

I Am Confident About My Friend

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Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism and Virtual
Friendship

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¹for now

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Introduction

This thesis will concern itself with two questions, one conceptual, one practical: what are we discussing when we are discussing well-being, and, given the answer to that question, how we should view the phenomenon of virtual, or computer-mediated (CM), relationships such as online friendships.

What Are We Discussing When We Are Discussing Well-Being

There is no shortage of theories on what constitutes the good life, or well-being. Section 2.1 will give a short summary of the various ways in which the question has been addressed. Among the theories discussed in section 2.1, the cluster of theories collectively labeled 'hedonism' stand out for having both some intuitive appeal and being the subject of sustained, damning critiques. Since in this thesis I intend to use a specific theory from exactly this cluster as an analytic device for the evaluation of "virtual friendship", I will first need to establish that:

- hedonism broadly, and the version of hedonism which I intend to use specifically, are viable theories of well-being
- the version of hedonism I intend to use picks out relevant features of problems with virtual friendship

Hedonism and its critiques

Hedonism broadly states that well-being consists wholly of pleasures had minus pains suffered, for various interpretations of pains and pleasures. And after all, do all good-makers for a life not reduce to pleasure of one kind or another, and bad-makers to pains?

One major line of critique is what has become known as the argument of false pleasure, which states, roughly:

False Pleasures (Turton, 2008, p. 24)

- (1) Hedonism about well-being states that all pleasure, and only pleasure, intrinsically contributes positively to well-being and that all pain, and only pain, intrinsically contributes negatively to well-being.
- (2) Pleasure based on truth, or something like it, contributes more positively to well-being than pleasure based on falsity.²
- 2 (3) Therefore, something other than pleasure (truth of some sort) must contribute positively to well-being.
- 1, 3 (4) Therefore, hedonism about well-being is false.

This argument traces back all the way to Plato's *Philebus*, and finds contemporary and oft-cited versions in the thought experiments of Shelley Kagan's *Deceived Businessman* (Kagan, 1997) and Robert Nozick's *Experience Machine* (Nozick, 1974). The idea behind these critiques is that hedonic pleasures do not differentiate beyond their phenomenological "feel" (Williams, 1974, p. 296), so hedonism cannot make sense of "false" pleasures that are experientially the same. If the consensus is that false pleasures exist, so much the worse for hedonism.

Kagan (1997) describes a businessman who has been deceived his entire life about the love and appreciation he thinks he received from his family and colleagues. Nozick (1974) describes "super-duper neuropsychologists" who will hook you up to a machine that will manipulate your brain to give you any experience you could fancy, and it would be as real to you as anything could be; you will forget you entered the machine, and will fully believe you are living the fantastic life you had designed for yourself. Kagan's and Nozick's charge is the same: you and the businessman will think you both have great lives, but since the evidence you have for that is false, you do not *actually* have good lives. The implication would be that since you are not actually having the pleasures you are enjoying, you are not actually deriving well-being from those pleasures — or at the very least, less well-being than if they were true.

²where these pleasures are presumed to be experientially the same

Relevance to problems of virtual friendship

The scenarios Nozick and Kagan describe may have been fanciful at the time they were proposed. But we are moving fast into a future where most conditions in their thought experiments will become common occurrence; CM virtual spaces as offered by social media or video games are perhaps not yet at the level of what Nozick's "super-duper neuropsychologists" could do in their Experience Machine, but they certainly are at a level where Kagan's Deceived Businessman could realistically be systematically deceived; and even under the best of circumstances, none of the pleasures had in those spaces correspond to an underlying truth in the world in the straightforward way we expect in "real" spaces. If Kagan and Nozick are right, such spaces would be best avoided. At worst, they offer mere facsimiles of pleasures, rather than real pleasures. At best, you may be having real pleasures, but you can never be confident of that fact. Why take such chances with your well-being, when the real thing is ready to hand?

Viability of hedonism as a theory of well-being

Søraker however offers an alternate view on the viability of hedonism, and of pleasures had in virtual spaces. Søraker (2013, 2010) proposes Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (CAIAH), a modification of Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (IAH) offered by Feldman (2010), as a hedonist theory of well-being that can withstand the argument from false pleasures.

In his proposal, Søraker suggests that we should not think of these thought experiments in terms of whether the pleasures are false, but whether (and to what extent) they are had confidently. As a demonstration case, Søraker offers to re-evaluate the argument by Cocking and Matthews (2000), who argue that CM communication cannot ground actual friendship — with the well-supported background idea that actual relationships are a requirement for human well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2002, p. 81). The re-evaluation should show that confidence in the friendship should be the determining factor when it comes to how much well-being is extracted from the experience, and that if confidence can be brought to the level of non-mediated relationships, there is no relevant difference between them.

Research question

The research question then is twofold:

Does Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism withstand the argument of false pleasures, and what new insights are generated by re-evaluating computer-mediated relationships through its lens?

This thesis will provide a critical discussion of the extent to which CAIAH succeeds in withstanding the argument of false pleasures, and how it explains the difference in value between direct and CM relationships. This critical examination will turn up what I think are some difficulties in the theory proposal. In order to do Søraker justice, however, I shall apply the principle of charity³, to follow what Dennett calls “Rapoport’s rules for successful critical commentary” Dennett (2013, ch. 3): I will attempt to re-express Søraker’s position on CAIAH to put it in its most favorable light, filling in missing detail in a manner that most strongly supports it and highlight points of agreement, specifically on those topics where Søraker goes beyond Feldman’s Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism to posit his own improvements. I will add a reflection on what I think the theory adds to our understanding of hedonism as a viable subjectivist theory of well-being — even if it is in some ways incomplete — and what we can learn about CM relationships and their value based on this discussion.

³“In our need to make him make sense, we will try for a theory that finds him consistent, a believer of truths, and a lover of the good” (Davidson, 2001, p. 202)

Thesis structure

This thesis will be laid out in four chapters, which will address the following topics, respectively:

1. *The Value And Viability Of Computer-Mediated Relationships*

This chapter will evaluate the grounds for the claim by Cocking and Matthews (2000) that virtual friendships are inferior to ‘actual’ friendships, by showing how their argument brings forward relevant aspects of the problem of false pleasures, and show its relevance to the discussion on the value and viability of CM (“virtual”) friendship.

The argument of false pleasures makes the case that at least some of the value of our pleasures derives from whether they are based on true states of affairs, even in those cases where we cannot know whether this true state of affairs obtains — from the point of view of the person whose well-being is being evaluated, there is no difference in phenomenological “feel” of the experience, and the truth cannot be established at a later point in time. I grant that the cases that Kagan (1997) and Nozick (1974) bring forward have intuitive appeal. It seems a stretch to claim that these cases are equivalent to a scenario where the pleasures were based on actual friendships, or actual accomplishment. We might expect the friendships of the Businessman to be unstable in practice, for example. But conceptually, they may not be friendships at all: if we are to trust Aristotle on the matter, both friends must mutually bear goodwill and wishing well to each other (Aristotle, 2009, §2), and this reciprocity is missing in the case of the Deceived Businessman. Regardless of whether the experience is pleasurable, it would not be a pleasure of *friendship* on this understanding; it would be hard to call these then equivalent to real friendship. If we derive our well-being in part from our friendships, we plausible derive less well-being if these friendships are fickle, or even wholly non-existent. For these reasons and more, a life built on false pleasures seems inconsistent with, to paraphrase Korsgaard and O’Neill, “a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking” (Korsgaard & O’Neill, 1996, p. 101).

This argument is directly relevant for how we should view virtual, CM relationships, such as online friendships. The term “virtual”

in common in common usage implies “lesser than the real deal”, “almost but not quite real“. Peirce describes the problem as

‘Virtual’ has been seriously confounded with ‘Potential,’ which is almost its contrary. For the potential X is of the nature of X , but is without actual efficiency. (Peirce, 1905a)

If in speaking of “virtual friendship”, we are in fact discussing potential-but-not-actual friendship, virtual relationships might be assumed to suffer from the same problems as do false pleasures.

Friendships are a near-necessary component of well-being, as Diener and Seligman (2002) argue, a point to which I will return in chapter two. Not only might we question whether such friendships could offer the same phenomenological “feel” on the relevant aspects of friendships, but if Kagan and Nozick are correct, even if they could, the computer-mediation would filter out so many clues, as Cocking and Matthews (2000) argue, that it would always be a suspect way of having such relationships.

At the same we must not take the results from these thought experiments as conclusive. This chapter will also outline some objections brought forward against them, which will lead the way for Søraker’s CAIAH to propose confidence rather than truth as a better way to acknowledge the intuitions evoked by the argument of false pleasures. Chapter 3 will offer a deeper look into how well confidence fares

2. *Well-Being, The Good Life, And The Role Of Relationships*

This chapter will start with an overview of theories of well-being and the role they ascribe to friendship. I will show that friendship can be seen as a practical necessity for well-being based on discussions in the philosophical literature and empirical research from positive psychology and related fields. I will outline how mediation affects the potential quality of CM friendship compared to direct-contact friendship.

The main questions to be answered here is: are mediated relationships inferior to their non-mediated version? Søraker proposes a CAIAH as theory which allows an answer to this question that is more nuanced than Kagan and Nozick’s “yes”. As the proposed

theory is a variant of hedonism, it is in principle susceptible to the argument of false pleasures; chapter 3 will investigate how well it is positioned to fend off that criticism.

3. *(Confidence Adjusted) Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism And The Viability Of Hedonism*

This chapter will take a closer look at hedonism as a theory of well-being. The starting point will be the foundation of CAIAH: IAH, put forward by Feldman (2004). IAH aims to be robust in the face of criticisms such as the argument of false pleasures by offering extensions such as Truth-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (TAIAH), but as I will argue in this chapter, using Truth this way in building a hedonist theory of well-being is self-defeating, as the resulting theory plausibly no longer qualifies as hedonism.

CAIAH intends to build on IAH but aims to repair aforementioned problems by replacing Truth from TAIAH with Confidence. CAIAH is at this point more a theory sketch than a full theory however; in this chapter, I will build out the concepts that the proposal by Søraker leaves implicit, and argue that if we cash out Truth in the way James (1896) explains the term, the concept of Confidence gives us everything that Truth was meant to do, while still staying within the bounds of hedonism. While I have attempted to strengthen CAIAH as much as possible, my build-out has unearthed some problems of the use of Confidence in such a way, which I will describe at the end of this chapter.

4. *Friendship And Well-Being In A Mediated World*

With the importance of friendship as argued in chapter 2 as a backdrop, this chapter brings together the connection between arguments against hedonism and concerns raised about CM friendship from chapter 1 with the discussion of CAIAH as a theory of well-being from chapter 3 to re-evaluate the claim against virtual friendship by Cocking and Matthews (2000). This chapter aims to substantiate the claim from Søraker (2013) that the argument by Cocking and Matthews (2000) could be fruitfully recast in terms of how confident we can be in mediated relationships rather than a categorical condemnation of them as intrinsically inferior. This recasting should show that confidence in the relationship should be the determining factor when it comes to how much well-being is extracted from the

experience. This would entail that, if the confidence can be brought to the level of non-mediated relationships, there is no relevant difference between them. This chapter will build out this recasting by interpreting the context of false experience through the concept of confidence I developed in chapter 3.

Finally, this chapter will look at normative implications and technology recommendations, aimed to address the problems unearthed in while evaluating CM friendship in the context of CAIAH, and offer possible avenues to extend CAIAH further using the concept of authenticity as inspiration. The concluding reflections will outline possible avenues future research with regards to raising well-being through friendship, assuming CM friendships are here to stay.

The Value And Viability Of Computer-Mediated Relationships

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In the discussion about computer-mediated (CM) friendship, you will often come across the idea of virtual spaces as the place of the encounter. The word “virtual” is heavily laden, however. It can, of course, mean “online” in its simplest form, in that a computer network acts as the carrier for the communication much as the air would if you are speaking facing each other. But virtual is also often used as a contrast against “real”, implying that reality should be construed as computer-free (Fornäs, 2002, p. 30), that technology makes life less real; “virtual” connotes approaching the actual without arriving there (Boellstorff, 2010, pp. 19-20). This gives rise to the concern that relationships, as well as other potential sources of well-being, that are mediated in this manner are also less real, and that “unreal” sources of well-being can ipso facto only yield faux well-being. Such mediation is in itself not new of course, and mediation does not specifically need computers. Pen-pals have mediated communication through letter-writing, and long-distance relationships are mediated by modes of transport. But computer-mediation has put mediated communications in the hands of nearly all of us, and it is becoming a pervasive part of our daily lives. I will return to the question whether these spaces are indeed so different in chapter 4, but the sheer scale of use is making computer-mediation a different phenomenon than previous forms of mediated communication.

This general concern about a life based on beliefs that do not correspond to reality has been fleshed out in several ways. The thought experiment of the Experience Machine by Nozick (1974) looks at beliefs about experiences that do not correspond to anything “real” in the world; the thought experiment of the Deceived Businessman by Kagan (1997) looks at beliefs where the subject is consistently mistaken in his beliefs about the relationships he has; both these thought experiments will be described in more detail in section 1.1.

While the consistent deception in these scenarios might seem outlandish, Søraker (2010, p. 65) rightly points out that Cocking and Matthews (2000) make a compelling argument about the unreality of close friendships in virtual worlds. I think an even broader case can be made that Cocking and Matthews (2000) argue that the subjective experience is too impoverished in CM spaces to even form reliably corresponding belief — in their specific case, beliefs that would ground friendship. Where the thought experiments from Kagan and Nozick perhaps seem remote from reality, the concerns they bring forward seem entirely plausible when it comes to the problems attaching to virtual friendship described by Cocking and Matthews; all in all, they could argue, the determinants of well-being must be “real”, or true, and the contemporary fashion of online friendship is more harmful than helpful.

We will take a more detailed look at the merits of their argument in section 1.2, but if these authors are right we might have cause for concern; CM places are rapidly becoming the norm for an important segment of our social lives (Aslam, 2015; Facebook Inc, 2015; Nielsen Corporation, 2014; Entertainment Software Association, 2015). And while Cocking and Matthews state that their thesis “is aimed at only the kinds of text-based communication common to email and chatroom style forums” (Cocking & Matthews, 2000, p. 223), the technology we can expect in even the mid-term future would still subject us to a large degree to the risk they espouse — cues filtered out (CFO), which will be discussed in more detail in section 1.2.1 — and as such would still be a very relevant concern, regardless of whether our friendships would be exclusively mediated or would take a hybrid form in which still a substantial (or growing) part of the contact would be mediated.

The thought experiments by Nozick and Kagan originate in the debate about the viability of hedonism as a theory of well-being, both forms of the “argument from false pleasures” (Feldman, 2004, p. 41). As these thought experiments address the same underlying concern of whether we are in

fact in contact with the fullness of reality, the problems they outline are directly relevant for how we should view CM relationships such as online friendships. If CM friendships are *like* friendships, but are not actual friendships, they would constitute a form of “false friendships”, and they would inherit all the problems that false pleasures entail for hedonism. As this thesis uses the work by Cocking and Matthews (2000) on virtual friendship as a discussion base, my argument will concentrate on that particular relationship, but the general argument should be applicable to mediated relationships broadly.

1.1 The Argument From False Pleasures

The argument from false pleasures is usually employed in attempts to refute hedonism as a theory of well-being. Chapter 3 will go into more detail what hedonism as a theory of well-being says, but for now suffice it to say that hedonist theories are subjectivist theories that all state that subjective pleasure, and only subjective pleasure, is what adds to well-being, and that subjective pain, and only subjective pain, is what detracts from well-being. The general case made in various arguments from false pleasures is that this view on well-being is mistaken — that it is evident upon closer inspection that there are other things that contribute to your well-being than the pleasures you subjectively have.

The argument from false pleasures is structured roughly as follows:

False Pleasures

- (1) Hedonism states that subjective pleasure is the only thing of intrinsic value for the well-being of a person
- (2) Pleasures based on truth are more valuable than pleasures based on falsity
- 2 (3) Therefore, something other than subjective pleasure is intrinsically valuable
- 1, 3 (4) Therefore, hedonism is false

The crux of the argument lies in premise 2. The two most well-known arguments for premise 2 can be found in the thought experiments of the Experience Machine by Nozick (1974), and the Deceived Businessman by Kagan (1997).

1.1.1 The Experience Machine

Nozick defines hedonist pleasures or pleasurable feelings as “a feeling that is desired (partly) because of its own felt qualities . . . I do not claim there is just one felt quality that always is present whenever pleasure occurs. Being pleasurable, as I use this term, is a function of being wanted partly for its own felt qualities, whatever those qualities may be” (Nozick, 1989, p. 103).

Of pleasures so construed, Nozick postulates

an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. . . . Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain . . . Should you plug into this machine for life? . . . Of course, while in the tank you won't know that you're there; you'll think it's all actually happening. . . . Would you plug in? *What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside?* . . . What does matter to us in addition to our experiences? First, we want to *do* certain things, and not just have the experience of doing them. . . . we want to *be* a certain way, to be a certain sort of person. Someone floating in a tank is an indeterminate blob. There is no answer to the question of what a person is like who has long been in the tank. . . . It's not merely that it's difficult to tell; there's no way he is (Nozick, 1974, p. 42).

