

BEYOND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

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The concept of well-being is relevant to a multitude of issues in the domains of ethics, law, medicine, mental health, and everyday decisionmaking. And yet while there seem to be some shared pre-theoretical intuitions about the nature of well-being, there is no widely accepted comprehensive account within the philosophical community. This essay takes up one strand of the discussion concerning well-being, namely what is the relationship between an individual's subjective stances, such as desiring, enjoying, or preferring, and his well-being. Subjectivism posits a dependency of well-being on the subjective stances of the individual, while objectivism denies this dependency. This essay takes Aristotle's eudaimonism as its point of departure. Aristotle's view is typically regarded as a paradigmatically objective account of well-being. Nonetheless, subjective stances do evidently play some role in well-being even according to Aristotle. This fact serves as impetus to consider accounts offered by current subjectivists as well as objections that are raised against them in the course of the debate. It is concluded that no existing objective account seems able to survive the counterexamples now standardly launched

against them. Furthermore, subjectivism faces an additional problem that none of the considerations that are thought to motivate it in the first instance uniquely point to some version of subjectivism as the best available account. Thus, it is argued that subjectivism as a category of account is ill-founded. The account of well-being that satisfies the intuitions of both objective and subjective accounts while avoiding the major drawbacks of each is a hybrid view with elements of both the subjective and the objective. This view defines well-being as the development of our natural strengths as individuals and human beings plus endorsement in the form of autonomous choice to develop these strengths.

For my daughter, Alexa

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I. Well-Being: Conceptual Connections

The concept of well-being is clearly central to a very broad range of areas of inquiry in philosophy and elsewhere. Notably, for instance, regarding questions of moral philosophy, the nature of individual well-being may ground ascriptions of rights and corresponding duties to act or refrain from acting. Further, moral merit and demerit may be assigned to an action based respectively on the extent to which it is beneficial to an individual defined in terms of the promotion of well-being or harmful defined in terms of setbacks to well-being. The extent of the relevance of well-being to morality will depend on the particular moral theory in question and the particular theory of well-being in question, but, in any event, well-being has at least some primitive normative status and is taken as something *prima facie* to be pursued, protected, and/or promoted.

In the realm of the law, the nature of well-being is crucially relevant to tort law, law concerning wrongful harm or injury, for example. Defining when one has been harmed or injured makes essential reference to well-being and setbacks to well-being. Anywhere in the law that best interests standards

are employed, such as in child custody matters and in child labor laws, well-being is relevant as well. For what promotes an individual's interests (broadly conceived) may be argued to track what promotes his well-being, and what is contrary to an individual's interests tracks diminishment of well-being. Also, what treatment of prisoners is justified and permissible may be governed by considerations of well-being. And again, other values in the law, such as liberty and privacy, may ultimately derive their value from some relationship they bear to individual human good.

In medical ethics, physicians are first and foremost bound by a duty to do no harm, where again, the nature of well-being has obvious impact on what constitutes harm. Decisionmaking in medical ethics contexts in general is based time and again on what promotes (and cannot promote) patient well-being; for example, decisions about whether a patient can benefit from and hence should be listed for liver transplant, when the potential benefits of brain surgery to a patient with intractable epilepsy outweigh the losses of brain function and therefore justify the surgery, and when life-sustaining medical measures cannot benefit and thus should be withdrawn from a patient in a persistent vegetative state are all decisions based (at least in large part) on the concept of individual well-being. Additionally, ethics committees in medical contexts balance

individual well-being against wider-reaching benefits to groups of future patients by considering on a case-by-case basis when medical experimentation on human beings is justified.

Within the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry human well-being is relevant as well since psychologists and psychiatrists take a sense of well-being to be a criterion of mental health. Psychiatrists must weigh the overall benefits and costs to well-being of prescribing medication, since such medications may alleviate psychological symptoms/disorders at the cost of other aspects of health and well-being. Like medical doctors, psychologists, at least in the clinical arena, are under a general obligation to protect their patients' well-being. Experimental psychologists as well must consider the potential impact of the experiments they perform on the well-being of their human subjects and must weigh potential harms against potential benefits to the patient and future patients.

And in the everyday actions of individuals, considerations of well-being play a prominent (and perhaps a dominant) role.

"Should I go to see a film or study for my biology exam?"

"Should I pursue a career as a physician or one as an entrepreneur?" "Should I marry and have children or not?"

