exists, then they might simply take the objection at hand as a reason to reject *Capacity to Care Resonance* in favor of *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance*. If one is skeptical of all modalist analyses of resonance – such as the ones employed in *Capacity to Care Resonance* and in *Modalist Non-Accidentalness* – they can rely instead upon *Explanationist Non-Accidentalness* to explain the way in which it is no coincidence that a person's favoring attitudes are connected to her pleasures. With regard to whether *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* is preferable to *Capacity to Care Resonance*, I have no dog in the race.

7. The Affective Considerations Behind the Constraint

I have so far argued that the typical interpretation of resonance is mistaken, that we have good reason to instead adopt *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* or *Capacity to Care Resonance*, and that felt-quality hedonism can meet either of those two constraints. I now wish to show that some of the same considerations that motivated the original constraint also give rise to a new kind of constraint – one that hedonists can meet, and that subjectivism, as it is traditionally formulated, cannot.

One worry that the constraint set out to avoid was the idea that a person's welfare goods could leave her cold. The thought of someone being utterly unmoved by what is purported to be good for her is a compelling case in favor of the kind of resonance we have discussed thus far. But there are at least two distinct ways in which one can be unmoved. The first we are by now familiar with. One is unmoved by something when she is not and cannot be brought to care about it; when it bears no connection to her favoring attitudes. But it is also appropriate to say that one is unmoved by something when it fails to elicit or involve a good feeling. Imagine the following case:

White Picket Fence: For years, Hannah has had a goal to own a house with a white picket fence. She not only wants it, but really values it. She thinks that a good life for her is one in which she meets this goal. She finally succeeds. Though she still wants it, still values owning it, and still generally maintains her favoring attitudes towards it, she feels empty. She gets no pleasure from having achieved one of her deepest desires.

Are Hannah's goods tailored to her? Do they fit? It seems clear to me that there is one clear respect in which the answer is "No." They leave her cold and unmoved because they fail to make her feel good.³⁶ Regardless of whether Hannah benefits from meeting her goal, there is an undeniable sense in which it fails to resonate – a sense that is not captured by the original kind of resonance, but one that is motivated by some of the same concerns.³⁷

Considering cases like Hannah's does not give rise to a perfect analog to the original constraint. The claim that a person can benefit from something only if it involves or is connected to felt-quality pleasure is too strong for our purposes.³⁸ But the case does seem to support the claim that a person's life on the whole cannot go well for them without some instances of feeling good. I call this "Affective Experiences Resonance" (for rhetorical ease in what follows, I sometimes refer to it simply as "affective resonance").

Affective Experiences Resonance: S's life can go well for them only if it contains instances in which they feel good.³⁹

³⁶Haybron (2008), Raibley (2013), and Tiberius (2018) discuss cases similar to *White Picket Fence* in part to draw our attention to the importance of affect to well-being.

³⁷Alwood (2023), Fanciullo (2025), and Kelley (2025a) defend an affective version of resonance. To be more precise, Kelley defends an interactive account of alienation which tells us that whether we are alienated from our welfare goods is a matter of how the different types of potential alienation (cognitive, affective, and desiderative) interact with one another.

³⁸See Alwood (2023) and Fanciullo (2025) for arguments that affective engagement is in fact necessary for benefit.

³⁹A comparable idea can be found in Hawkins (2010).

To be clear, I do not wish to claim that the considerations at hand tell in favor of affective resonance rather than attitudinal versions of the constraint. I am simply pointing out that some of the very same considerations that motivated the constraint can be taken as support for affective resonance.

Because there are many varieties of subjectivism, adjudicating whether each can meet *Affective Experiences Resonance* is beyond the scope of this paper. I do wish, however, to put forth a consideration in favor of the claim that felt-quality hedonism has an advantage over subjectivism, as it is traditionally formulated. Because felt-quality hedonism holds that the only thing that benefits is pleasure – feeling good – it easily meets affective resonance.⁴⁰ As we explored before, a view is subjective to the extent that it grounds prudential value in warrantless attitudes. While there are many different ways to fill out the details of this skeletal picture, the skeleton itself does not make reference to feelings at all. So, there is no guarantee that our fleshed out theory will respect affective resonance.

There is, of course, nothing preventing subjective theories from stipulating that feeling good must be involved in a good life. For instance, imagine a view of desire-satisfactionism which holds that the satisfaction of desires always involves pleasure. Neil Sinhababu (2017), for instance, argues something along these lines. On one interpretation of Heathwood (2019), the desires that matter for well-being are characterized by a pleasant felt quality.⁴¹ These kinds of views allow the subjectivist to easily meet *Affective Experiences Resonance*. My claim is not that all subjectivists are unable to respect affective resonance, but rather that, in this respect, felt-quality hedonism has an advantage over bare-bones subjectivism.

8. Conclusion

Pinning down what resonance requires is a complicated matter. I hope to have shown that the typical interpretation of the constraint is wrong, and that we should opt for *Non-Accidental Connections Resonance* or *Capacity to Care Resonance* instead. I am agnostic about whether one is preferable to the other. Once we see that either variant is better than what resonance is standardly taken to require, the path forward for felt-quality hedonism comes into view. I argued that pleasure bears a non-accidental connection to our favoring attitudes and that it is something that we have the capacity to care about. I contend that, as a result, felt-quality hedonism can in fact respect resonance.

I briefly put forth an affective constraint motivated by some of the same concerns as the constraint with which we are familiar. If we are compelled by the concerns that animate the original resonance constraint, then we should take seriously the constraint that I introduced. Though no doubt some subjective views will be able to meet the new constraint, many will not. Because there is nothing built into subjectivist views, as they are

⁴⁰Whether other kinds of hedonism meet *Affective Experiences Resonance* depends on how the details are fleshed out. For instance, an externalist account of pleasure would not reliably meet *Affective Experiences Resonance* because there is nothing built into those accounts which guarantees any particular felt quality. But, if the account were to constrain which sorts of experiences could count as pleasures, or to claim that the attitude in question has a particular kind of pleasant felt quality, then they could guarantee that good lives contain some instances of feeling good.

⁴¹For an argument that this interpretation is untenable, see Fortier (forthcoming).

traditionally formulated, that guarantees that they meet affective resonance, surprisingly, felt-quality hedonism has an advantage in its ability to respect the spirit of resonance.⁴²

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