1.1.2 The Deceived Businessman

In a similar vein, Kagan, following Nagel (1970, p. 76) in arguing against the claim that “what you do not know cannot hurt you”, asks us to

imagine a man who dies contented, thinking he has achieved everything he wanted in life: his wife and family love him, he is a respected member of the community, and he has founded a successful business. Or so he thinks. In reality, however, he has been completely deceived: his wife cheated on him, his daughter and son were only nice to him so that they would be able to borrow the car, the other members of the community

only pretended to respect him for the sake of the charitable contributions he sometimes made, and his business partner has been embezzling funds from the company which will soon go bankrupt. . . . We can imagine that the man's mental states were *exactly* the same as the ones he would have had if he had actually been loved and respected. So if mental states are all that matter, then — since this man got the mental states right — there is nothing missing from this man's life at all. It is a picture of a life that has gone well. But this seems quite an unacceptable thing to say about this life; it is surely not the kind of life we would want for ourselves. So mental state theories must be wrong. (Kagan, 1997, pp. 34–35)

In both cases, from the point of view of the person whose well-being is being evaluated, there is no difference in phenomenological “feel” of the experience, and the truth cannot be established at a later point in time. I will grant that these have intuitive appeal. It seems a stretch to claim that these cases are equivalent to a scenario where the pleasures were based on actual love, or actual accomplishment. A life built on false pleasures seems inconsistent with, to paraphrase Korsgaard and O'Neill “a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking” (Korsgaard & O'Neill, 1996, p. 101). If I then accept that

1. the only relevant difference between the states of affairs laid out in these thought experiments is that a true state of affairs is pitted against a false state of affairs, and that
2. these thought experiments successfully demonstrate that a life based in falsity is the worse life (premise 2), and that it does not matter whether I experience this difference

then it would seem I have no choice but to agree that the argument is valid, and that hedonism is false. This conclusion enjoys broad support in the literature¹; Sumner concludes that “the lesson of the experience machine is that any theory with this implication is too interior and solipsistic to

¹Weijers (2014, p. 530) e.g. lists Finnis (1980, p. 33), Railton (1984, pp. 148–149), J. Griffin (1986, pp. 9–10), Thomson (1987, p. 41), Brink (1989, pp. 223–224), Attfield (1991, p. 33), Becker (1992, p. 25), Darwall (1997, pp. 162 & 178), Hooker (2000, p. 39), Kymlicka (2002, pp. 13–14), Sobel (2002, p. 244), Jollimore (2004, pp. 333–334), Tiberius (2004, p. 311), Baggini (2007, pp. 74–76), Brülde (2007, pp. 26–29 & 33), Richard Kraut (2007, pp. 124–126), Rivera-López (2007, p. 75), Haybron (2008, p. 21), Kazez (2009, pp. 51–54), Keller (2009, p. 657), Bok (2010, pp. 24–28), Hausman (2010, p. 329), Hurka (2010, pp. 68–70), Tiberius and Hall (2010, pp. 214–215), . . .

provide a descriptively adequate account of the nature of welfare. Since welfare does not consist merely of states of mind, it does not consist merely of pleasurable states of mind, regardless of how these are characterized” (Sumner, 1996, p. 98).

1.2 Computer-Mediated Relationships

The start of our analysis will be the argument by Cocking and Matthews (2000), who argue that CM communication cannot ground actual friendship; online friendships are, in their words “psychologically unavailable to human agents”. There is some empirical backing for this claim. Even when Horst and Coffé notes that the effects of close proximity has influences that range from good to bad (Horst & Coffé, 2011, p. 527), they do note that “only the frequency of meeting friends face-to-face has a remaining positive direct influence on subjective well-being” (Horst & Coffé, 2011, p. 525). The argument by Cocking and Matthews revolves around the claim that two persons can only be genuine friends if they are mutually aware of the “true self” that underlies the facade we construct when we go through everyday life. This true self could be understood roughly as the kind of person you are when you feel no need for privacy in your current context; where you feel free to “show a side of [your] personality that others never see” (Rachels, 1975, p. 326). Your colleagues at work, and even good acquaintances in your social environment, are presented with those aspects of your self that you more or less consciously select as appropriate to the environment, but your friends are allowed to know you are “secretly a poet, if rather shy about it, and only to your best friends do you show your verse” (Rachels, 1975, p. 326).

It is not only by voluntary disclosure that you reveal your true self to your environment, however. Through a process of non-voluntary self-disclosure, you will “leak” information about yourself to those persons who are frequently in your physical presence; your “paranoia about personal safety where [you] regard placing three dead-locks on the front door as merely prudent behaviour, . . . which would inevitably be revealed . . . where [your] friend notices [you] fussing over the locks” (Cocking & Matthews, 2000, p. 228). This is not information you would volunteer about yourself as you do not see yourself as paranoid; it takes the outside perspective of your friend to make you aware that it could be the case at all. As Briggie (2008, p. 72) notes, there may be things about myself of which I am unaware or only dimly aware, meaning that I could not reveal

these things to online friends, because I do not know they are there to be revealed.

Instead in the virtual world, because of the “range of technologically based structural constraints inherent in Net communication, I am able to present myself to others with a high level of control and choice” (Cocking & Matthews, 2000, p. 228). And this “ability” enhances both the voluntary case, where I can be much more successful in crafting a facade because no non-voluntary leaks can occur, but also the non-voluntary case such as with the dead-bolts, where I might actually want the effects of such information leaks, but I am deprived of the option to have them, as the online environment only allows me to share what I know I want to share; “I can then, choose and control my self-presentation to, and my exchanges with, my Net ‘friends’, in various significant ways which I either cannot, or would not be so disposed to, with my non-virtual friends” (Cocking & Matthews, 2000, p. 228). To be a genuine friend I must thus necessarily be able to witness your non-voluntary behaviors; since this is severely diminished in the virtual environment — if not simply ruled out completely — no genuine friendship can start or persist purely online. This problem is generally described as CFO, a point on which I shall elaborate in section 1.2.1. The ability to choose and control your self-presentation is of course not absolute; even people who spend substantial effort to shield off their real identity can be found (Greenberg, 2015), and companies build substantial profiles by tracking your habits online (Hill, 2012; Leber, 2016). But this does not prevent most users from curating their online persona, and there seems to be substantial pressure to do so: a Pew research report shows that as much roughly three-quarters of teens think people are less authentic and real on social media than they are offline, and 40 percent of those polled felt pressure to post positive and attractive content (Lenhart, 2015, p. 59).

If all this is true, and if we agree that relationships are a necessity for well-being (a point I shall return to in section 2.3), we should avoid spending any significant portion of our social lives in online environments. Even if from my point of view I engage in all the activities I normally would with a friend, and I am getting all those pleasures I deem valuable from the online contact, by nature of the medium we do not mutually disclose our whole selves, and the friendship would be in that sense “false”. In terms of the Experience Machine, I am choosing to forego the uncomfortable feedback non-voluntary disclosure might bring; in terms of the deceived Businessman, I am depriving myself of those crucial cues that could tell me I need to seek alternative relationships where I am in fact valued. CM

friendships make it too easy to put myself in an “echo chamber” where I am only confronted with what I want to hear, rather than what I need to hear (Vicario et al., 2016, p. 558).

1.2.1 Cues filtered out

E. Griffin, Ledbetter, and Sparks describe the cues filtered out (CFO) problem as “an interpretation of CM communication that regards lack of non-verbal cues as a fatal flaw for using such media for relationship development,” (E. Griffin et al., 2012, p. 138) further breaking this down in more refined categories such as social presence theory, which suggests CM interactions (certainly when the mediation is primarily textual) deprives users of the sense that another actual person is involved in the interaction, or media richness theory, which suggests that face-to-face communication provides a rich mix of verbal and nonverbal cue systems that can convey highly nuanced emotions, for which computer-mediation does not offer sufficient “bandwidth” to convey rich relational messages, and thus lacks the capacity to disclose sufficient detail in real-time to offer an equivalent to face-to-face interactions. This limited “bandwidth” practically necessitates to be selective as to the when, how and for how long the communicate; “the price they pay is that they miss out on important, potentially problematic and complex, aspects of the friends’ personality. Therefore the agent ends up admiring and loving parts of the friend rather than the whole of her” (Fröding & Peterson, 2012, p. 205). We cannot “perceive the other person in a full, rich way”, which prevents the “necessary bond, one that will allow the fullest communication of feelings and goals, with the least ability to fool the other person or hide our vices” (Sharp, 2012, p. 239). Rheingold states this poses is an “ontological untrustworthiness of cyberspace” where “the lack of body language and facial expression” is damagingly missing from the online vocabulary (Rheingold, 2000, p. 177). Another aspect, related to the filtering problem, is what E. Griffin et al. (2012, p. 142) labels the problem of Chronemics from Walther (2008), which says *even if* the impoverished nature of CM communication is solved, there is an additional problem of the rate at which information can be processed; CM communication can, according to Walther, take at least four times as much time to both produce and to understand, putting another limit on the richness of CM communication.

1.3 Problems With Arguments From False Pleasures

Despite the enduring support for the argument from false pleasures, I believe it to be flawed. That is not to say that nothing should be learned from it — quite the contrary, in fact. I think the intuitions they evoke largely point us in the right direction, a point to which I shall return in section 3.4. Nevertheless, their objections are not definitive. On the one hand, hedonism can itself be described in ways that are compatible with the intuitions evoked by the thought experiments of Nozick and Kagan; section 3.3 and section 3.4 will go into further detail on such reconceptualizations. On the other hand however, the thought experiments by Nozick and Kagan have alternate readings that diminish much of the force of these arguments. Some of such alternative readings will be presented here.

The simplest rebuke of these thought experiments is to simply bite the bullet and state that the intuitions they evoke are strong but misplaced; that the entire notion of “false pleasures” is a mistaken concept. Such an argument is made e.g. by Gallop (1960). By that line of argument, the thought experiments conflate the concept of subjective well-being with either something akin to an aesthetical conception of the good life from the perspective of an outside observer, or with reliable means to obtain such subjective well-being. I shall return to this point briefly in section 2.1, but I consider the intuitions evoked by the thought experiments strong enough that they cannot simply be brushed aside. Still, the argument from false pleasures must face the issue of how to account for the idea that pleasures or pains not experienced can affect your well-being. Even Kagan concedes that “changes in well-being must involve changes in the person.” (Kagan, 1994, p. 314), and that “ [the Businessman’s] life is not going well [but] in contrast, when I ask myself whether he is well-off or not, I find myself much less confident, and I find myself with *some* sympathy for the thought that the deception doesn’t affect his level of well-being” (Kagan, 1994, p. 321) — even when the thought experiment stipulates that the Deceived Businessman has no experiences that would in such a way affect his level of well-being; recall that the Businessman “dies contented, thinking he has achieved everything he wanted in life” (Kagan, 1997, p. 34).

I will structure my investigation into these thought experiments along the lines of Kolber (1994, pp. 12–13); On the one hand, the empirical

claim of the argument must be true. It must be true that people would choose not to enter the experience machine. On the other hand, it must be the case that the intuitions are responses to the underlying question, “are mental states all that matter to me?”, rather than fears of technology encroachment, or fears that malfunctions of the Experience Machine may affect our mental states. In the same vein, thought experiments that are relevantly similar to the Experience Machine and the Deceived Businessman should yield the same intuitive responses.

On the empirical question, I will just comment that a growing number of people voluntarily spend an increasing amount of time in virtual environments; video games are a common passtime, and social media has become a staple part of our social lives. Empirically it looks like people voluntarily enter environments that are explicitly intended to provide (temporarily) what the Experience Machine would provide², and voluntarily enter environments where Cocking and Matthews (2000) plead that the risk of the Deceived Businessman looms large. This is of course not an argument in favor of CM relationships per se — it is not uncommon for large groups of people participating in activity detrimental to well-being — but it at least indicates many people find this pleasurable behavior. In favor of the view of Cocking and Matthews (2000), at least we could say that this is a non-trivial phenomenon which warrants our concern.

On the question of what the thought experiments in fact disclose, we could be skeptical whether the intuitions that the thought experiments elicit do in fact indicate a Truth preference about the grounding of our experiences. Kolber proposes a reversed Experience Machine where, instead of being asked whether you would consider plugging in, you are asked whether you would plug out. You are told “you are not [fill in your name], you only think you are [your name]. Get off the machine and you will be who you really are, John Doe” (Kolber, 1994, p. 15). If Nozick’s conclusion holds, the answer should be unequivocal; the person that is actually John Doe should want to leave.

De Brigard (2010) operationalized this reverse thought experiment. In his experimental setup, de Brigard offers three scenarios, or “vignettes” as he calls them; a Neutral, a Negative and a Positive vignette. In each of the scenarios you are confronted by an agent with the surprising message that you have for the past years been plugged into an Experience Machine due to an administrative error. You are informed that “your life outside

²in the sense that these environments try to generate realistic environments that allow partial suspension of disbelief to foster deeper engagement, even if the users know on reflection these spaces are not really what they depict

is not at all like the life you have experienced so far,” and in the case of the Negative and the Positive vignette are told additionally that “in reality you are a prisoner in a maximum security prison in West Virginia,” and “in reality you are a multimillionaire artist living in Monaco.”, respectively (De Brigard, 2010, pp. 47–49). The question is whether you would prefer to leave now.

In the Positive vignette, response was approximately 50–50 between respondents. In the Negative vignette, the response showed an overwhelmingly strong preference to stay in the Experience Machine. In the Neutral vignette, there was a significant preference to stay connected — and interestingly, the respondents who opted out of the Experience Machine more often reported the “second chance” aspect of leaving than they did report a reality preference. All of this points towards a life based in falsity not necessarily being the worse life. And if we apply similar reasoning to the Deceived Businessman, it becomes less obvious that he should prefer to live the life that corresponds to reality, as his case is most closely aligned to the Negative vignette.

De Brigard points out (De Brigard, 2010, p. 50) that both readings of the Experience Machine can adequately be explained by what Samuelson and Zeckhauser (1988, p. 8) call a “status quo bias”, which will connect to issues of reliability of expectation and confidence in future experience in section 3.4. In the cases where the disadvantages of a change are more easily imagined than the advantages, “the disadvantages of change loom larger than the advantages” (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1991, p. 200). This certainly would seem to be the case for Nozick’s Experience Machine; hardly any subject being posed the thought experiment will have any experience that would extrapolate into a thorough imagining of being in the Experience Machine. In De Brigard’s reading however, most subjects will readily know what it would be like to have simply lived their life, and whether it was inside the Experience Machine or not doesn’t enter the picture.

The sample size of the experiment was small, and perhaps not representative of how the general public would respond, but even so — it conflicts with the unequivocal response Nozick predicts.

An interesting aside — what to do with pleasure we take in fantasy, or unrealized (or even unrealizable) ambition under the problem of false pleasures. We could dream of some day becoming an astronaut, or one may derive enormous pleasure from dwelling on the mere possibility

of winning a football pool, even if in both cases we harbor no illusions about the chances of either being realized (Gallop, 1960, p. 333). The reverse would also hold; if I harbor an unwarranted fear of serious illness, such that it comes to dominate my every thought, this fear *in itself* is indistinguishable in its effects from a fear that would be warranted because I am in fact at risk of this serious disease but it never materializes (Gallop, 1960, p. 333). It would be hard to tell in what way my life would be better off one way or the other.

1.4 Summary

In this chapter I have evaluated prominent objections against virtual experience and their ramifications for CM relationships from three major angles. While all three advocate directly or indirectly against virtual friendships, their force has been weakened by alternative understandings of what these objections purport to show. That said, the weakening only shows that what Kagan, Nozick and Cocking and Matthews find troublesome about virtuality could have different underlying causes than what these writers had claimed, not that the effects should not be taken seriously. For that reason, the next chapter will explain the reasons why we must take friendship seriously as a factor of well-being, and what responses have been formulated by proponents of hedonism against the argument from false pleasures.

Well-Being, The Good Life, And The Role Of Relationships

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2.1 Well-Being And The Good Life

A theory of well-being allows us to grade a life in terms of how good the life is for the person living it. Being able to conceptualise what it means for a life to be better gives us insight into the elements of our life we should pay attention to in order to achieve such progress and how to formulate a theory of action. A good theory of well-being is therefore well worth having; once we are armed with a theory of the good, acts can be compared to see which one better promotes well-being (Kagan, 1997, p. 60). A good understanding of theories of well-being, as well as the role of friendship, will also help in the later evaluation of the claims by Cocking and Matthews (2000) in chapter 4, to see in what ways computer-mediated (CM) friendships can add to or detract from well-being.

There is no shortage of contenders when it comes to such theories; Parfit (1984, p. 4) first grouped these into three partially overlapping categories, later elaborated by Brey (2014, pp. 16–20):

- *Hedonism*, member of the class of mental state theories, holds that “only pleasure is intrinsically good, and pain is the only intrinsic bad. . . . to strive for well-being is to strive for the greatest balance of pleasure over pain” (Brey, 2014, p. 17). Mental state theories say that what matters for personal well-being are the mental states

of the subject, specifically various forms of pleasures and pains in the case of hedonism. Different versions of hedonist theories make different claims about what happiness involves, and how it should be characterised. The main objection to hedonist theories are the aforementioned Experience Machine and the Deceived Businessman from section 1.1. Besides those, there are other forceful critiques. Mill calls it “a doctrine worthy only of swine” (Mill, 1863, p. 10), the reasons for which will be outlined in section 2.2. And hedonism has classically had problems accounting for differences in value deriving from how pleasures are distributed throughout a life, known as the “shape of a life” problem, on which more in section 2.2.1.