"Should I volunteer at the animal shelter or take a photography class?" Decisions over these everyday matters are not, to be sure, based solely on considerations of individual well-being,

but such considerations do play an integral role, no matter how the concept is explicated. What particular actions individuals choose, what courses of action they decide upon, and what kind of life they decide to lead are grounded by their judgments about what is best for them. Individuals craft their lives guided by a vision of the human good that they either have on hand or discover/create as they go along.

Because of the wide-ranging relevance of the concept of well-being in the above and other realms, the stakes are high for getting the account right. And yet no existing account of well-being seems adequate to the role it plays in these realms. There is no broad philosophical consensus about the concept at a theoretical level, at any rate. This dissertation represents an attempt to contribute to the ongoing philosophical discussion about well-being.

Well-being, prudential value, welfare, eudaimonia, the human good, and what is good for an individual are all taken to be equivalent locutions for the purposes of this inquiry. These concepts are all employed to pick out a common-sense notion of an individual's doing well or faring well. These notions are conceptually distinct from the normatively kindred notions of happiness and meaning in life, concepts which admit of full-length investigations in their own right. Happiness, roughly, consists in a state of feeling enjoyment or satisfaction with

the conditions of one's life. If well-being is the main course of life, as it were, happiness seems to be the dessert. The meaning of life seems in ordinary parlance to refer to an impact one's life has beyond oneself or the source of such an impact. For example, an individual may judge the meaningfulness of his life to attach to his contribution to a solution for problems that affect a great portion of the population, to the financial stability of future generations of his family as a result of his individual financial success, or he may judge it to stem from a religious source. Some may deny that individual human life derives meaning from external sources or impact at all. Without entering the debates over the nature of happiness and meaning in life, it will suffice for the purposes of this inquiry to note that these concepts are distinct from well-being.

II. Subjectivity and Objectivity

Philosophers disagree over whether well-being is objective or subjective. Subjective accounts hold, roughly speaking, that whether something constitutes an individual's well-being depends on his subjective attitudes, while objective accounts deny this dependency. Although subjective theories currently dominate the philosophical literature, the present essay is an attempt to provide criticism of particular subjective theories of well-

being and to argue that purely subjective accounts of well-being in general are ill-founded. It is also an attempt to locate an account beyond subjectivism that accords with pre-theoretical intuitions about well-being that drive both subjective and objective accounts.

Explicating subjectivity and objectivity, therefore, and discussing the shape of subjective and objective accounts of well-being are tasks of preliminary importance in accomplishing these aims.

At issue between rival subjective and objective accounts of well-being are the questions: (1) What role do subjective stances play in well-being? and (2) What role do facts independent of subjective stances play in well-being? Regarding (1), a subjective stance is defined broadly and variously as a positive attitude, a liking, an enjoying, a choosing, a pursuing, a desiring, and the like.

L.W. Sumner defines the debate between subjective and objective well-being as follows:

[W]e may say that a theory treats welfare as subjective if it makes it depend, at least in part, on some (actual or hypothetical) attitude on the part of the welfare subject. More precisely, a subjective theory will map the polarity of welfare onto the polarity of attitudes, so that being well off will depend (in some way or other) on having a favourable attitude toward one's life (or some of its ingredients), while being badly off will require being unfavourably disposed toward it. Likewise, something can make me better off on this sort of account only if I have (or would have under the appropriate circumstances) a positive attitude (of the appropriate sort) toward it . . .

Objective theories deny this dependency. On an objective theory, therefore, something can be (directly and immediately) good for me though I do not regard it favourably, and my life can be going well despite my failing to have any positive attitude toward it.¹

James Griffin also states, "By 'subjective' [account of well-being], I mean an account that makes well-being depend upon an individual's own desires and by 'objective' [account of well-being] one that makes well-being independent of desires."²

Sumner and Griffin both, therefore, define subjective and objective well-being as mutually exclusive, focusing on the necessary condition of subjectivism that an individual must have a positive subjective stance toward something for it to contribute to his well-being (remaining agnostic about any role facts independent of subjective stances may play) and the denial of this dependency by objectivism.

Thus, according to these definitions, the answer given to questions (1) and (2) by subjectivism is that (i) it is at least a necessary condition of something being a part of well-being that the individual whose well-being it is has a positive subjective stance toward it and (ii) natural facts independent of these subjective stances play either no role, a marginal role, or a substantial though secondary role.

