'Approaches to well-being, use of psychology and paternalism in economics' by Marion Collewet

Referee's report

This is a short, well-written paper which reviews three strands of literature about how normative economics might take account of psychological findings about happiness and well-being. The author's commentary is thoughtful, sensible and fair, although there is little in the way of novel insight. The paper is a little thin to be a free-standing journal article, but would work well as a small contribution to a special issue. Collewet's main conclusion (which echoes Scitovsky's understanding of his own work) is that any economic analysis of well-being must be based on personal judgements. This seems entirely right to me. However, I was not convinced by Collewet's suggestion that an economist who expresses his or her judgements about other people's well-being is being paternalistic. It is paternalistic to *intervene in* another person's decision-making on the grounds that one knows better than that person what constitutes his or her well-being. But in a free society, everyone is entitled to express their own judgements about well-being and to engage in debate with consenting others. And while no one is obliged to listen to other people's ideas about well-being, some willingness to do so seems like a good strategy in life.