- *Desire-fulfilment theories*, or preference-satisfaction theories, state that “one’s level of well-being is set by the extent to which one’s desires are satisfied [where] a desire is satisfied if the desired state of affairs obtains.” (Tupa, 2006, p. 41). These desires can be thought relevant to the theory based on various criteria, such as whether they are your current desires simpliciter, whether they are your desires as you have them after you have reflected upon them, or the desires you would have were you fully cognisant, or informed, about what having them fulfilled would entail, and what the alternatives to those desires are. Desire-fulfilment theories have the benefit that they do not suffer the false pleasures problem, as they can trivially state that the Deceived Businessman or the occupant of the Experience Machine does not have the implicit desire — that their pleasures are real — fulfilled. There are various objections to this class of theories however; you could e.g. irrationally hold desires knowing full well that having them satisfied would detract from your well-being (the junk food industry survives on this fact by and large). There is also the conceptual problem that “it would seem that it is not the case that things are good for us because we desire them, but rather that we desire things *because* they are good for us” (Brey, 2014, p. 17).
- *Objective-list theories* hold that well-being is determined by the degree to which you meet a certain number of objective criteria, regardless of whether we desire them or deem them pleasurable. Parfit (1984, p. 499) suggests among others rational activity and the development of one’s abilities, Finnis (1980, pp. 86–90) what he means to be an exhaustive list of seven such criteria, among which friendship, knowledge, and play. In this domain we also find the capability approach as pioneered by Sen (1980, 1984, 1985b,

1985a) and further developed by e.g. Nussbaum (1987, 1992, 2001, 2003). The main objection against objective list theories is contained in its description; many people deem it implausible that there may be things that you could strenuously reject as unpleasant and undesirable even after reflection, but which still objectively contribute positively to your well-being; as Feldman (2004, p. 69) argues, what makes life of (a person) good is that he enjoys what he gets, not that he gets what he wants, or what we have decided he should want.

For the remainder of this thesis it is important to distinguish theories of well-being from moral theories. Theories of well-being have as their subject that which makes a life prudentially good for the individual whose life it is; moral theories roughly have as their subject the ways we ought to live our lives so we orient ourselves properly towards others. While a moral theory could very well stipulate that what is moral ought to be judged in terms of how an action contributes to the well-being of yourself and others, and a theory of well-being can take on board that our moral community contributes to our personal well-being, the orientation of a theory of well-being is towards the individual¹.

It is similarly important to distinguish prudential well-being from the life that is deemed to be an aesthetically, exemplary, or morally good life. While the exemplary life may coincide with that life being good for the person living it for example, and the exemplary life might be thought to be very valuable, it is not *necessarily* the case that an aesthetically, exemplary, or morally good life is also good for the person living it, so they are not under all readings the same concept (Sumner, 1996, pp. 20–25). Hamlet's life was aesthetically pleasing, but implausibly good for Hamlet himself. Mother Theresa's could on some accounts be deemed exemplary or morally good, but it was a life of hardship; her life was perhaps good for others², but it did not appear to be very good for herself. From a hedonist perspective, it could even be the case that I gain in well-being through morally reprehensible acts, such as when I might be taking pleasure in the misery of others (Silverstein, 2000, p. 280). Disconcerting as this may

¹Non-Western fields of philosophy such as Indo-Tibetan do not strictly separate these matters (Ekman, Davidson, Ricard, & Wallace, 2005, p. 60), and could in principle come to very different conclusions on the matter. There is, alas, insufficient room to investigate that line of research in the context of this thesis

²Mother Theresa's Home of the Dying is the subject of some controversy with regards to the care given and her motives in the matter (A. Taylor, 2015)

be, Kagan, one of hedonism's most formidable critics, already notes that we should take this distinction seriously (Kagan, 1994, p. 321)³.

As the term 'hedonism' appears in a variety of theories, let me start out by delineating what I will not be covering, or at least not in depth:

1. Motivational hedonism, which is a descriptive psychological theory that entails the view that that (only) pleasure or pain motivates us into action.
2. Folk hedonism, which is a normative theory of well-being which holds that well-being consists in having, in the balance, as many pleasurable sensations as possible.

Even though Folk Hedonism, or hereafter Default Hedonism (DH), is in fact a theory of well-being, I will discuss it only because the most prominent critiques against hedonism have primarily had it as their target. This variant is what gave axiological hedonism much of its bad reputation, and it is DH first and foremost which thought experiments such as the Deceived Businessman (Kagan, 1997) and the Experience Machine (Nozick, 1974) from section 1.1 aim to discredit. It is addressed in this thesis primarily to show that there are plausible variants of axiological hedonism that are robust against the problems that have been raised against DH.

2.2 Hedonism As A Theory Of Well-Being

As outlined, hedonism has experienced withering criticism, primarily in the form of arguments that level the charge of "false pleasures" against it, such as described in section 1.1, but also others such as the Shape of a Life problem described below in section 2.2.1.

It is important to note that the thought experiments of both Kagan and Nozick rely on an implicit assumption. The explicit claim is that "true pleasures" add more to your well-being than the corresponding "false pleasures". The reason *why* these "true pleasures" add more to your well-being rests on the implicit assumption that you in fact desire two things: you explicitly desire to experience pleasure rather than pain, but

³"As I have just noted, in thinking about the deceived businessman the judgment that I am myself most confident about is that his *life* is not going well. In contrast, when I ask myself whether *he* is well-off or not, I find myself much less confident, and I find myself with some sympathy for the thought that the deception doesn't affect his level of well-being." (Kagan, 1994, p. 321)

you also implicitly desire that the factors which you think are the cause of your pleasurable experience do in fact obtain. It is quite reasonable to assume most people will have both these desires. The thought experiments however stipulate that neither the Deceived Businessman nor the occupant of the Experience Machine can ever know the implicit desire is satisfied, and neither Kagan nor Nozick however specify how, or for what reason, having this implicit second desire satisfied contributes to your well-being. There is of course a theory of well-being, as outlined above, that states that it is exactly the fulfilment of desires, whether they involve a change in the person or not, is what determines well-being: preference-satisfactionism. It could certainly be argued that *if* preference-satisfactionism is true, that hedonism would be in trouble. But neither Kagan nor Nozick have posed an explicit argument for the plausibility of desire-satisfactionism as part of their thought experiments. Absent such an argument, assuming preference-satisfactionism to be true as an argument against hedonism would amount to begging the question.

As I will return to below, Søraker (2010, 2013, forthcoming) sketches a variety of hedonism which could be a viable theory of well-being in the face of such critiques. Søraker gives no indication that he thinks the sketched theory should be inherently stronger than competing non-hedonist theories of well-being. Rather, the target seems to be to demonstrate that hedonism should re-enter the pool of plausible theories along with objective list and preference satisfaction theories.

When I refer to hedonism as a theory of well-being, I shall take it to have mean minimally

Definition 2.1 (Hedonism). *T is a form of hedonism if and only if all the basic intrinsic value states according to T are pure attributions of some sort of pleasure or pain. (Feldman, 2004, p. 177)*

and more elaborately

Definition 2.2 (Hedonism). *(Feldman, 2004, p. 27)*

1. *Every episode of pleasure is intrinsically good; every episode of pain is intrinsically bad.*
2. *The intrinsic value of an episode of pleasure is equal to the number of [units] of pleasure contained in that episode; the intrinsic value of an episode of pain is equal to –(the number of [units] of pain contained in that episode).*

3. *The intrinsic value of a life is entirely determined by the intrinsic values of the episodes of pleasure and pain contained in that life, in such a way that one life is intrinsically better than another if and only if the net amount of pleasure in the one is greater than the net amount of pleasure in the other.*

This formulation is also commonly known as “summative hedonism”, as the well-being of a life is seen as the sum-total of these episodes of pleasures and pains. It does not explain in any detail how exactly a unit of pain or pleasure is to be measured, but one could perhaps use something like the Experience Sampling Method (Reed & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 21). With Experience Sampling, you ask individuals to provide systematic self-reports at random occasions in order to obtain self-reports for a representative sample of moments in people’s lives. Such measures are imprecise of course, but having a basis to make rough comparisons of better and worse in a reliable way would already be a valuable achievement (J. Griffin, 1986, p. 76); as Singer would say, “precision is not essential” (Singer, 2002, p. 16). Having even very rough units gives us a measure of well-being-to-date for a particular life, and the topic of adjustment which will be discussed in sections 3.2 to 3.4 will show some ways in which we may recognize such rough units.

The basis of much of hedonism originates in the theory of Bentham (1879, ch. IV) who described well-being as felicity, which could be calculated by summing a persons pleasures, quantified by how intensely it is felt, how long it lasted, etc. This concept was later refined by Mill (1863) to respond to critiques of the like that such a conception of well-being was “as a doctrine worthy only of swine” (Mill, 1863, p. 10). It was argued it would equate an accumulation of the most base pleasures, such as those more typically enjoyed by pigs, to what we intuitively deem an high-value human life. Mill moved from Bentham’s quantitative hedonism to an qualitative hedonism (Brey, 2014, p. 16) where the well-being derived from a pleasure is not only determined by its quantity, but also by the quality of the pleasures; qualitatively “higher” ones such as intellectual pleasures always contribute more than “lower” ones, such as physical pleasures. It is, as it is said, better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied⁴. We see here the first move towards the adjustment that will feature prominently in the versions of Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism of chapter 3. As we shall see there, the pleasures described in Feldman’s

⁴The argument by Moore (1903/1960, §50) on the heap of filth could be said to have been a precursor to Nozick’s Experience Machine. Both aim to show that more than pleasure matters to us; truth in the case of Nozick, and beauty in the case of Moore.

Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (IAH) have much in common with the higher pleasures from Mill.

2.2.1 Hedonism and the shape of a life

Another problem that has been raised against hedonist theories, even in its qualitative form, is the so-called “shape of a life” phenomenon (Velleman, 2009b, pp. 58–59), related to the summative aspect of hedonist theories.

One life begins in the depths but takes an upward trend: a childhood of deprivation, a troubled youth, struggles and setbacks in early adulthood, followed finally by success and satisfaction in middle age and a peaceful retirement. Another life begins at the heights but slides downhill: a blissful childhood and youth, precocious triumphs and rewards in early adulthood, followed by a midlife strewn with disasters that lead to misery in old age. Surely, we can imagine two such lives as containing equal sums of momentary well-being. . . . Yet even if we were to map each moment in one life onto a moment of equal well-being in the other, we would not have shown these lives to be equally good. For after the tally of good times and bad times had been rung up, the fact would remain that one life gets progressively better while the other gets progressively worse . . . To most people, I think, the former story . . . is the story of a better life.

When we recall definition 2.2 there really should not be a difference between these two lives; we should be indifferent among them, as the sum-total of well-being would be the same. Yet uphill life is plausibly a preferable life, with more overall subjective well-being⁵. Section 3.3 outlines, among other things, Feldman’s response to this problem, but will also show that the solution proposed no longer adheres to definition 2.2. Here again, Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (CAIAH) will propose confidence as an pleasure-adjuster that does, on which further detail in section 3.4.

⁵although we should not exclude the possibility that the time-sensitivity of pleasure can be explained in part by the endowment effect, or loss aversion (Kahneman et al., 1991, p. 194). Downhill will have had more loss-experiences in his life, and could associate that with lower well-being, even if the rationality of calling these instances ‘losses’ can be called into question. To not complicate matters further, I shall take Downhill’s losses to be rationally deemed such.

2.3 The Role Of Friendship In Well-Being

The claim that friendships are a vital component of well-being has a long history taking us at least back to Aristotle, who calls friendship the “greatest of external goods . . . without whom no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods” (Aristotle, 2009, pp. 114, 92). Friendship, according to Aristotle, “creates a context or arena for the expression of virtue, and ultimately for happiness” (Sherman, 1989, pp. 127–128). Kiliarnta (2016, pp. 2-3) summarizes Aristotle’s account of friendship by describing the three forms Aristotle distinguished:

1. friendships of utility, based on certain advantages that one can attain from one’s friend
2. friendships of pleasure where the main motivation for continuing the friendship is the pleasure we get from our friend’s company, and finally
3. virtue friendship, which is based on mutual admiration of your friend’s character and the sharing of values

with virtue friendship being the highest form that can be reached, where critics such as Cocking and Matthews claim that this latter form is unattainable in CM friendships (Kiliarnta, 2016, p. 2).

There is ample research showing different aspects of being social, having friends, or belonging to community and its positive effect on subjective well-being. Diener and Seligman (2002, p. 81) for example call friendships a near-necessary component of well-being. Demir and Weitekamp (2006) show a strong correlation between best-friendship quality and happiness. Fowler and Christakis (2008) shows a dependency relationship between your happiness and the happiness of others with whom you are connected. Adams, Santo, and Bukowski (2011) talks about a reversed, but equally important phenomenon, that having a best friend could negate the effects of negative life experiences, or even of protecting against physical decline at older age (Avlund, Lund, Holstein, & Due, 2004); Helliwell and Putnam claim a “robust relationship between ties to friends and happiness/life satisfaction” (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004, p. 1435). This robustness does not translate into universality of course; Li and Kanazawa for example finds a negative correlation for high-IQ persons between frequency of contact with friends and life satisfaction (Li & Kanazawa, 2016, pp. 13-14). But most of the population seems to benefit from contact with friends.

Given that friendship is so vital to well-being, it is not surprising that objections such as those of Cocking and Matthews (2000) are raised when it appears that the concept could be harmed by something like technological mediation. This section will outline some of the research on the importance of friendship for well-being, and canvas the common criticisms on the harmful effects of mediated relationships.

The claim underlying many of these objections is that the Aristotelian ideal of friendship is claimed to be incompatible with technological mediation of online friendships, usually related to the worry about cues filtered out (CFO) discussed in section 1.2.1. If Kagan and Nozick are correct, it would not matter whether such friendships could offer the same phenomenological “feel” on the relevant aspects of friendships. The computer-mediation would filter out so many cues, that it would always be a meagre simile of having friendships. This is what Cocking and Matthews (2000) argue. On-line friendships are said to be “likely more limited than friendships supported by physical proximity . . . Because on-line friends are not embedded in the same day-to-day environment, they will be less likely to understand the context . . . rendering support less applicable. . . . The interpersonal communication applications currently prevalent on the Internet are either neutral toward strong ties or tend to undercut rather than promote them” (R. Kraut et al., 1998, p. 1030). Rheingold speaks of the “ontological untrustworthiness of cyberspace . . . the lack of body language and facial expression” (Rheingold, 2000, p. 177) where the enrichment of communication through “a raised eyebrow or a playful tone of voice” (Rheingold, 2000, p. 177) is simply missing from the on-line vocabulary. Dreyfus (2009, p. 69) argues we can only trust what we can experience fully, and that mediated experience *should* perhaps not be trusted, as the mediation makes it too easy to keep commitments fleeting as there is little risk of confrontation when one of the “friends” chooses to withdraw (temporarily or permanently) into anonymity when interest wanes or conflict potentially arises (Dreyfus, 2009, p. 87). McFall (2012, p. 224) argues that mediated experience is structurally meager even when both friends try, as a mediated conversation is more like a description of events than a picture of events, and too much interpretation goes into the description to ever offer a true picture of the other; this extra layer of interpretation-filtering means your friend never experiences you fully, only your description of yourself. And Mesch and Talmud find that “friendships originated in the Internet are perceived as less close and supportive because . . . online friends are involved in less joint activities and less topics of discussion” (Mesch & Talmud, 2006, p. 147).

More needs to be said on the positive possibilities of CM interaction, to which I will return in chapter 4. In the interim, the above concerns do indicate CM friendship warrants scrutiny. To give this scrutiny the conceptual backing it needs, the next chapter will dig deeper into the theory of well-being that was the subject of the critiques from section 1.1: hedonism.

(Confidence Adjusted) Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism And The Viability Of Hedonism

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In this chapter, I will look at more contemporary formulations of hedonism, including a new formulation proposed by Søraker: Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (CAIAH). The intent of this investigation is to see how the new elements that CAIAH bring to hedonism can help understand what is problematic about computer-mediated (CM) friendship according to Cocking and Matthews (2000), in order to further see in Chapter 4 whether this new understanding can help mitigate these problems.

3.1 Hedonism

If first-person well-being in the strictest sense would be our goal, taking into account the separation described in section 2.1 between subjective well-being and, the morally preferable life, I might conclude that Default Hedonism (DH) would suffice, with apparent agreement from critics such as Kagan: “in thinking about the deceived businessman, the judgment that I am myself most confident about is that his *life* is not going well. In contrast, when I ask myself whether *he* is well-off, I find myself much less confident, and I find myself with *some* sympathy for the thought that the deception doesn’t affect his level of well-being” (Kagan, 1994, p. 321).

Given this I could question the use of bringing in external, non-subjective factors such as “corresponding to reality” when conceptualizing well-being; these external factors put an artificial limit on how much well-being a person can derive from a given state of affairs. Should my concern be to maximize the well-being by making sure I have high-value pleasures, there are ample ways I can do this without involving external factors, some of which will be discussed in section 3.2. So it may appear we could dismiss the problems of the Experience Machine and the Deceived Businessman as pseudo-problems.

This would be too hasty a move. While section 1.3 showed that the critiques against hedonism are perhaps not as strong as once thought, an interesting finding remains. The readings of the Experience Machine from Kagan (1994) and from De Brigard (2010) contradict each other in their conclusion, yet they agree on one important aspect: we see relevant differences between the states of affairs they describe as true and false, respectively. Neither reading indicates that we should be indifferent between these states of affairs. This fact still bears explaining. Regardless of how exactly we read the thought experiment, Nozick’s argument does succeed in isolating the fact that we care about more than our experiences as we are experiencing them (Silverstein, 2000, p. 285).