¹ Sumner 1996, p. 38.

² Griffin 1986, p. 32.

Focusing on the necessity of subjective stances for subjective well-being and, thus, treating objective and subjective accounts of well-being as mutually exclusive is a useful heuristic, but has limitations. Sumner, for his part, notes that this is an intentionally indeterminate account of subjectivism, defined as such for the purpose of distinguishing the view from objectivism while accommodating a range of particular articulations of the subjective position to be plugged in at a later time.³ While the dichotomy between the subjective and objective, thus, has fortuitous consequences for a charitable construal of subjectivism within the context of its indeterminate definition, it allows for only those versions of objectivism that give no genuine role to individuals' concerns. So while this dichotomy gives wide latitude to subjectivism, it serves either to uncharitably pigeonhole objectivism or to define as subjective the more plausible "objective" views according to which well-being has an objective origin but subjective stances also play a genuine role.

Just as subjective accounts can allow a genuine defining role to facts independent of subjective stances while retaining their basic subjective character, objective accounts can in like manner take subjective stances to be relevant to well-being

³ Sumner 1996, p. 38. Griffin notes extreme reluctance in dividing the territory into subjective and objective accounts (Griffin 1986, p. 32).

while at base remaining objective in character. One can imagine accounts which (i) take subjective stances exclusively to be relevant (i.e., to be necessary and sufficient) for well-being, (ii) take subjective stances to be necessary while holding that facts independent of subjective stances are relevant, (iii) take subjective stances to be necessary and facts independent of these stances to be marginally relevant, (iv) take facts independent of subjective stances to be sufficient for well-being, (v) take facts independent of subjective stances to be necessary and sufficient for well-being, (vi) take facts independent of subjective stances and subjective stances of the right kind to be jointly necessary, (vii) take facts independent of subjective stances and subjective stances of the right kind to be jointly necessary and sufficient for well-being. The variations seem endless. For even within the context of these possibilities, the precise extent and character of the role played by the subjective and objective admit of a great deal of variation. Thus, while treating subjective and objective well-being as mutually exclusive is useful for distinguishing the basic views at the preliminary stages of an inquiry into the nature of well-being, it serves to obscure relevant details of these accounts at later stages of inquiry. Furthermore, the mutual exclusivity entailed by the standard definitions implies that any account which takes both objective facts and subjective

stances to be necessary conditions for well-being is a subjective account. Such a hybrid account, the details of which would require fleshing out, should not, it seems, be placed under the rubric of subjective theories of well-being. For on such an account both subjective stances and facts independent of these stances might both play defining roles in well-being and associating the view with subjectivism may serve to obscure important details.

Accordingly, what is needed is an approach to the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity as well as to what qualify as subjective and objective accounts of well-being that permits exploration of a broader range of relationships between the subjective and objective in the constitution of well-being. This approach will be rough and indeterminate by necessity in order to make room for the details of specific theories which can vary widely over the question what relationship subjective stances and matters of mind-independent fact bear to well-being. At base, for present purposes, subjectivity is that which pertains to subjective stances, such as liking, preferring, desiring, approving and so on. What subjective accounts of well-being have in common, then, is that they take well-being to be fundamentally a matter of the subjective stances an individual takes (or would take/could take under improved conditions). The source of well-being according

to these accounts is the set of positive subjective stances an individual takes (or would take/could take under improved conditions).

Objectivity, for present purposes, is that which pertains to facts independent of individual subjective stances. Objective accounts of well-being, then, take the source of individual well-being to reside fundamentally in facts independent of individual subjective stances. These accounts are not, at base, a matter of subjective stances, but rather a matter of facts about the world, individuals, and the relationship between these.

Though somewhat rough, these definitions have the advantage of most charitably accommodating a range of different accounts of well-being, while still remaining heuristically useful regarding the basic questions of what relationship subjective stances and mind-independent facts have to the make-up of well-being. These definitions, therefore, will be accepted as preliminarily adequate for this inquiry, but subject to refinement.

III. What follows

As for a roadmap of what follows, chapter 2 consists of Aristotle's discussion of eudaimonia, its profile as an objective account of well-being, and a discussion of

subjectivist criticisms of the account. Aristotle identifies eudaimonia as the end at which all human action aims, but notes the lack of agreement over what eudaimonia is. Eudaimonia is identified with living well and acting well, and hence, is an account of well-being. Chapter 2 traces Aristotle's argument through his famous "function" argument to the conclusion that well-being is activity of reason in accordance with excellence.