It is my position that the intuitions regarding the Experience Machine and the Deceived Businessman tell us something important about well-being not captured by Default Hedonism or even Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (which I will explore further in section 3.2). Here is what I think they highlight: we would do well to pay careful thought to which pleasures we choose to pursue, and aim to invest our time in pursuit of those pleasures that will reliably add to our well-being. Moreover, these intuitions highlight that there is likely a factor in how our pleasures are constituted that

tracks the continuity of pleasures that would come with such reliability. This is an aspect that is rarely discussed in the literature, but which offers a middle position between accepting or rejecting such arguments entirely. That we should want such continuity would be corroborated by the status quo bias which the experiments from De Brigard (section 1.3) showed.

The aforementioned factor Kagan has in mind is Truth, and that would indeed make our pleasures reliable in this sense. But Kagan asks too much. To know which pleasures are reliable in this way requires an outside observer we do not commonly have, so we can in practice hardly know which pleasures are reliable in the way Kagan wants. Furthermore, it would exclude experiences for which the truth conditions might lie largely within rather than outside ourselves, such as love (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 24), and religious experience, from contributing to our well-being.

There remains therefore an interest in finding out more about the nature of such factors to explain our preferences that Kagan's and De Brigard's Experience Machine are said by their respective creators to elicit. In this chapter, I will investigate what Feldman has done on this question in his formulation of Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (IAH) and its variants, and identify some problems in his answer in section 3.4. These problems are sufficiently fundamental that they make the project of evaluating the issue of CM friendship through the lens of DH a non-starter. Søraker however contends that these problems can be mended by his own variant of IAH, namely CAIAH, so section 3.4 will aim to build out the proposal for CAIAH to the level it can be used for the analysis of CM friendship.

For Feldman, the base theory of well-being is IAH, and the factors he introduces to accommodate our intuitions on thought experiments such Experience Machine are what he calls various "adjusters". These adjusters modulate how much well-being is derived from a given pleasure or collection of pleasures, and serve to explain how hedonism can be viable in the face of the purported conclusion from these thought experiments that more than immediate experience matters for our well-being.

3.2 Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism

Feldman defends a specific form of hedonism as a theory of well-being: IAH. IAH stands against DH (Feldman, 2004, p. 25) in a specific way; whereas according to DH our pleasure is measured in terms of intensity and duration of sensation (Feldman, 2004, p. 84), in IAH our pleasure is measured in terms of intensity and duration of the degree to which we take pleasure *in* our experiences. IAH does not exclude sensory pleasures from contributing to our well-being, but the source of the derived well-being is thus our attitude towards those experiences rather than the experiences themselves.

Let us say that I want to dismiss the problems of the Experience Machine and the Deceived Businessman as pseudo-problems for hedonism. I could accommodate the distinction between higher and lower pleasures (Mill, 1863, pp. 12-13) for example by moving from DH to Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism, which would allow us to “avoid all this controversy if we simply drop all talk of sensory pleasure and imagine instead an axiology based on attitudinal pleasure. We can say that higher pleasures are not pleasures that feel a special way, or that have been caused in a special way” (Feldman, 2004, p. 73). Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism, as described by Feldman (2004, ch. 4), is a relatively straightforward modification of DH, where hedonist pleasure is not a question of “being pleased by” (experiential pleasure) but rather “taking pleasure in” (attitudinal pleasure). This would explain how I could derive well-being from sensory painful experiences (such as sports) that I still take pleasure in. Additionally, Feldman (2004) argues that the vast majority of the conventional critiques against hedonism can be countered by making choice adjustments on the understanding of its key terms, while still adhering to the idea that a life is ultimately good for the person living it on account of the pleasure, less the pain, it contains.

The first move, kept throughout the work, is to do away with sensory pleasures as the base unit for the hedonist calculus. Feldman (2004, p. 55) introduces the concept of ‘attitudinal pleasures’ as a replacement base unit. Like sensory pleasures, attitudinal pleasures are mental states. Sensory pleasures result directly from the stimulation of the senses. Attitudinal pleasures instead come about when you take pleasure *in* your experiences. So where I might experience sensory pleasure from a hot bath, attitudinal pleasure when I take reflective pleasure in the fact I am having hot bath, but I might also take pleasure into something that does not (relevantly)

include stimulation of the senses, like enjoying a good movie¹. The concept of attitudinal pleasures also explains how I can derive pleasure from sensory painful experiences, such as intensive sports: I can take pleasure in achievement, even if that comes at the cost of temporary unpleasant experience. This move is analogous to the move from first-order desires to second-order desires (Frankfurt & Watson, 1982, p. 8). An example may serve to illustrate. An addict will in general have the direct (first-order) desire to take harmful drugs. But the same addict might also want to escape his addiction. If he does, he has the second-order desire to be rid of his first-order desire, because his life would be better for it. In an analogous way, an athlete could in general be displeased by discomfort. But the athlete might also recognize he would be pleased by his resolve towards improvement through training, even if that training involves discomfort. If he does, he recognizes that he can take pleasure *in* his training, even though the training does not offer sensory pleasure, because his life will be better for it.

Rather than trying to evade the other critiques against hedonism, Feldman shows that hedonism can be made robust in face of them. He does so by taking on board their conclusions, and explains how a particular understanding of hedonism — Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (IAH) (Feldman, 2004, 73, ch. 4) — coupled with an adjuster — can account for objections such as the Experience Machine and the Deceived Businessman.

Feldman is not interested in defending Default Hedonism (DH) (Feldman, 2004, pp. 22, 55–57), presumably because it is too sensitive to the existing critiques; DH assumes that pleasure is strictly a sensation (Feldman, 2004, p. 25), and when understood as such it is immediately vulnerable to the argument from the Experience Machine as posed by Nozick (Feldman, 2004, pp. 41–42): the sensory experiences I have in the Experience Machine are indistinguishable from the experiences I would have in the real world, so the resulting value would have to be the same. The experiments from De Brigard do not immediately help here; the test subjects were not asked to weigh the value of their sensory experience, and the wording of the Vignettes would most likely evoke contemplation

¹There are some lingering worries that the propositional nature of IAH excludes certain relevant pleasures and pains. Sumner for example points out that infants and many nonhuman animals would be deemed to be incapable of well-being as they “lack the conceptual resources for understanding propositions” (Sumner, 1998, p. 177), and it seems plausible that searing would detract from well-being even if the pain is such that it excludes coherent thought. Feldman responds that “all sorts of lowly creatures have propositional attitudes all day long . . . I reject Sumner’s claim that infants and nonhuman animals lack the resources to have propositional attitudes” (Feldman, 2002, p. 4), but offers no argument for this claim other than that he is sure his dog Pippin has them (Feldman, 2002, p. 4).

of life plans sooner than sensory experience. It should be noted that Feldman does not propose that IAH trumps other theories of well-being but rather aims to show that it is can be robust in the face of the strongest objections against hedonism, aiming to restore hedonism as a viable theory to be discussed among other theories of well-being.

Definition 3.1 (Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism). (Feldman, 2004, p. 66)

1. *Every episode of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure is intrinsically good; every episode of intrinsic attitudinal pain is intrinsically bad.*
2. *The intrinsic value of an episode of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure is equal to the amount of pleasure contained in that episode; the intrinsic value of an episode of intrinsic attitudinal pain is equal to - (the amount of pain contained in that episode).*
3. *The intrinsic value of a life is entirely determined by the intrinsic values of the episodes of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure and pain contained in the life, in such a way that one life is intrinsically better than another if and only if the net amount of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure in the one is greater than the net amount of that sort of pleasure in the other.*

According to IAH, the pleasures relevant to assessing well-being hedonistically should be understood as propositional attitudes of ‘taking pleasure in a states of affairs’ rather than as sensations, where a person takes attitudinal pleasure in some state of affairs if “he enjoys it, is pleased about it, is glad that it is happening, is delighted by it.” (Feldman, 2004, p. 56) These pleasures are not known to the subject as direct sensations, but are known in the same way we know our intentional attitudes when we believe something, or hope for it, or fear that it might happen (Feldman, 2004, p. 56). It is the force with which these states of mind are had, not that of any direct sensation, which matters for valuation of well-being. Sensory and attitudinal pleasures often occur simultaneously; it is not uncommon for people to take pleasure in sensory pleasures. But even if co-occurrence is common, this does not mean they are the same thing. Feldman (2004, pp. 56–57) gives an example of a person under anaesthetic who takes pleasure in having survived a motorcycle crash — no sensation is felt, but the attitudinal pleasure may be substantial.

The units of measurement in IAH are ‘basic intrinsic value states’ (Feldman, 2004, p. 172); those states that have their intrinsic values in the most fundamental way; they are the ‘value atoms’. Hedonist theories claim that the value atoms are “pure attributions of some sort of pleasure or pain”

(Feldman, 2004, pp. 173–177). The atoms in Feldman’s IAH are those cases where a person take pleasure in something that is not instrumental or compositional in nature (Feldman, 2004, pp. 57–58), but intrinsic, such that “the ultimate object of his enjoyment is *p* itself.”

This move to IAH immediately provides an interesting mitigation for one of the problems for DH: hedonic adaptation. This concept was first brought up by Brickman and Campbell (1971), and has become known as the hedonic treadmill after the adaptation of the idea by Eysenck (1990). In hedonic adaptation, pleasurable events add only short-term benefits to your well-being, and as you get used to the experience the intensity of the pleasure gradually declines, the analogy with the treadmill being that if you do move forward, you will soon find yourself back at your starting point². Having more pleasure does not make you correspondingly happier. The problem for DH is that pleasures no longer correlate closely with sensory experience. The pleasure you derive from the exact same sensory experience could well dwindle to zero as you adapt to it. Based on his research on the hedonic treadmill, Eysenck calls the notion that “your level of happiness depends simply on the number and nature of the pleasurable events which happen to you” the number one myth about happiness (Eysenck, 1990, p. 120). Interestingly, studies on the hedonic treadmill find that some experiences are highly resistant to adaptation. On the positive side, we find marriage, and perhaps unexpectedly, cosmetic surgery (Nettle, 2005, pp. 78-84), and on the negative side, that living or working in a noisy environment (Frederick and Loewenstein, 2003, p. 311; Nettle, 2005, pp. 78-84). These are all pleasures or pains that are mostly described by our attitudes towards our experiences; it is not the “direct sensation” of marriage or cosmetic surgery which provides the pleasure, but our taking pleasure in a lasting commitment, or taking pleasure in the improvement in your appearance with which you tread into the world every day. Likewise, it is not the sensation of noise that detracts from your well-being, but the fact that it continuously occupies your attention. While not in any way comprehensive, this could be a first indicator that attitudinal pleasures are more robustly correlated to well-being, and attitudinal pains to lower well-being.

²or ‘set point’ as it is called in relation to the treadmill

3.3 Truth/Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Feldman claims IAH is malleable enough to account for the various objections posed against hedonism. An array of ‘adjusters’ is offered³, in much the same way Mill adjusted for culturally ‘higher’ pleasures (Mill, 1863, pp. 11-12), each creating a new variant of adjusted-IAH to meet the demands of various normative standards, intended to show the flexibility of Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (IAH). The value the basic intrinsic value states contribute to a person’s well-being are, in Feldman’s analysis, thus not necessarily set by the subjective experience of the person alone. Feldman proposes several different such adjusters, each intended to target a specific class of objections to hedonism. There is Altitude-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (AAIAH) to emulate Mill’s “qualified hedonism” (Feldman, 2004, pp. 72-75). Should you demand that ‘Truth’ is a relevant factor in assessing well-being (which those wielding the Argument of False Pleasures such as the Deceived Businessman are apt to do), in Truth-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (TAIAH) (Feldman, 2004, pp. 109-110) false pleasures are discounted against ‘true’ pleasures, and thereby the objections appear to have been met. The idea is that by adjusting the “raw” intrinsic pleasure by some factor reliant on whether the pleasure is taken in a true object (Feldman, 2004, p. 112), we can get the same outcomes that Kagan and Nozick argue for from a hedonist theory. Feldman (2004, §5.3) offers Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (DAIAH) to counter the objection from base or worthless pleasures as posed e.g. by Moore (1903/1960, §56). In DAIAH, the actual contribution of a pleasure of a certain intensity is adjusted according to the extent to which the object in which the person takes pleasure is deserving of being taken pleasure in: “the value of a pleasure is enhanced when it is pleasure taken in a pleasure-worthy object, such as something good, or beautiful. The value of a pleasure is mitigated when it is pleasure taken in a pleasure-unworthy object, such as something evil, or ugly. The disvalue of a pain is mitigated (the pain is made less bad) when it is pain taken in an object worthy of pain, such as something evil or ugly. The value of a pain is enhanced (the pain is made yet worse) when it is pain taken in an object unworthy of this attitude, such as something good or beautiful” (Feldman, 2004, p. 120).

³ exemplified by “Let us assume that every potential object of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure can be ranked on a scale according to its suitability to serve as an object of such pleasure. We can say that the scale positions such objects according to their ‘altitude’. Mental, moral, and aesthetic objects have high altitude” (Feldman, 2004, p. 73)

The same reasoning goes here as it does for TAI AH; if you are convinced it is possible to establish separate from the appreciation of the subject that an object is (un)deserving of that appreciation, the “raw” pleasure so adjusted will meet the Moorean objection. With this parade of hedonisms, Feldman aims to show that adjusted-IAH as a principle behind a theory of well-being can be molded to whatever intuitions are pitted against it, with DAIAH the formulation favored by Feldman (Feldman, 2004, p. 3).

In adjusted-IAH, the contribution of a pleasure to my well-being is determined by two factors: the purely subjective intensity of the pleasure, and the truth-value (in the case of TAI AH) or the degree in which the object of pleasure is deserving of being enjoyed (in the case of DAIAH). For example, suppose “true” pleasures are twice as valuable to my well-being as “false” pleasures, given the same intensity of pleasure. Now suppose that learning to master skydiving for me yields intrinsic attitudinal pleasure of +10 on some scale. Learning it in the Experience Machine would yield +5 units of well-being, but enjoying the experience in the real world would yield me +10 units.

Adjusters like Desert or Truth seek to explain the intuitions evoked by thought experiments such as the Deceived Businessman or the Experience Machine — why we should value one life as having more well-being than another even if they contain the same amount of experienced attitudinal pleasure — while staying within the bound set by definition 2.1. But perhaps more importantly, and even though Feldman says that “hedonism (as he understands it) says nothing about what we should do, or what we should seek,” (Feldman, 2004, p. 31) I think more ought to be said on this subject for a theory that aims to provide normative support, if only to give guidance on which kinds of pleasures have a higher chance of sustainably providing well-being. Once the correct adjuster has been found — assuming still that we need such adjusters — we can still take a theory from a thin theory to a thicker theory (Ryle, 2009, p. 508) that gives guidance in achieving the goal of well-being, and allows recognizing when we veer off track. By knowing the correct adjuster (such as Desert or Truth) for pleasure strength, I stand to gain by being able to organise my pleasures such that the benefit derived from them is maximised. Knowing the relevant adjuster would allow us to “to recognize . . . what will most fully satisfy us” (Frankfurt, 2010, ch. IV).

Attitudinal pleasure is also presented as addressing the temporal problem of the Shape of a Life thought experiment described in section 2.2.1. To recap the problem: since definition 2.2 claims that the value of a life

can be determined by summing the ‘value-atoms’ of IAH, we are left to wonder how two lives with the same value-atoms can be said to have different value simply because they are distributed differently. It seems preferable to end ‘on a high note’, even if the amount of pleasure and pain is otherwise exactly the same. Feldman accommodates this in IAH by offering Globality-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (GAIAH) (Feldman, 2004, p. 138), which says that the person might “take pleasure in [the upward slope of his life experiences], thinking that his later happiness makes his life as a whole more meaningful. Perhaps in old age he begins to think that his earlier pains served some purpose. Maybe he thinks that the earlier pains had instrumental value — they taught him important lessons, or were suffered in pursuit of goods that in fact were later achieved” (Feldman, 2004, p. 131), and that this additional attitudinal pleasure accounts for the uphill life being perceived as offering more well-being.

The adjusters are stipulated to affect the well-being derived from the pleasures; the more accurately the thing I take pleasure in actually obtains or the more deserving the thing I take pleasure in is (in the case of TAI AH and DAIAH, respectively) the stronger it contributes to my well-being (Feldman, 2004, pp. 112,121), regardless of the amount of pleasure I take in the associated state of affairs. According to TAI AH, the Deceived Businessman has lower well-being than the non-Deceived Businessman because the things both take pleasure in are much less true for the former than the latter. A similar argument would hold for the argument from base pleasures (Moore, 1903/1960, §56) in DAIAH; the higher pleasures would be more deserving than the lower pleasures and would for that reason contribute more to my well-being than lower pleasures I take equal pleasure in.

3.4 Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism

Feldman's varieties on IAH however have one major and one minor problem. The minor problem relates to the problem of the shape of a life: it appears the "extra pleasures" derived from living Uphill's life can not count as intrinsic pleasures. The major problem is that the adjusted variants of IAH may not be hedonist theories, defeating their purpose. CAIAH, once fully developed, intends to address both these problems.

CAIAH is at this point more a theory sketch than a fully developed theory. It is proposed by Søraker (2010, 2013, forthcoming) as an adjusted-IAH variant much like TIAAH, but with Confidence as the adjustment factor instead of Truth. CAIAH, in its response to the argument of false pleasures, would roughly state that the question of whether pleasures are "false" or not should be reframed in terms of whether we are confident that they are. Seen this way, the problem with the Experience Machine is not that the pleasures are objectively false in one way or another, but that we have a hard time being confident about taking pleasure in something that does not conform to our ideas about what it means to be "real" and "true". This section will investigate the viability of this move, and revisit the thought experiments to see how IAH fares with confidence as the adjuster, examining the benefits, potential pitfalls, and the warrants for it. In doing so I will also show how confidence adjustment addresses the "shape of a life" thought experiment (Velleman, 2009a) discussed in section 2.2.1, which is thought to pose a problem for summative hedonism, in that the time at which the pleasure is had seems to influence the value of it independent of the mental states that accompany it. This all intends to show that CAIAH could be the viable form of hedonism needed for my re-evaluation of the problem of CM friendships in chapter 4.

In line with the various adjusted versions of IAH of Feldman, CAIAH holds that well-being consists in activities and experiences that I reflectively take pleasure in, but adds that the amount of well-being I derive from a given pleasure is in some way proportional to my confidence that they correspond to something real, and that they are sustainable (Søraker, 2013, p. 1). How we should understand confidence has not been specified within Søraker's proposal. In section 3.5.1 I will develop my proposal for confidence within CAIAH.

3.4.1 The minor problem: the instrumentality of Uphill's extra pleasures

The minor problem in the adjusted-IAH theories relates to the response to the Shape of a Life problem for summative hedonism, discussed in section 2.2.1, that GAIAH (Feldman, 2004, p. 138) was claimed to address. While it sounds reasonable enough that Uphill's well-being increases because he cares positively for the upward trajectory his life seems to be taking, we have not been provided with a reason why Uphill *should* care positively for this trajectory, especially since seen this way the "pleasure bonus" would seem to be instrumental rather than intrinsic (Feldman, 2004, p. 58), which might lead to double-counting (Feldman, 2004, p. 128). Feldman explains the extra pleasure of Uphill's life because he may "take pleasure in [the upward slope of his life experiences], thinking that his later happiness makes his life as a whole more meaningful" (Feldman, 2004, p. 131). Feldman however also argues that in IAH we must only count intrinsic pleasures, not instrumental pleasures that may be the conditions for our intrinsic pleasures, and in making that argument, he says that "the person takes attitudinal pleasure in one state of affairs in virtue of the fact that he takes pleasure in others. In such cases, I say that the person is taking 'extrinsic attitudinal pleasure'" (Feldman, 2004, p. 58). But given that Uphill's pleasure consists of taking attitudinal pleasure in one state of affairs (the Uphill shape) in virtue of the fact that he takes pleasure in others (the pleasures which are progressively more pleasant), it would make either the Uphill pleasure or the pleasures which the Uphill pleasures are about extrinsic, not intrinsic — and thus not eligible to count towards our well-being under IAH.

While not made explicit in Søraker's proposal of CAIAH, Confidence as I develop in section 3.5.1 does account for the extra (dis)value of pleasures and pains depending on where they are located in a life⁴. It seems plausible that a pleasure that reliably adds to our well-being should be deemed of greater value. From the steady increase or decrease of pleasure, I might infer a trend with an underlying cause; someone else might consider fate such a causal factor (Pepitone & Saffiotti, 1997, p. 25). In the case of Uphill's life, the pleasure is gaining in reliability as it occurs consistently with increasing strength, and is gaining reliability of disvalue in the case of Downhill's life. If we deem it reasonable that we should be confident in that which is reliable, confidence tracks the adjusted value of

⁴although it does not seem to be able to under all circumstances, as explained in section 3.6

our pleasures in the case of Uphill and Downhill. Even if confidence does not itself determine the adjusted value of the pleasure, and we are thus not offered a reason to want confidence for its own sake (Belshaw, 2014, p. 1), it is an effective adjuster in the sense that those who pursue those pleasures for which confidence can be had by reliability should be on the whole better off⁵.

3.4.2 The major problem: internalism versus externalism in hedonist theory

The major problem relates to Feldman's goal to describe a viable hedonism. While Feldman makes a compelling argument for the malleability of his theories to subsume the cases of his opponents, the IAH family of theories he proposes are no longer, strictly speaking, hedonist theories, thereby defeating the purpose of the adjusted theories. This is a concern Feldman (2004, ch. 8) himself raises, noting specifically that "If [these theories] are forms of pluralism, they are not forms of hedonism" (Feldman, 2004, p. 169). At this point you might object that this need not be a bad thing; why should we *not* have a pluralistic theory of well-being? On this subject, Feldman (2004, pp. 19–20) argues that

Pluralism

- (1) No legitimate theory of well-being should be able to say that a life I find wholly unsatisfying is a life that is going well for me
- (2) Pluralist theories state that multiple aspects (such as pleasure, knowledge, and virtue), each not reducible to simpler underlying concepts, contribute to well-being
- 2 (3) If I had all these aspects except pleasure to a very high degree, a pluralist theory would deem my life to be high in well-being

⁵ There are of course cases where substantial well-being can be derived from activities in which you rationally have near-zero confidence — playing and winning the lottery for example. CAIAH does not specify whether the confidence is a simple factor which could adjust even great pleasures to near-zero. CAIAH is however oriented towards being able to offer recommendations, and given the exceedingly slim chances of winning big in a lottery, as a general rule CAIAH could sensibly recommend against playing the lottery as a life-plan for well-being.

- (4) Assuming hedonism is prima facie plausible, it is possible for me to have all these aspects except pleasure to a very high degree, yet still find my life wholly unsatisfying
- 1, 3, 4 (5) Therefore, pluralist theories are not legitimate theories of well-being

Recall now that Feldman characterizes hedonism as definition 2.1

Definition 2.1 (Hedonism). *T is a form of hedonism if and only if all the basic intrinsic value states according to T are pure attributions of some sort of pleasure or pain. (Feldman, 2004, p. 177)*

to which he adds that “what marks a theory as a form of pluralism is that it postulates the existence of a plurality of fundamental sources of intrinsic value” (Feldman, 2004, p. 113). The question is whether Truth- or Desert adjusted pleasures are legitimately “pure attributions of some sort of pleasure or pain“. Feldman already notes that “it might be thought that one mark of hedonism is that it makes the value of a person’s life supervene upon facts about that person’s mental states. Hedonism seems to imply that if two people are alike with respect to mental states, then their lives are alike with respect to value. That would follow from the fact that episodes of pleasure and pain are mental states” (Feldman, 2004, p. 113). He concedes that TAI AH violates this principle (Feldman, 2004, p. 181), but claims that DAIAH satisfies strong supervenience (Feldman, 2004, p. 181), assuming Desert for any object is fixed. The reason for this is that if we assume Desert is the same in every possible world, the state of the world has no effect on the derived well-being, and therefore the only thing the well-being derived could supervene on are the mental states of the subject.

This still leaves the fact that Desert can exert its influence without the subject being aware of it (Feldman, 2004, p. 121). This seems to be at odds with definition 2.1; it no longer seems that the basic value states are *pure* attributions of attitudinal pleasure or pain, and it contradicts directly the idea that “the source of value, according to IAH, is located precisely in the enjoyment of the things, not the things enjoyed” (Feldman, 2004, p. 69). A response might be that desert could directly influence the intensity with which the subject experiences the attitudinal pleasure, in which case Desert would merely be an instrumental factor in the intensity of the pleasure (and as such, known to the person, affecting the mental states directly). But if not, it is unexplained how it meets the purity demand

of definition 2.1. As the phenomenological “feel” of the pleasure is not differentiated between them (Williams, 1974, p. 296), the adjustment factor appears to be wholly external.

Weijers (2015, §4.a) explains the point of contention like so:

Internalism about pleasure is the thesis that, whatever pleasure is, it is always and only inside a person. Externalism about pleasure, on the other hand, is the thesis that, pleasure is more than just a state of an individual (that is, that a necessary component of pleasure lies outside of the individual).

where he goes on to note that “[t]he vast majority of historic and contemporary versions of Prudential Hedonism consider pleasure to be an internal mental state” (Weijers, 2015, §4.a). The problem with these proposed adjustments for Truth or Desert is that when, as said, a necessary component of (the well-being derived from) pleasure lies outside of the individual, the basic intrinsic value states would not be pure attributions of pleasure, but conjunctions that have a pure attribution of pleasure as one conjunct, and thereby fail Feldman’s test for being a form of hedonism (Bradley, 2010, p. 234).

3.5 Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism: From Sketch To Theory

As I remarked before, CAIAH is at this point more a theory sketch than a fully developed theory. In order to be able to evaluate the promise of CAIAH, and then evaluate virtual friendships through its lens, I will use the basis provided by Søraker (2010, 2013, forthcoming) to add more substance to its major concepts.

3.5.1 Confidence

Søraker (2010) builds on IAH, incorporating the adjustment idea, to propose CAIAH. CAIAH aims to describe a substantive hedonist theory of well-being while remaining within the bounds of hedonism, avoiding the problems of section 3.4.2, by taking on board only mental states in both the value base and in the adjuster. Confidence-adjustment of well-being derived from pleasure aims to do justice to the idea that pleasures that are experientially the same can in practice contribute different levels of well-

being to your life, but doing so in a way that avoids the problems described in section 3.4.2; as Søraker (forthcoming, p. 1) notes, confidence as an adjuster does its work by direct effect on mental states. And it does so, as we shall see in this section, while still explaining our intuitions regarding how much well-being I derive from the scenarios in the thought experiments which I have discussed, and showing how we can get the most well-being from our experiences by arranging matters such that we can be confident about them. CAIAH contrasts strongly with TIAAH or Kagan and Nozick's ideas. Under CAIAH a range of potentially false yet confidently held beliefs could be the source of pleasures which yield high well-being (Søraker, 2013, p. 1). This offers a starkly different reading of the pleasures of the occupant of the Experience Machine or of the Deceived Businessman about the love and trust they experience. The legitimacy of this reading will be investigated further in section 3.5.2.

In the face of the problem of internalism versus externalism from the section 3.4.2 we can thus note that there are important differences between Truth and Desert on the one side, and Confidence on the other. Where both Truth and Desert fail the "pure attribution" criterion, Confidence, being a mental state, passes.

On the influence of confidence, Søraker states that "the strength of attitudinal pleasures [in CAIAH] is partly determined by your confidence that they correspond to something real, that they are sustainable, that they are reciprocal⁶, and a number of other determinants of confidence" Søraker (2013, p. 1). When this role is assumed for confidence, it is necessary to explain what is meant by confidence when used this way.

None of Søraker's proposals for CAIAH (Søraker, 2010, 2013, forthcoming) operationalizes the concept of confidence. For the course of this argument, I will understand confidence to mean, broadly, that we have a reasonable expectation of success when we act in the world (cf. Frankfurt, 2010, ch. IV). On this reasonability, Rotenstreich notes of such reliance or dependence that "expectation, presupposing so many tacit assumptions, might be viewed both as a rational attitude and as an attitude which, to say the least, lacks a warranted justification, and in that sense cannot be viewed as fully rational" (Rotenstreich, 1972, pp. 348,353). The question thus becomes: what do we mean by reasonability, and which circumstances would lead us to hold such reasonable expectations of success.

⁶in the case of relational pleasures such as love, friendship, etc.

I think there are two major components that determine such reasonability. First, I can see whether I have experience or evidence (e.g., past performance) which have in the past with some consistency yielded the expected pleasures (Earle, 2009, p. 786). Second, in those cases where I lack such evidence, I can see whether I have in the past been able to overcome and persist in the face of uncertainty or adversity (White, 2009, p. 103), allowing me a chance at attaining new pleasures that I deem desirable even though I do not have access to them now; in face of the lack of evidence of past occurrence, “the courage to act derived from certainty about one’s capabilities, values and goals” (Flannery & Grace, 1999, p. 36). This understanding is in line with the characterisation by Rotenstreich (1972, p. 348), where confidence, in relation with ourselves, others, or the world, are described in opposition to uncertainty and fear, about the past extending into the future, and that unexpected events can be dealt with through resolve of character (Rotenstreich, 1972, p. 353).

In both cases, the evidence is incomplete: the evidence only supplies reasonability of expectation, not certainty. Both constitute a “believing in” (Rotenstreich, 1972, p. 353), or hope for, the reasonability of expecting success, where the pleasure derived from an experience, adjusted for my confidence that I may attain it, is proportional to the incomplete evidence I have. The Deceived Businessman derives maximum well-being from those things he has pleasure in, as he has every reason to be confident about them. Would the veil start to fall, the confidence he had even in past pleasures would fall, and thereby so would the overall well-being he derived from his pleasures.

When we act with confidence, we act as if what is under consideration is true (Rotenstreich, 1972, pp. 348,349), even while we know at the same time to varying degrees it may not be. We must do so when we are faced with what James calls a ‘forced choice’, on which more in section 3.5.2. The important aspect here is that, keeping in mind the discussion of the problem of externalism/internalism from section 3.4.2, that high confidence very likely correlates with the matter under consideration being true, that “the holding of a thing to be true is an occurrence in our understanding, which, though it *may* rest on objective grounds, also *requires* subjective causes in the mind of the individual who makes the judgement” (Rotenstreich, 1972, 348, emphasis mine). While the external facts of the matter may impact our confidence, it is in fact the subjective causes in the mind of the individual that determine our confidence, and thereby how much well-being I derive from me taking pleasure in anything.

Most likely, the argument from false pleasures depends on the reasonable intuition that in reality, the Deceived Businessman has no business being as confident in his beliefs as he is claimed to be; at some level, he must know he is being deceived. It would require a level of unprecedented coordination such as we only see in fictional accounts, in movies like the *Truman Show*, to maintain the conditions where he would have *zero* grounds for doubt. And if by intuited practical necessity the reality of the situation would leak through the facade, then it seems plausible he cannot *actually* be as happy as his non-deceived counterpart. But if this is what drives our intuition regarding the Deceived Businessman, what we are saying is that his confidence should be lower, and that this lower confidence translates to lower well-being. If this is the case, the Deceived Businessman would also be at least partially culpable for his lowered well-being; either because he stubbornly refuses to pick up clues, or at least because he makes not even minimal effort to test his beliefs. In both cases, he would have no justification for the confidence of his beliefs, and more likely than not, these behaviors would erode confidence, when others in his surroundings do at least mildly test their beliefs.

This still has not established why having confidence should adjust pleasures positively, only that confidence can plausibly coincide with a reasonable expectation of attaining pleasure. Section 3.5.3 will explore how confidence can be more thickly constitutive of attaining pleasure: by being the condition of possibility for acting towards certain pleasures. For this, I first need to lay some groundwork introducing concepts of Pragmatism into the discussion.

3.5.2 Being pragmatic about truth

Even if we were to take the Deceived Businessman and the Experience Machine at face value, we could question what exactly is meant when it is said that well-being is (partly) determined by Truth; “we must look to the upshot of our concepts in order rightly to apprehend them” (Peirce, 1974, CP 5.3).

There is of course some relationship between Truth and the Confidence Søraker proposed; our “degree of confidence *can* be determined by truth” and in the converse case, that “self-deception will usually lead to cognitive dissonance, which by its very nature erodes confidence” (Søraker, forthcoming, p. 1). In such cases, adjusting for confidence and truth would largely yield the same outcomes.

And perhaps confidence and truth should be seen as substantially similar when it comes to adjusting pleasures for well-being. As Peirce notes, “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth” (Peirce, 1878/1992, p. 139). As ever more evidence mounts that steers belief towards a “fated conclusion”, I would have increasing justification in holding my belief true; and “every attitude of confidence is holding something as being true or relying upon something with certainty; that is to say that what is relied upon justifies the trust vested in it” (Rotenstreich, 1972, p. 349).

Peirce captures the situation of the Deceived Businessman beautifully:

You only puzzle yourself by talking of this metaphysical “truth” and metaphysical “falsity” that you know nothing about. All you have any dealings with are your doubts and beliefs . . . if by truth and falsity you mean something not definable in terms of doubt and belief in any way, then you are talking of entities of whose existence you can know nothing, and which Ockham’s razor would clean shave off. Your problems would be greatly simplified, if, instead of saying that you want to know the “Truth,” you were simply to say that you want to attain a state of belief unassailable by doubt. (Peirce, 1905b, p. 168)

which is to say, the thought experiment stipulates nothing that the Deceived Businessman knows or experiences could be grounds for an assailing of his beliefs, and in that sense, they are unassailable by doubt. If he had doubts, I might question the rationality of such doubts. He has after all been provided only with evidence that his beliefs are true, and none that his beliefs are false; “the pleasure one takes in it is not to one’s discredit if it is in fact the reaction that *would* be appropriate if the news were true. It is the absence of such a reaction that would be thought strange or discreditable” (Gallop, 1960, p. 332), and likewise it is appropriate to take pleasure even in false information “when one is in no way to blame for being misinformed” (Gallop, 1960, p. 332). That is not to say his beliefs *are* true simply because no counter evidence can be had. But the question remains whether I could legitimately consider a belief false under such conditions. When found in such a position, given the available degree of assurance, the wise man proportions his belief to the evidence (Hume, 1910, §X.I).

James asks perhaps *the* pertinent question when a hedonist wishes to understand how truth could matter when it comes to well-being:

Grant an idea or belief to be true . . . what concrete difference will its being true make in any one's actual life? What experiences [may] be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? . . . What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms? . . . true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot (James, 1909, pp. v–vi).