Chapter 2 then considers the formal characteristics that Aristotle takes to be criteria of well-being. Namely, in order for something to be a constituent of well-being it must be: proper to man; something of our own; stable or enduring; final or complete; self-sufficient; unique to man; and pleasant. The chapter examines what these criteria amount to and how they relate to Aristotle's account of well-being.

The final substantive section considers subjectivist critiques of Aristotle's position. The most potentially damaging complaints against the account of eudaimonia are that it conflates what makes a good person and what is good for a person and that it is a theory of perfection and not an account of well-being at all. This section addresses these criticisms and attempts to mitigate their damage.

In the end, this chapter notes that regarding the dispute between subjective and objective accounts, Aristotle's account by his own lights has a subjective component. The precise nature

of the subjective in Aristotle's theory is not clear, however, and only a relatively weak subjective component can be decisively attributed to it. Chapter 2 takes Aristotle's account of eudaimonia to provide the impetus to examine subjective accounts for the purpose of exploring just what role subjectivity ought to play in conjunction with the objective in the constitution of well-being.

Chapter 3 surveys some of the variations on the subjective account and the objections that are launched against them in the literature on well-being. It traces the way in which subjectivists modify their accounts in order to deal with counterexample, while attempting to retain these accounts' subjective spirit. It considers hedonism, actual-desire satisfaction accounts, constrained desire-satisfaction accounts, Sumner's constrained hedonism, and the idealized desire-satisfaction accounts of Peter Railton and Connie Rosati. The chapter concludes that none of the particular variations of subjective account that it considers survive the counterexamples that are standardly put forth against them.

In response to the thought that the details of different articulations of subjectivism considered in chapter 3 can be modified without end, however, to deal with new counterexamples, chapter 4 attempts to undercut subjectivism at a more basic

level. It argues that subjective theories of well-being as such are ill-motivated and lack adequate grounding.

Chapter 4 identifies two considerations that seem to motivate subjectivism: the thought that subjectivism comports better than objectivism with an intuitive conception of personal autonomy; and the thought that subjectivism provides a conceptual connection between value and motivation to act.

Chapter 4 argues that objective well-being is compatible with a robust conception of personal autonomy and that subjectivism, therefore, is not uniquely situated to uphold this value. Furthermore, it is argued that the subjectivist's thought that the nature of values as secondary qualities does not, indeed, motivate subjectivism, but begs the question against objective well-being. Lastly, once the basic subjective stances that stipulate well-being on the subjectivist's account are idealized to avoid counterexamples, they do not provide any more of a link between value and actual motivation than do objective accounts. Thus, all of the considerations that motivate subjectivism in the first instance, fail to uniquely ground it.

Finally, chapter 5 attempts to identify an account of well-being that resides in territory beyond subjectivism. It argues that well-being is comprised of a subjective component and an objective component. Well-being, according to this account, is constituted by the exercise and development of human

and personal strengths, talents, or abilities plus endorsement in the form of autonomous choice.

The objective component of the account is naturalistic, has its origins in Aristotle's account of eudaimonia and is supported by research into human psychology. The subjective elements of this account are the necessity that an individual autonomously choose something for it to constitute well-being as well as a latitude to exercise personal preferences consistent with the objective features of well-being. This hybrid account is superior to either subjective or objective theories on their own because it is able to escape the weaknesses of exclusively subjective and objective accounts, while embracing the primary strengths of each.

CHAPTER 2

EUDAIMONIA: ARISTOTLE'S ACCOUNT OF WELL-BEING

I. Introduction

The concept of *eudaimonia* plays a central role in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*⁴. This much is clear and uncontested by commentators. Beyond this general agreement, however, disagreements and controversies abound concerning the character of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*.⁵ Basic and profound controversies such as how the Classical Greek term *eudaimonia* is to be translated into English, whether Aristotle intends to be offering a theory of well-being or happiness or flourishing or perfection, just what role external goods like wealth, physical attractiveness, and friends play in Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*, as well as whether virtue is sufficient for well-being do not even begin to scratch the surface of the range of issues under dispute.