In the case of both the Deceived Businessman and the Experience Machine, the subject can in fact do all those things; any attempt at “assimilation, validation, corroboration and verification” would — by stipulation — succeed, as their experiences are stated to be indistinguishable from what they would be if they were true. The Deceived Businessman has no experiences that could be warrant doubting the truth of his experience, right up to and including the moment of death, and he makes, given the evidence available to him, warranted assertions about the world. The same holds for the subject in the Experience Machine; as long as the subject is in the Experience Machine, no experience would warrant doubt about the reality, and all experiences warrant confidence in the experiences being real.

Intuitively, the easiest way to full confidence — certainty — would be to ascertain that my beliefs agree with reality. James (1907, lecture VI) legitimately raises the question as to what may precisely be meant by the term ‘agreement,’ and what by the term ‘reality,’ when reality is taken as something for our ideas to agree with. This is especially interesting in the case of the Deceived Businessman. We are, after all, interested in the “cash-value in experiential terms” (James, 1907, lecture VI) of the relation of the beliefs underlying our attitudinal pleasures to the world. If we follow James, and accept that “true ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify; false ideas are those that we cannot,” it becomes questionable in exactly what way the beliefs of the Deceived Businessman are false that could ever be known, given that he can so assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify, as long as the conditions of the thought experiment hold.

But even if the Deceived Businessman were to start generating doubts, or I find myself doubting whether my experiences in the Experience Machine

are genuine based in pure Cartesian speculation, this still leaves me with the problem of how to treat the facts that I am now calling into doubt.

If the Deceived Businessman or the occupant of the Experience Machine were to entertain constant doubts about the truth of their experiences lacking any means of confirmation or disconfirmation, this would undermine their pleasures even if they were true. Søraker (forthcoming, p. 2) raises the point that the pleasure I take in the love my spouse has for me⁷ would be undermined (both the pleasure derived, but also the sustainability of its presence) if I were to constantly doubt its truth; as per James, “there are, then, cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming” (James, 1896, §IX). Where James was of course arguing for religious faith, it is not hard to see how confidence is a required component of the Deceived Businessman enjoying his relationships, and a pervasive lack of confidence would plausibly bring about the end of same. Confidence would then itself be constitutive of such pleasures. This does not yet establish of course how such adjustments interact with the pleasure. This is a point I will return to in section 3.6.

3.5.3 When to be confident, when to be sure

It is of course preferable to be sure rather than merely confident when you can about things that matter for your well-being. But the option to be sure is not always available. For inconsequential choices, either because the outcomes do not have great import or because the choice can be postponed until surety can be had, there is not much of a problem.

But many of our choices are not like that. Some outcomes do matter, and sometimes opportunity will pass before we can be certain. As an example, let us assume that the Deceived Businessman has started to doubt the truth of his positive experiences. He must now decide how he is going to act on these doubts. But while he is contemplating how to act, his colleagues and family may well have picked up on his doubts, and must now live under the shadow of distrust this doubt casts on their friendship and love. Their patience in tolerating this could well run out before the Deceived Businessman has made up his mind. While the Deceived Businessman is examining, judging and testing the evidence, James (1896) would argue that the Deceived Businessman cannot help but make a choice in how he is going to enact his now doubting state of mind towards those around him — trusting or distrusting.

⁷for the sake of argument assumed to be true and unconditional

This is described by James (1896) as a ‘genuine choice’ to be made. A genuine choice is characterized by three criteria:

- it must be choice between “live options”. A live option has some appeal to the chooser; it must be both interesting and possible. A dead option is one which has no such appeal, by being either uninteresting to me, or I do not consider it possible for the option to materialize. The choice between having a Lutefisk for lunch or meeting Wittgenstein for dinner is in fact a pseudo-choice, as I consider the one possible but not interesting, and the other interesting but not possible. But in the case of the doubting Deceived Businessman, choosing to trust and choosing to distrust are both live options.
- it must be a forced, rather than an avoidable choice. An option is forced when there is an either/or situation. If, for instance, I have to choose whether to live or die, the option is forced - there is no third alternative; as James puts it, by saying “Either accept this truth or go without it” James (1896, §I), I put on you a forced choice. However, if I have to choose whether to go to the theater or to go to a football match, there are easily other options — I could go play video games, or go out for a run. Whether to have confidence in a person is not something that is in the same way open to alternatives.
- it must be a momentous, rather than a trivial choice. Some choices can only be made very rarely, relating to timing, special circumstances, or because making the choice either way entails a drastic change in your life — e.g. migrating to a new country, or having children. If a choice is easily reverted, or the effects of the choice are easily disregarded when undesirable, then it cannot be said to be momentous choice. Opposed to this are trivial options — options which do not really make much difference in the world, or ones where you have the option all over again in the near future. In the case of the Deceived Businessman, you can not postpone indefinitely, and once the opportunity passes, a do-over is less likely to happen.

When posed with such a choice, we cannot postpone until sure. Scepticism or agnosticism under such circumstances are not a postponing of action but an act in and of itself; you act *as if* the belief is false, because you refrain from acting as if it is true; “He who refuses to embrace a unique opportunity loses the prize as surely as if he tried and failed . . . to not decide, but leave the question open, is itself a decision — just like deciding yes or no — and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth”

(James, 1896, §IV). Which the right course of action is — act as if true or act as if false — is deeply tied to what you value in belief formation: roughly, whether you desire to know many truths, or whether you wish to avoid false beliefs. These attitudes towards belief are called maximax and maximin respectively, and they hinge on whether you deem the best possible outcome or the worst possible outcome of a decision the normatively relevant feature (Peterson, 2009, p. 46). Whether one or the other is better is not generally decidable; where Schwartz (2004, p. 85) concludes that maximaxers experience less satisfaction with life because they experience more frustration, Peterson (2009, p. 46) argues that maximizers are much more likely to pursue risky but very worthwhile life-projects. Ultimately, where you stand on this matter for a given choice is largely determined by your level of optimism (Peterson, 2009, p. 47). If you wish to avoid false belief, you would be more likely to favor distrust, as that will avoid having false beliefs at the cost of having fewer beliefs. James however argues in line with Peterson (2009, p. 46) that the doubting Deceived Businessman has more to lose by fearing error than he has to gain by trusting, so you are warranted to act as if true. Confidence values the option that has good outcomes, assuming the good outcome is possible, and thereby creates room for it to occur.

You might at this point justifiably raise the objection that “live option” is too weak a criterion: it might encourage people to create live options out of thin air simply because they are easily possible. An example of this would be Rawls’s grass-counter (Rawls, 1999, p. 379). In this thought experiment, Rawls asks us to consider

someone whose only pleasure is to count blades of grass in various geometrically shaped areas such as park squares and well-trimmed lawns. He is otherwise intelligent and actually possesses unusual skills, since he manages to survive by solving difficult mathematical problems for a fee.

Similarly, the Deceived Businessman could go out of his way to avoid ever being presented with evidence that might justify doubt. As Rotenstreich puts it, “whether or not the trust is warranted is not a foregone conclusion present in the very attitude” (Rotenstreich, 1972, p. 349). The level of optimism you have must not be out of line with the probability that your favored option is true (Radner & Marschak, 1954, p. 61). To make confidence-adjustment more robust against this, we could say that options can be considered live options if they are desirable, possible, and have no obvious or easily attainable defeating evidence, which Huemer calls the

principle of Phenomenal Conservatism: “If it seems to *S* [e.g. the Deceived Businessman] that *p* then, in the absence of defeaters, *S* thereby has at least some degree of justification for believing that *p*” (Huemer, 2007, p. 30). For the grass-counter, we could argue that if his mathematical skills are representative of his general interest in intellectual puzzles, and he is not afflicted with obsessive-compulsive disorder or severe autism, it would be unlikely he could be sincerely confident that grass-counting is what he would take most pleasure in in, all things considered. But the case for the occupant of the Experience Machine and the Deceived Businessman would be a much simpler case. Given the evidence available to them, reasonable conditions for confidence appear to be met, and we would need further explanation to accept his life is not going well for him.

Meanwhile, James would argue the Deceived Businessman cannot be agnostic in his acts towards his loved ones; while he can suspend judgment in his beliefs on whether he is in fact loved, he cannot suspend his acts. If he acts on the assumption he is loved, he acts no different than if he knows he is loved; if he acts on *either* the assumption that he is not, or on the assumption that more proof must be presented (agnostic), he acts no different than if he knows he is not loved. He must in acting choose which risk he wants to engage with: does he want to avoid ever being wrong, or does he want the opportunity to be right. Given the choice is between live options, and as such each option is both desirable and possible, James puts before us that “to know is one thing, and to know for certain that we know is another. One may hold to the first being possible without the second” (James, 1896, §V), which translates well to the concept of confidence without certainty.

Couple this with the idea that some facts (such as friendship) “cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming,” and the idea emerges that the non-deceived businessman in assuming his pleasures are false when in reality they are not, he may bring about their falsity where they previously were true — it is possible for the non-Deceived Businessman to test his beliefs to destruction. Certain classes of questions, among which James counts questions concerning personal relations, are such that “their solution cannot wait for sensible proof . . . if I stand aloof, and refuse to budge an inch until I have objective evidence, until you shall have done something apt, as the absolutists say, *ad extorquendum assensum meum*, ten to one your liking never comes” (James, 1896, §IX).

I can add a simple twist to the thought experiment of the Deceived Businessman to elucidate the value of the pragmatic conception of truth applied to the case of the Deceived Businessman: just before their deaths, both the Deceived Businessman and his non-deceived brother, who have available exactly the same evidence for exactly the same first-person experiences of attitudinal pleasure, start putting together subtle ambiguities they have picked up over the years, and start to seriously entertain the idea each has been structurally deceived over the years. It seems plausible that for both brothers, this would have a negative effect on their life value. Whether or not the doubts are grounded in truth, the brothers are likely to experience the same loss of well-being. But on Kagan's account, the pain accompanied by these doubts should by some mechanism be less for the Deceived Businessman. On James's reading of the situation, both would suffer equal damage to to a live option which they had committed themselves to.

Concluding, even when confidence is not a normative concept in the same way that truth and desert are (Feldman, 2004, p. 121), we could say that sustainable confidence *tracks* pragmatists' truth about the matter, and as such still can function as an indicator for how we should prefer our pleasures; true rather than false, confident rather than diffident.

Bringing on board confidence as part of a hedonist theory of well-being would still not make CAIAH a very thick theory, as Søraker (2013, p. 1) notes⁸. The correlation between confidence and happiness suggested by Søraker (2010, p. 232) however seems to be corroborated by findings from the field of positive psychology (Seligman, 2011, p. vi)⁹. If this correlation holds, the Positive Psychology research could then provide backing research to make CAIAH thicker to the point it could offer guidance on how to get the most actual well-being from our experiences (Soraker, 2012, p. 19)¹⁰; in order to get the maximum benefit, our pleasures should be real in the case of TIAAH, or deserving, in the case of DAIAH — or we should be confident about them, in the case of CAIAH, as we will see in section 3.4.

⁸“CAIAH is initially a ‘thin’ theory of the good life, which means that it tries to set out formal conditions for a good life without specifying concrete, objective requirements”

⁹“[confidence] is just a meter that reads out the state of the system. . . . When you are doing well in [various life-contexts], the meter will register high. When you are doing badly, it will register low.”

¹⁰“I think we can find such a golden mean in the notion of ‘recommendations,’ which may be of the form: This tends to increase the subjective well-being for most people, so it might be worth trying.”

3.6 Some Problems With Adjusting For Confidence

That is not to say confidence is without problems.

The first I have shortly touched on in section 3.5.3; we must have some justification for our confidence in order to get the desideratum of reliability. Section 3.5.3 did bring forward lack of epistemic defeaters as the minimal condition for such warrant, but no sufficient condition was directly suggested in any of Søraker's proposals.

Søraker does hint towards the concept of Nietzschean risk-taking (Søraker, 2010, p. 65) as a way to elicit such defeaters. Nietzsche famously called on people to “live dangerously” (Nietzsche, 1887/2001, p. 161), that danger “first made us know our resources, ... our spirit” (Nietzsche, 1888/2005, p. 214). Such a dangerously lived life would expose our beliefs to contrasting opinions, which would force us to reflect on our beliefs rather than accepting them by default. The resulting dialectic could serve as ways to test whether the beliefs have good grounds, whether they cohere with our other beliefs, etc. Couple this with “Clifford's Other Principle” — “It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to ignore evidence that is relevant to his beliefs, or to dismiss relevant evidence in a facile way” (Van Inwagen, 1996, §18) — and in the fashion of Popperian falsification (Popper, 1959/2002) we could deem all our beliefs only provisionally true, and the spiritual and intellectual danger and heroism Nietzsche called for would have us grab every opportunity to test our beliefs, and discard them when they cannot pass muster.

Living this way for all our beliefs that play a part in Jamesian genuine choices should unearth obvious and easily available defeaters, and would have us discard all options that have now become non-live options. This would strengthen the warrant we would have for the confidence in our remaining beliefs¹¹. This approach of continuous testing of belief however is in some important sense severely risk *averse*, in the sense that the choice to keep testing your belief amounts to acting as if you accept it to be false. It would have you “refuse to embrace a unique opportunity”, and “lose the prize as surely as if he tried and failed” (James, 1896, §IV). The lack

¹¹ Note that this warrant is desirable for pragmatic reasons, not principled reasons. The aim is not to become a Nietzschean hero, but to assure that hedonistic benefits are reliably attained, with the background intuition that tested or verified beliefs are more likely to produce these reliably.

of a balanced system of warrant for confidence remains a sizable problem for CAIAH.

Another problem relates to the way confidence is supposed to play its adjusting role: it is not clear confidence can be disentangled from the pleasure itself. This is a problem Bentham (1879, ch. IV) already hints at when he talks about the “fecundity” and “purity” of pleasures, which are the chances a pleasure has of being followed by sensations of the same or the opposite kind. This bears strong analogies to the confidence I have discussed. According to Bentham, “fecundity” and “purity” affect the strength of the pleasure being had itself directly. While Bentham does note that “they are not . . . in *strictness* to be taken into the account of the value of that pleasure,” but he does name them among the list of circumstances that determine the strength of the pleasure. Recalling from section 3.2 that for the non-adjusted component of our pleasures it is the force with which these states of mind are had, to which adjustment is applied to establish how much well-being is actually derived. This is plausibly possible for the kinds of situation we would encounter in thinking about the problem of Shape of a Life (section 2.2.1), where reflecting on a pleasure already had which turned out not to have obtained could sensibly be said to diminish the well-being that past pleasure contributes to the life as a whole.

It is however not clear how we should disentangle our confidence that the subjects of our pleasures obtain from the force with which the pleasure is had for pleasures in the present — it seem incoherent to say I can have the full force of pleasure regardless of whether I am at the time fully confident, fully diffident, or anywhere in between. If this assessment is correct, confidence would in practice only adjust for past pleasures, but would directly affect present pleasures rather than only adjusting the derived well-being, with non-confidence simply being another attitudinal displeasure to add to the calculus. Lack of confidence could perhaps be thought to tar the well-being derived of the whole class of similar experiences in general (Gallop, 1960, p. 335), but this would not be an adjuster to the present pleasure itself.

A very minor, but still interesting twist is how confidence may interact with attitudinal pains and hedonic adaptation. The common conception of adjusted attitudinal pains would be that the more strongly adjusted the pain is, the more “negative well-being” would be derived from it. So when a pain is in fact true, or it deserves to be taken pain in, the pain detracts more from your well-being than would a pain that is false, or that is undeserving. But let us take as the attitudinal pain of a child

gone missing, and we are pained by the idea she might have died. When adjusted for confidence, we should expect that being fully confident would detract more from our well-being than living in strong doubt. The research however indicates that being fully confident of a missing person's death (such as after finding physical remains) rather than being only partially confident has a large, long-term, positive impact on well-being, the hypothesis being that a small remaining hope may impede the onset of adaptive processes that could eventually return one to normal hedonic levels (Frederick & Loewenstein, 2003, p. 317).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out to investigate how CAIAH could be built out to a full theory of well-being. This was done in service of using the resulting theory to scrutinize the reasons Cocking and Matthews (2000) offer when they regard virtual friendship as a structurally lesser alternative to 'real' friendships. After having taken a look at some of the classical objections against hedonism, the project of constructing CAIAH has left us with a theory with some issues to resolve, but which still offered a pathway to interesting insights about the role of confidence in well-being. The next chapter will apply these insights to the critique of Cocking and Matthews.

Friendship And Well-Being In A Mediated World

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Even though section 3.6 showed some difficulties remain in Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (CAIAH), it would be once again too hasty to put it aside without applying the lessons learned along the way. Remembering the research question from the Introduction:

Does Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism withstand the argument of false pleasures, and what new insights are generated by re-evaluating computer-mediated (CM) relationships through its lens?

it is still possible to answer both parts constructively.

On the first part, regardless of the problems discussed in section 3.6, CAIAH does withstand the argument of false pleasures through my interpretation of truth and falsity using the insights generated by James' view on truth from his *Will to Believe*. This interpretation however would have both CAIAH and Truth-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism (TAIAH) withstand the argument of false pleasures, as the concept of truth I argued in section 3.5.2 using James would be equally applicable to TAI AH. But CAIAH distinguishes itself here positively because it also evades the major problem discussed in section 3.4 that afflicts TAI AH: it stays within the bounds of hedonism, where TAI AH does not on the interpretation of Truth that Feldman responds to. The problems discussed in section 3.6 are not problems that affect the status of CAIAH as a hedonist theory. Additionally, the groundwork of CAIAH outlines how we could go about formulating

a hedonist theory that stays within the conceptual bounds of hedonism. There is thus great value in the theory, regardless of the aforementioned issues.

On the second part, the investigation of CAIAH has left it a strong enough base to serve as a lens to look at the claims of Cocking and Matthews (2000) on virtual friendship, insofar as it raises some questions that are helpful in assessing the value of CM relationships. My interpretation and extension of CAIAH in chapter 3 brought me two important concepts. My operationalization of confidence from section 3.5.1 as a reasonable expectation of success led me to the question of how we should consider the concept of truth as Kagan would have it in practice. This in turn brought me to the ideas of James (1896) on how confidence and truth interact: we are allowed to assume truth under the conditions that constitute a Jamesian genuine choice.

4.1 False pleasures and virtual friendships

Bringing back together the combined problem raised by Nozick (1974), Kagan (1997) and Cocking and Matthews (2000), we can now rephrase the question in terms of looking whether a choice for a CM friendship can be, as James (1896) would put it, a live option in a genuine choice. Section 3.5.2 already established that acting towards establishing a friendship could be considered a genuine choice; the question at hand, and the matter of dispute, is whether CM relationships should qualify as a live option against non-mediated friendship. Recall from section 3.5.2 that a live option demands that it must be both interesting and possible, where ‘possible’ in this case would mean that it could in principle meet the demands for genuine friendship in the light of the objections that have been discussed so far.

As we have seen in section 2.3, the major underpinning of the charge by Cocking and Matthews rests on the problem of cues being filtered out. But it is not the lack of cues as such that does the damage. With the lessons from our investigation of CAIAH in hand, we can say that it is the lowered confidence in the friendship *resulting* from the cues being filtered out that is the problem. The insights generated by CAIAH also explain why we should think the riposte by Briggie (2008) describing the pen-pal soldier, about which more below, to be an effective defense against Cocking and Matthews (2000): cues can in some special occasions work against such confidence, and lack of cues may in some circumstances

boost confidence in our friendship, because we can be more frank with each other (Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984, p. 1128). The important question then becomes whether we can legitimately attain confidence in the case of CM relationships.

As in the discussion on false pleasures from section 1.3, the argument by Cocking and Matthews (2000) can be investigated along the same lines employed by Kolber (1994, pp. 12–13):

- does it match empirical research?
- are the thought experiments in fact disclosing matters about the concepts under scrutiny or only of ancillary features?
- do all thought experiments set up to investigate the same concepts yield the same intuitions?

On the empirical aspect, while perhaps a minor point, it does not seem that the impoverished means of communications that Cocking and Matthews warn are inherent in CM relationships has done much to slow the uptake of services dedicated to the task; late 2015, Snapchat reports a hundred million daily active users (Aslam, 2015)¹, Facebook a little over a billion daily active users (Facebook Inc, 2015), with both services growing year over year. The popularity of text-based spaces as a primary form of communication suggests that it must have advantages over “normal” face to face conversation (Nye, 2006, pp. 197–198).

But the juxtaposition between “real” and “virtual” is itself open to debate. On the one hand, the idea that reality is usually “unfiltered” is an assumption that is itself open to challenge, argued at length by Borgmann (1987), Ihde (1991) and Verbeek (2005). What we consider to be “real experiences” are often enough mediated experiences; a movie shared with a friend is enjoyed in a deeply technologically constituted space (Nye, 2006, p. 191), and as such already a mediated contact with your friend.

More importantly, it is too hasty to say these places are not “real”. We should not think of online worlds as “spaces in which we simply work out offline issues and once sorted, happily leave . . . What happens in virtual worlds often is just as real, just as meaningful, to participants. A friend can be a friend online, even if you never meet them face to face”

¹ although it is certainly not always used as a tool for reciprocal communication; many use it mainly as a broadcast medium.

(T. L. Taylor, 2006, p. 19). Such spaces offer valid “interaction with other real people” (Munn, 2011, p. 8) where shared activity can take place.

We should therefore remain open to the idea that mediated communications could give way to a more diverse understanding of friendship and offer a new mode to understand online relationships as a different approach towards friendship rather than demanding it fits the mold of its face-to-face counterpart. Perhaps all that is needed is a more pluralist conception of friendship. Where many of the critiques seem to take Aristotle as their starting point, the Platonic conception could offer a more sympathetic view on virtual friendships. Briggie (2009, p144-145) paints the Platonic friendship as co-developing with your own character, where more interaction means more opportunities for friends to mutually shape and improve one another². On this view, more means of reaching out to friends would not be a distraction from the deepening of the friendship but might be viewed as each offering their own unique ways to co-shape each other in the friendship, with no medium necessarily preferable to the other except in what they can offer. While intuitively we might say that the richest experience would be face to face, under the Platonic account, perhaps the richness of variety of (mediated) experience can to some extent make up for the richness of proximity and fullness of disclosure.

A closer look at the concerns of Cocking and Matthews (2000) about the restrictions placed on friendship formation by way of the meager medium of computer mediation will show that the concerns raised in their article, while not implausible, need not be inherent in the context of virtual spaces. I propose to re-evaluate the claims by Cocking and Matthews from two perspectives.

First — assuming their premise that crucial cues are filtered out in CM relationships holds — I will examine whether the loss of these cues necessarily means the resulting relationships cannot build the confidence of their face-to-face counterparts.

Second, I will examine whether it is actually the case that computer-mediation by necessity removes the non-voluntary aspect of communication to the point that the resulting facade is too meager to build confidence on.

²although the number of simultaneous friends you can actually have has been theorized to be limited (Dunbar, 1992), which finds some empirical backing (Saramäki et al., 2014)

4.1.1 Does Loss Of Cues Exclude Depth?

Against the first claim, Briggie (2008, pp. 74-75) posits the story of a soldier fighting a war, communicating with a school teacher in Boston by letter exclusively. According to Cocking and Matthews, the medium of letter-writing should be such an impoverished facade that no real friendship could come from it — certainly not a friendship that could compare with his comrades in arms. Briggie adds some details however that cast the situation in a wholly different light; the soldier has doubts about the nobility of the cause they are fighting for or the rightness of the means that they sometimes use, but is afraid that speaking his mind on these matters would cause discord in the group that they can ill afford. There is no such risk with the Bostonian teacher however, so the soldier — free from the “complex webs of relations and social structures” that can not only enable but also inhibit “being yourself” — feels free to disclose his most hidden thoughts to the teacher; to “show a side of [your] personality that others never see” (Rachels, 1975, p. 326), the very thing described as the trust-base needed for friendship in section 1.2. And not only is distance in this case ironically a factor in becoming closer, “in asynchronous interaction one may plan, contemplate, and edit one’s comments more mindfully and deliberately than one can in more spontaneous, simultaneous talk” (E. Griffin et al., 2012, p. 144). This could perhaps account for results such as shown by McKenna, Green, and Gleason (2002, p. 9), who found in a limited study that many close Internet relationships were robust over a span of years, and in a laboratory experiment found that participants liked each other more when they had initially met online compared to a face-to-face initial meeting. We need not even go to the extremes of war to find plausible cases. There is the possibility that online friendships can grow between people who do share similar contexts and interests but who are geographically diverse, such as support groups for people in abusive relationships. In such support groups, one could find people with shared interests and problems, and where one would perhaps be less intimidated by the physical presence of others, facilitating open sharing, such as reddit (2016).

Briggie reverses the argument by Cocking and Matthews. Rather than non-voluntary disclosure through full cue availability being the enabler to foster confidence in the relationship, it could in fact be the factor that makes us guard our appearance even stronger under social pressure.

Once again, the investigation of CAIAH leads us to an important consideration. Putting the argument by Briggie against that of Cocking and

Matthews, cues being filtered out can be positive or negative depending on circumstance. This would mean that it is not the cues themselves that are objective factors in friendship-building; cues filtered out (CFO) is not inherently negative, but situationally determines the relevant adjuster, in this case confidence. Rather, it looks like the extent to which we can have grounded confidence in our relationship is what matters, and that it is there we should put our focus. This generally supports a subjective account of well-being, where that which enhances one person's confidence may diminish that of another. It might be a general advantage of the introduction of adjusters that they encourage eschewing absolutes — rarely found in the real world — in favor of an approach that allows for more nuance.

Briggle's view is supported by e.g. the research by Hull (2009, p. 129), who found that virtual environments can be used in therapy as safe places to (re)discover yourself to help change the participants' views of themselves and the world around them, and Turkle (2005, p. 288), who argues that technological mediation allows you to cycle through personae, cutting across "real life" distinctions of gender, race, class, and culture, to to see yourself in the mirror of the medium (Turkle, 2005, p. 132), offering "opportunity to play with one's identity" (Turkle, 1994, p. 158), findings which is supported by research by Bargh and McKenna (2004). It should be noted that Turkle became much more pessimistic about the net value of virtual relationships in her later work. Nevertheless, her later claims that the shift to CM communications could lead to displacement of valuable practices (Turkle, 2011) describes a problem that is conceptually distinct from the potential positives that were the subject of above-mentioned earlier work (Turkle, 1994, 2005). The potential positives from her earlier work can stand on their own, are conceptually mutually reinforcing with the work from Briggle (2008).

4.1.2 Does Computer-Mediation Exclude Cues?

Additionally, I could question whether computer mediation does strip our relationships from intimate peeks into each others' lives. Perhaps this was plausible when the mediated communication was infrequent and strictly segmented over different spaces — but nowadays, we are hyper-connected, and there are myriad ways in which we disclose ourselves that transcend the carefully crafted facade. boyd³ speaks of "always-on intimate communities" (boyd, 2013, p. 114) on social media; indeed,

³boyd is spelled all lower-case, as per <http://www.danah.org/name.html>

these do allow shaping of the perception to some extent, but at the same time social life (both the failures and successes) become consequential and persistent, available for scrutiny long after the fact; what in offline life might have escaped attention or would be lost to memory is now on permanent record for re-evaluation through the persistence, searchability and replicability that such spaces offer (boyd, 2012, p. 27). Meanwhile, the risk that users of CM platforms show only “partial selves” by tailoring their online persona should not be taken at face value. A limited study by Back et al. shows that “people are not using their OSN (on-line social networking sites) profiles to promote an idealized virtual identity. Instead, OSNs might be an efficient medium for expressing and communicating real personality, which may help explain their popularity” (Back et al., 2010, p. 374). These forms of communication may themselves be seen as personal idioms between friends, which allows friends to express themselves in ways that are unique to that friendship, and in that way can reinforce their relational identity (Chan & Cheng, 2004, p. 308).

That still leaves wholly untouched that our contemporary relationship with technology seems to make non-voluntary disclosure the default in important ways. Rosen speaks of the unreflective way many Snapchat users document their lives for their friends (Rosen, 2016). Kiesler et al. describes the decreased inhibition that often accompanies CM communication (Kiesler et al., 1984, p. 1128), leading to “levels of verbal and self-disclosure which would be almost unthinkable in other types of communication among ‘strangers’” (Kim & Raja, 1991, p. 3). Such findings contradict the idea that the impersonality and anonymity of such media would make it natural to create a carefully crafted persona; in some cases, if differences are found, they show more frequent and explicit emotion communication in CM contexts than in face-to-face communication (Derks, Fischer, & Bos, 2008). This open communication can be cultivated by reciprocal increasing self-disclosure with trustees “purposefully changing the context of their own actions by disclosing something personal, encouraging the other person in the exchange to say something personal, and so on . . . enabling a ‘leap of trust’ producing a favourable state of expectation regarding the actions of others” (Henderson & Gilding, 2004, pp. 501, 502). Yee (2006, p. 27) finds substantial portions of online contacts involved telling personal issues or secrets to their online friends which they have never told their offline friends⁴. Elder makes the point that by cross-referencing mediated sources you can get a decently accurate

⁴The research by Yee (2006) was done over a sizable sample of users, but could be subject to selection bias, as all these users already voluntarily spent substantial time online in virtual worlds

picture of the other, perhaps even better than in “real-life”, now that the other cannot deflect from difficult topics, as “text-based conversations are, arguably, less susceptible to deception of this kind: one can evaluate the content and consistency of claims without the emotional overlay introduced by facial expressions and tone of voice. Online, conversations leave digital ‘paper trails’, making it easier to cross-check stories and consider a person’s comments in light of the overall picture of their character presented by their online presence” (Elder, 2014, p. 292). This offers wholly new processes of interpretation in which I can be the mirror for friends. Even where people provide plainly false information online, this can be indicative of something other than the construction of a facade, i.e. showing playfulness to their friends. These friends will know the information is false by being able to cross-reference information from online and offline sources, and will know that “marking oneself as rich or from a foreign land is not about deception; it’s a simple way to provide entertaining signals to friends while ignoring a site’s expectations . . . they’re simply refusing to play by the rules of self-presentation as defined by these sites. They see no reason to provide accurate information, in part because they know that most people who are reading what they post already know who they are. . . . They see social media as a place to gather with friends while balancing privacy and safety with humor and image ” (boyd, 2014, pp. 46-47).

Self-disclosure can even be fully outside the awareness of the CM participant; recall the infamous big-data case where Target knew about the teenage pregnancy of one of their customers before her family did by analyzing shopping habits (Duhigg, 2012) — and this story surely is not the exception (Leber, 2016). Seen this way, the question is not whether we disclose non-voluntarily, but how we should regain a modicum of control over who has access to our selves so disclosed. Cocking and Matthews of course had different recipients in mind of such disclosure — friends, not large corporations attempting to turn people into consumers by capturing externalities. But this still shifts the problem in an interesting way: we have moved from the alleged impossibility of substantial disclosure, to making sure that the disclosure reaches the right recipient.

On the claim of Cocking and Matthews (2000) that true friendship is required for reflective self-development, I would say the construction of a public-facing persona inevitably requires a certain introspection into one’s authentic character if for no other reason than to determine how the constructed persona must differ from the authentic persona. If one does not know oneself, one cannot deceive others because so much of

your past expressions are (semi) publicly catalogued and searchable; all this would have to be taken into account in creating a consistent persona. It is thus not possible to consistently present yourself as what you are not without having already confronted deeply what you are.

Finally, in keeping with the Aristotelian conception of friendship underlying most of the charges against CM friendship, we could instead look towards shared activity rather than shared physical cues as the pivotal ingredient in developing full CM friendships:

And whatever being consists in for each person, or whatever it is for the sake of which he chooses to live, in this he wants to spend time together with his friends. Therefore some drink together, others play dice together, others engage together in gymnastics and hunting, or philosophize together: Each group of friends passes its days together in that which it loves most in life. For wanting to live together with their friends, they do and share in those things by which they suppose that they live (Aristotle, 2009, §1172a1–8)

But under Aristotle's account, there are activities that are preferable in building a friendship; The shared life must "include both sharing of broadly human good, and of particular goods for particular human beings" (Elder, 2014, p. 288). For Aristotle, these particular goods are strongly associated with "living together with conversing and sharing thoughts" (Liu, 2010, p. 593).

The idea that physical proximity is a necessity for shared activity could perhaps originate from the *instrumental* necessity of proximity in Aristotle's time (Kaliarnta, 2016, pp. 12-13). But the spaces in which the shared activities happen need not be physical spaces; as Elder points out, Aristotle differentiates "'living together' in the friendly sense from 'living together' in the cattle sense⁵. Friends, rather, 'live together' by sharing rational life, by sharing language and thought through conversation, as the rational life is characteristic of human beings and conversation is how we reason collectively" (Elder, 2014, p. 288). Given this, the CM environment does not need to be deemed so hostile to friendship; as Bülow and Felix points out, "seeing as it is possible to engage online even in *theoria*, the highest sense of human activity according to Aristotle, why should he not have accepted such an online relation as a perfect friendship?" (Bülow & Felix, 2014, p. 31). The main technological concern for CM friendship would

⁵Aristotle (2009, §1170b10-15)

then be that the mediating environment would be a space conducive to shared activities that encourage such conversing and sharing thoughts to the extent that you can get a deep sense of the character of the other. Munn describes such shared activities in the CM space of massively multi-player online role-playing games (Munn, 2011, p. 9), but we should of course not limit our scope to games when so-called social media platforms enjoy a substantially larger user base. The question would then become how we might foster deep and shared activity in a broader class of CM spaces.

4.2 Should Meeting Spaces Be Real, Or Rather Authentic?

None of the objections from section 3.6 need to be definitive problems for CAIAH of course. Separating out adjusters has the dual benefits of explaining our intuitions with regards to thought experiments such as those of Kagan and Nozick, and as a start for making the theory thicker. CAIAH, as mentioned above, shows promise in the sense that it is a move towards formulating a hedonist theory that stays within the conceptual bounds of hedonism. But perhaps taking a lead from this idea there can be different ways to achieve that same goal. While still underdeveloped as an idea, authenticity could be the inspiration needed to reformulate CAIAH towards the adjusting factor of meaningfulness, a point already raised by Søraker (2010, pp. 76,106), but not further developed.

Let us look at the Experience Machine once more. One passage that struck me specifically was this: “Nor do we merely want the added pleasurable feeling of being connected to reality. Such an inner feeling, an *illusory* one, also can be provided by the experience machine.” (Nozick, 1989, 106, emphasis mine)

This aversion to the illusory life is open to more than just the reading that we value contact with reality. As J. W. Mulnix and Mulnix note: “What we want is not merely to be pleased or satisfied by our experiences; we want them actually to be going the way we want. This reflects our commitment to the value of authenticity: we want our experiences to genuinely reflect our life as it actually is. In fact, our taking pleasure in the circumstances of our lives seems parasitic upon our believing that they are authentic” (J. W. Mulnix & Mulnix, 2015, pp. 177–178).