This chapter examines Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia* as a rival to contemporary theories of well-being. More particularly, this chapter concerns the objectivity of

⁴The discussion herein is based exclusively on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

⁵ I will use 'eudaimonia' and 'eudaimon' as technical terms. They will thus appear in italics only when I am referring to the Greek words. The nominal form is 'eudaimonia' and the adjectival form is 'eudaimon.'

Aristotle's conception of well-being; its objectivity renders it a rival to contemporary theories of human good which predominantly are subjective. Subjective and objective accounts disagree about the relationship of subjective stances to well-being. Subjective stances include approving, liking, seeking, choosing, enjoying, desiring, preferring, and so on. Simply stated, subjective conceptions of well-being hold that the good for human beings is in some way fundamentally *about* subjective stances, while objective accounts hold that well-being is not fundamentally *about* subjective stances.⁶ More specifically for purposes of juxtaposition, objective accounts affirm that an individual need not have a positive subjective stance toward something (such as an object, an action, or a condition) for it to constitute or contribute to his well-being; some factual conditions independent of subjective stances, however, must be met in order for something to be part of or contribute to an individual's good. Subjectivism rejects the independence thesis and holds that some positive subjective stance is necessary for something to qualify as a constituent of or to promote an individual's good.

⁶ This chapter does not critically examine the particular content Aristotle gives to eudaimonia; that is, it is not concerned with the particular items, habits, states of affairs, dispositions, etc., that Aristotle argues contribute to (or detract from) an agent's eudaimonia. Nor is it concerned with commentators' criticism of this aspect of Aristotle's theory.

This chapter explicates Aristotle's objective theory of eudaimonia, offers a profile of eudaimonia as an account of well-being, and considers the most potentially damaging subjectivist critiques of Aristotle's account.

II. Eudaimonia According to Aristotle

Aristotle introduces the concept of eudaimonia in response to the self-posed question: what is the highest of all the goods of action? (*EN* 1095a15-16) By this point in the text, he has already indicated that as an empirical matter everything (every art and inquiry and action and deliberate choice) seems to aim at some good. He has also stated that these aims and the actions and choices, etc. which aim at them are hierarchically ordered, i.e., that the ends of some actions are pursued for the sake of other actions or for other ends. He argues, "[I]f, then, there is some end of action which we want for itself and [we want] the other [ends] for it, and we do not choose everything for another [end] (for this will go on, at any rate, infinitely, so that desire would be empty and idle) clearly this must be the good and the best." (*EN* 1094a18-23) Aristotle appears to affirm the three antecedent clauses, supporting the third with a premise that its falsity would problematically imply that our instrumental pursuit of ends goes on infinitely, ultimately rendering desire empty and vain. (1094a20-21) Thus, the good and

the best is that end which we choose, want, or desire for its own sake (and not also for another end), and that for the sake of which we ultimately choose every other end. This is why determining what this end is, Aristotle notes, has great significance.

Aristotle continues that it is generally agreed that this end in itself at which everything else aims is named 'eudaimonia'; for both the populace and the refined agree about this much and identify living well (εὖ ζῆν) and acting well (εὖ πράττειν) with being eudaimon (εὐδαιμονεῖν). (1095a15-20) However, while both the populace and the refined agree that the good is eudaimonia, they hold divergent views about what eudaimonia is or about how eudaimonia is to be defined. Some, according to Aristotle, suppose that eudaimonia is pleasure or honor or wealth, while some think it is something other than these; some even take eudaimonia to be something different at one time than it is at another time, so that they think eudaimonia is health when they are ill but wealth when they are poor. (1095a23-25) Since there are so many divergent opinions among the populace and the refined about what eudaimonia is, Aristotle proposes that an inquiry into eudaimonia consider the more reasonable opinions which seem to have some case in their favor.

Aristotle's methodology here is to take the beliefs of the populace and the refined as basic data to be considered. He

states what these beliefs are and attempts to prove them by resolving the puzzles or disagreements among the reputable beliefs. These "reputable beliefs" are the beliefs accepted by everyone, the majority, or the wise. (*Top.* 100b21-3) By examining conflict between reputable beliefs and accordingly eliminating false beliefs, the inquiry arrives as close as possible at the truth. (*EN* 1146b6-8; 1145b2-7)