The Experience Machine is described as strongly anti-authentic: “business enterprises have researched thoroughly the lives of many others. You can pick and choose from their large library or smorgasbord of such experiences” (Nozick, 1974, p. 44)⁶.

A better interpretation of the thought experiments by Kagan and Nozick could be that they address authenticity rather than truth; perhaps then what Kagan and Nozick show is not that we wish to engage with reality per se, but rather we wish to engage with reality as a means to live authentically. Living authentically does not strictly require engaging with reality as such, but it does require an environment which is amenable to engaging with ourselves. I think this is an attractive understanding of these thought experiments, and even of the findings of De Brigard (2010); the status quo bias proposed could be understood as a general unwillingness to abandon existing life-projects even when offered substantially more pleasant attitudinal pleasures. And there are reasons, again, why this is attractive; having a stable sense of your life-projects gives you a better base to evaluate which kinds of experiences or object to take pleasure in, of which one should seek more, even at the cost of present (attitudinal) discomfort. Belshaw concurs with this interpretation. In his response to the Experience Machine he writes that “what the machine offers is so meagre that almost no one could be tempted. And no hedonist, or supporter of the mental state view, will need, in light of rejecting this meagre offer, to rethink their position.” (Belshaw, 2014, pp. 1–2)

In Belshaw’s review of the Experience Machine,

The scientists simulate ordinary sensory input, making it seem to you as if you are climbing a mountain, beating a friend, impressing a girl. This is all they do. Your memories, dispositions, and most of your beliefs remain intact. And thus your reactions to these simulated events remain as they would were the events really to occur. It might, for example, seem to you surprising that you should be climbing, winning, impressing. Or, if you are generally fearful, you might be afraid of ‘climbing’ now. (Belshaw, 2014, p. 9)

In this case, even though the sensory inputs are generated, you are in fact engaging with yourself when you climb the simulated mountain that to you is indistinguishable from a real mountain. According to the

⁶this risk of inauthenticity is not confined to the Experience Machine; see e.g. McLuhan (1967)

stipulations of the Experience Machine, you would have to overcome your uneasiness to push ahead in the face of fatigue, and conquer a fear that is by no account less real than were you to climb an actual mountain.

The arguments from Nozick (1974) and Kagan (1994) would then become:

Inauthentic Pleasures

- (1) Hedonism states that experienced pleasure is the only thing of intrinsic value for a persons' well-being
- (2) Pleasures based on falsity do not engage us with our authentic self
- (3) Pleasures engaged with authentically contribute more to well-being than those enjoyed inauthentically, even if they are experientially the same
- 3 (4) Therefore, something other than experienced pleasure is intrinsically valuable
- 1, 2, 3, 4 (5) Therefore, hedonism is false

Understood this way, pleasures are not discounted because they do not correspond with something True or Deserving, but because they diminish our capability to live authentically in several ways.

In the Experience Machine there is the risk of no authenticity when there is no “real” effort involved with attained results. But let us suppose I have a fear of flying. A mischievous friend slips me into the machine while I sleep, and while in the Experience Machine, I confront and overcome my fear. The fear response will be fully real in the Experience Machine, and in fact there is only a slight reduction in the risk that underlies the fear — in the Experience Machine, there will be no chance of death in an plane crash, while in the real world, there is a vanishingly small chance (Barnett & Higgins, 1989) of a plane crash. Once I sleep again, my friend disconnects me from the Experience Machine. In what sense have I not authentically confronted and overcome my fear? True, the fear may return if were to become aware of my friends' mischief, and until that moment I would fly without fear. The overcoming then is real, even if the flight that I took was not.

The Deceived Businessman can in the same way only be denied authenticity from a third person perspective; regardless of whether he is making

the effort to attain the results, he is simply denied any possibility to find he has not attained them; there is no disunity of self for him, and his responses to his environment are genuine. The results from De Brigard (2010) fall in line here; the general consensus seems to indicate that people value the continued engagement with their running life-project important enough to not simply abandon, but worth developing.

This leaves the question of how to establish authenticity, and why pleasures authentically engaged with contribute more to well-being, even if they are experientially the same as pleasures enjoyed inauthentically. I intuit that when I live authentically, I live in line with what Korsgaard and O'Neill calls my 'practical identity', "a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking" (Korsgaard & O'Neill, 1996, p. 101), and that doing so would make my undertakings *meaningful* in the context of the projects tied to that practical identity. It is thus not exactly "living authentically" that provides well-being, but the concept of authenticity points me towards a life that I find meaningful. It is the living of a meaningful life that gives me intrinsic attitudinal pleasure, and this in turn gives me well-being. I can, in other words, be confident in the way discussed in section 3.4: that these pleasures fit into my practical identity, which is a lasting part of myself, and as such will yield reliable and sustained well-being. It is this practical identity of which I need to be sufficiently confident that my friend can know mine, and I can know his. This could be an interesting avenue for extending the research started with CAIAH.

4.3 Conclusion

This thesis set out to answer the research question

Does Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism withstand the argument of false pleasures, and what new insights are generated by re-evaluating computer-mediated relationships through its lens?

With regard to the first part of the question, I have first set out to give CAIAH more body as a theory. I find that Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism does withstand the argument of false pleasures given the concept of confidence I developed in section 3.5.1, and the following further development of this confidence using James' pragmatism in section 3.5.2.

This in turn I have applied to understand the problems raised by Cocking and Matthews (2000) with regards to CM friendship. Applying the lens of this version of CAIAH to their critique of virtual friendship showed that their critique was not without merit, but that the problems they raised — that virtual friendships could not be real friendship — originated from a deeper cause than the CFO problem that was initially offered. This deeper cause was the lack of confidence we could have in CM friendships. This change of perspective opens new technology design approaches that could address the problem that it is in practice still hard to build confidence in CM friendships.

Despite the issues with CAIAH as discussed in section 3.6, its constituent concepts are rich enough to help understand the potential benefits and risks of CM friendship. Additionally, its structure outlines how one ought in the general sense to go about formulating a hedonist theory of well-being. A theory that would stand on the shoulders of CAIAH would be poised to offer two major desiderata:

- staying within the conceptual bounds of hedonism.
- offering factors which are, unlike Desert and Truth, assessable without having to assume a problematic third-person perspective.

These factors then could be used judge whether our current life path is plausibly steering us towards more or less well-being, and can be used to critically assess new technological developments to judge to what extent they are likely to increase or decrease it. While more work would need to be done to counterbalance the problems outlined in section 3.6, it does already offer the benefit of roughly tracking how much well-being we are likely to derive from our pleasures (section 3.5.3). In this sense, it can still plausibly be used to assess the risks and benefits from CM friendships.

With regards to the problem of CM friendships, I need to extend the same courtesy to Cocking and Matthews that I did to Kagan and Nozick. While the case of Cocking and Matthews is not so unequivocal against CM friendship after closer inspection, they point out that CM friendship brings something new to an element that is crucial to human well-being. They are right that we should be curious about how it affects our well-being, and that we should seek the relevant factors at play. The closer inspection of their charges against CM friendship brought forward that CFO was only instrumentally problematic. The real problem was that we cannot

be confident that we have a full enough picture of our friends, and our friends not a full enough picture of us.

4.3.1 Recommendations

None of what has been argued should be construed as a claim that CM friendships are not a matter of concern. I do not dispute the that the effects that Cocking and Matthews argue come with CM friendship can and do occur. Lack of deep connection is already a recognised health risk (Avlund et al., 2004; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). With studies showing that a correlation between CM contact displacing offline contact and such health risks (Selfhout, Branje, Delsing, ter Bogt, & Meeus, 2009; Kross et al., 2013), the claim by Cocking and Matthews that a trend towards CM friendship poses a real threat becomes more plausible. While I do dispute that such effects are *necessarily* an outcome of such services by means of CFO problems, there are areas for improvement that could address the negative affordances of CM spaces. We have seen a rapid rise in popularity of CM spaces in the past years. Services such as Facebook and Reddit, which have advanced swiftly over the past years in terms of technology and features, appear to have grown only haphazardly when it comes to serving the needs of friendship on a deeper understanding of the concept — on the reading of Cocking and Matthews, these systems are antithetical to friendship even. The recommended improvements should aim to address both the concerns raised by Cocking and Matthews (2000) and heed the lessons of CAIAH.

First and foremost, this thesis offers in its analysis the concepts which address the operative factors when it comes to establishing full, rich friendships online. Preferably, we would want to take advantage of the benefits of CM spaces, such as the freedom to experiment with your identity. At the same time we must not ignore the problem that in CM spaces we lack the means to build confidence from the cues we do have.

Increasing the social presence

The first option for improvement is to increase what is called the “social presence” (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). In doing this, the aim is to address in various ways the problem of CFO. According to Short et al., the social presence of a system is the extent to which it allows participants to feel to be in the presence of the other, by transmitting non-verbal cues

(Short et al., 1976, p. 65) along with the communication. While Short et al. worked primarily with audio and video teleconferencing systems, and as such was mostly oriented towards “facial expression, direction of looking, posture, dress and nonverbal, vocal cues” (Short et al., 1976, p. 65), the concepts of social presence can still be applied in context of services where video/audio feeds are not available or appropriate.

In this domain, we find for example work by Kort, Nefs, Gullström, de Greef, and Parnes, who investigate the possibilities of spatial, social and information connectedness (Kort et al., 2013, pp. 44–46) in CM spaces. The spatial connectedness intends to enhance the experience of closeness by using improved techniques for eye tracking in video conferencing so participants get a greater sense of eye contact. The social connectedness experiments with making the shared activity tangible in a way that does not require the users’ attention, such as through mood lighting in a room. Informational connectedness intends to capture that part of communication that is generally not expressed verbally, such as the mood we might read from each others’ face; using automatic recognition of emotions and intentions, a CM space could for example make the general mood tangible through aforementioned lighting.

Building and grounding your confidence

Where an increase in “social presence” increases the “bandwidth” available for CM friendship formation, there is another angle that must be addressed. The increased social presence gives a better view of the other in the moment of communication, but yields very little information on what is called the “interpersonal epistemology” (Walther, 1992). Interpersonal epistemology is achieved when persons develop distinctly individuating representations of one another’s psychological makeup (Walther, 1992, p. 71) such as representations of others’ beliefs, the reasons for those beliefs, and their underlying motivational structures. This knowledge can be gained through ongoing interaction over time through “strategic probes,” the “patterns of communication used by an individual to gain information about another person’s beliefs, motives, and intentions” (Berger, Gardner, Parks, Schulman, & Miller, 1976, p. 156).

We see first moves already being made in social networks to remedy part of this. Facebook and Google+ for example encourage their users to use their real names rather than a pseudonym, and to attach their phone number. This means the user discloses his preferences in a public manner,

and thus in a sense states her commitment for the beliefs and motivations offered in communications using the service. But more than anything else, it addresses the issue of identifying each other, rather than knowing each others' character.

Instead, I would propose the extension of the idea of a reputation economy (Hearn, 2010) into the domain of character disclosure. We find the basis for this model in sites such as Reddit, or Slashdot, where users can accrue 'karma' as others approve ("upvote") or disapprove ("downvote") of their contributions to topical discussions. This system could in principle generate insights showing — to your friends — which topics you opine on, which topics you vote on, in what direction (which is itself a form of opining), and what domains capture your interest, or which domains *ought* to capture your interest, but do not seem to. This would already create a means through which disclosure could take place which is not primarily shaped by how you consciously wish to portray yourself. This could be further refined using techniques for collaborative filtering towards people-to-people recommendations (Cai et al., 2010). Users of such a system would be allowed to show their approval of the holistic picture that emerges from these insights, which would feed back into this recommender system, which would create a means of enlarging your circle outside the "echo chamber" of those domains where you participate in the discussion to which you might find yourself naturally drawn (Vicario et al., 2016, p. 558).

There are several dimensions that would lend themselves to quantification to enable such a mechanism⁷:

1. there are known dimensions on a relationship that are known to correlate to depth of friendship: increases in interdependence, breadth and depth of interaction, interpersonal predictability and understanding, the change toward more personalized ways of communicating, commitment, and the convergence of the participants' social networks (Parks & Floyd, 1996, p. 87).
2. the CM service could report on trends for individual users to see whether the quality of their friendships trends upwards or downwards. This could serve as input for a user to strengthen his ties, or to prioritize depth over number of friends on such a service

⁷the current proposal assumes only intra-service quantification. Inter-service quantification would likely yield a richer picture still, but would complicate getting implementation both technically and in constructing adequate cross-service terms of service

3. a more global trend could be calculated over the whole population of users to see if one service fares better than another when it comes to fostering quality friendships.
4. such algorithms could also be used in recommendation services to put new people into contact where it is deemed likely that a deep friendship could occur.

This does not yet address the issue of course that users may use more than one means of communication. The proposals above assume only intra-service quantification. Inter-service quantification would yield a richer picture, but would also raise severe privacy problems

The list of dimensions put forward by Parks and Floyd was later further developed by Chan and Cheng into a questionnaire (Chan & Cheng, 2004, p. 310), but on today's CM services, several of these lend themselves to being either replaced by or at least augmented by automation using data trails generated by the users.

1. Interdependence, which refers to the feeling of mutual dependence and the degree to which the two parties influence one another, was captured by items such as 'The two of us depend on each other.'
2. Breadth, which refers to the variety of conversational topics shared between the two parties, was captured by items such as 'Our communication ranges over a wide variety of topics.' Much of this dimension should be derivable from user activity on specific topical parts of the service, such as voting or commenting behavior on Reddit.
3. Depth refers to the degree of self-disclosure and is the process-oriented and communicative aspect of intimacy. This dimension was measured by items such as 'I feel I could confide in this person about almost anything.'
4. Code change, which refers to the change in linguistic forms and cultural codes used in a relationship, was measured by items such as 'The two of us use private signals that communicate in ways outsiders would not understand.'
5. Understanding refers to the agreement about which behaviors are acceptable, the understanding of how each person's actions can contribute to the relationship, and the expectation about which

responses each is likely to have. A sample item is ‘I can accurately predict what this person’s attitudes are.’

6. Commitment, which refers to the expectation that a relationship will continue and the feeling that a relationship ought to continue, was measured by items such as ‘This relationship is very important to me.’
7. Network convergence, which refers to the overlapping of social networks of the two parties, was captured by items such as ‘We have introduced each other to members of each other’s circle of friends and family.’ This, again should be largely automatable given that the service typically serves a large part of each of the friends’ social network.

Avenues for future research and policy development

While research on technology for social presence such as by Kort et al. shows some conceptual promise, the problem remains of course that the technology needs to be in use to be effective. It would be interesting to see future research which would combine mobile platforms with wearable technology as springboards for non-intrusively sending along social presence signalling with regular communications.

All the above recommendations assumed to a large extent that the best way to approach CM friendship is to make sure it offers the relevant aspects of offline friendship. Instead, we may want to turn the problem on its head. In following Cook and Lalljee (1972), future research could look into whether new communication behavior could be developed and promoted, where written substitutes are provided for verbal and visual cues. These cues would be specifically geared towards disclosing the self in a way where confidence can be established while taking into account the unique capabilities of such CM systems, such as archival, indexing, search and data blending. Cook and Lalljee showed little success with their limited attempts using phone communications. But phone systems were a rather stable technology at the time they undertook their research, where computer systems are highly malleable, and users seem open to experimenting with new technologies. It is then perhaps a matter of both redesigning the technology *and* learning how to use these technologies successfully. Such research would be multidisciplinary, bringing in expertise from both computer science, psychology and philosophy.

Addressing such issues is the topic of the emerging field of Value Sensitive Design (VSD) (Friedman, 1996). VSD “connects the people who design systems and interfaces with the people who think about and understand the values of the stakeholders who are affected by the systems design process” (Friedman, 1999, p. 3).

Furthermore, the companies that build and maintain such services do not exist primarily to service the deeper needs of their users. As commercial ventures, they will balance the needs of their users against their financial responsibilities to their stakeholders and employees. Governmental policy-makers can encourage innovation in this domain of VSD, either by funding research and development to happen in cooperation with such services, or by setting regulatory policy. The former would be preferable, as the latter is a more invasive move that could be said to encroach on the freedom that should exist between the service provider and its users to enter into agreements as they deem fit⁸.

All these recommendations are preliminary, and will each require further research in their respective fields. These recommendations aim to point the way towards ways to live with technology that support the goal of well-being, in this case on the subject of friendship broadly, and CM friendship specifically. Further research would bring together relevant expertise from technology designers, philosophers, psychologists, policy makers and user representation groups to translate these somewhat abstract recommendations on making sure our technology serves our values into design and implementation requirements.

⁸It would not, however, be entirely without precedent. Conceptually, the same freedom argument could be made for the amount of privacy the users of such services are willing to surrender in order to use the service, yet there is already increasing policy pressure on the matter of privacy. Likewise, in matters of public health, governments already have widely deployed regulations, targeting products such as tobacco and alcohol.

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Acronyms

AAIAH	Altitude-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism	38
CAIAH	Confidence-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism	59
CFO	cues filtered out	64
CM	computer-mediated	59
DAIAH	Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism	38
DH	Default Hedonism	32
GAIHAH	Globality-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism	40
IAH	Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism	33
TAIAH	Truth-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism	59
VSD	Value Sensitive Design	78