Aristotle continues the inquiry by identifying three types of life which are reasonably (or not unreasonably – i.e., not without an argument in their favor) thought by the populace and the refined to be the eudaimon life: the life of enjoyment, the political life, and the theoretical life. (*EN* 1095b15-18) Aristotle rules out each of these proposed candidates for eudaimonia in turn. The first of these types of life is the life of enjoyment which is proposed by the populace to be the eudaimon life. If the life of enjoyment is the eudaimon life, then eudaimonia is pleasure. Aristotle rejects the thesis that eudaimonia is pleasure and, therefore, that the life of enjoyment is the eudaimon life, on the grounds that the life of enjoyment is slavish and those who choose it choose the life of grazing animals. (1095b19-21) The refined propose that the eudaimon life is the political life and since honor is, essentially, the end of the political life, eudaimonia, on this view, is honor. Aristotle argues that the thesis that eudaimonia

is honor is false because honor is conferred on the person who has it by the esteem of others. The good, or eudaimonia, he states, is both something of our own or something that resides in us and something difficult to deprive us of (1095b23-29); honor, however, seems to be at least as much (and perhaps more) about those who bestow it as about the individual who receives it; it also may be given and taken at the whim of those who honor. Further, according to Aristotle, it looks as though people pursue honor for the sake of virtue. But the good is something pursued for itself and not for the sake of anything else. Hence, as far as concerns the political life, virtue appears to have a better claim to being eudaimonia than does honor. (1095b28-32)

Virtue, however, is excluded by Aristotle as well on the grounds that, like honor, it is incomplete (1096a32-33). Someone might be asleep and possess virtue, or someone might lead an inactive life but possess virtue. Someone might suffer the greatest evils and misfortunes, but possess virtue nonetheless. No one, according to Aristotle, would count this individual as eudaimon except if he were maintaining a thesis or paradox. (1096a1-4) After dismissing virtue as a candidate for eudaimonia, and after excluding two of the three sorts of lives he proposes to consider, Aristotle extends a promissory note to

discuss the third life, the theoretical life in forthcoming discussion.

Reiterating the need to clarify what eudaimonia, or the chief good, is, Aristotle commences his famous function argument (1097b22-1098a20), proposing to look to the function (ἔργον) of man to determine what his good is. The good of a thing and its good performance are defined by appealing to its function. Thus, if something has a function, the good and the "doing well" may be expected to be found in the function. (1097b25-30) If we are to pronounce, then, that "X is good" or "X is doing/performing well," the truth of these statements is assessed by reference to X's function.

Aristotle here assumes the validity of such functional analyses. He intends to appeal to our common-sense evaluations of things such as crafts and presumably artifacts and animal body parts, and the like, in terms of their success in the performance of their functions. The goodness of a knife, for instance, is assessed by its ability to perform its function -- in this case cutting. Aristotle affirms that anything that has a function is to be judged in this way.

Since everything that has a function is to be evaluated by reference to its function, if man has a function, then, his good is to be found in his function as well. (1097b28) Aristotle then considers the question whether man indeed has a function. He

appeals to the fact that craftsmen are evaluated on the basis of their performance of their function to suggest that it is plausible to think that man as such also has a function. Similarly, each of man's body parts, such as eyes and hands, have functions and it therefore seems reasonable to Aristotle to think that man has a function of his own beyond the set of functions which correspond to his individual body parts (1097b31-33).

Assuming that man has a function, then, what might it be? To determine what the human function is, Aristotle looks to the sorts of activities in which man engages. He considers and excludes the life of nutrition and growth, since this sort of life is common (κοινός) even to plants. (1097b32-1098a1) The sort of activity Aristotle is seeking as an appropriate candidate for the human function must be an activity peculiar or unique (ἴδιος) to man, i.e., not something shared by other living things. Thus, man's activities of nourishing himself and growing do not constitute his function (1098a1-3).

Aristotle notes that man also engages in a life of perception. This sort of activity, however, also fails to be peculiar to man. Every animal lives a life characterized by this sort of activity (1098a3-5). Therefore, Aristotle concludes that because the function of man is an activity distinctive to him, perception cannot be the function of man either.

All that remains to be the function of man, Aristotle argues, is "some action of the part which has reason." (1098a3) Aristotle suggests that the human function is "activity of the soul in accordance with or not without reason." (1098a7-8) Thus, it seems, we know that what is characteristic and unique to "man" is activity using the capacity to reason. We are interested, however, in what makes a "man" a "good man." On Aristotle's view, the function of a man and a good man are the same in kind, for generally speaking "the function of a this and an excellent this are the same in kind." (1098a8-10) Aristotle indicates, for instance, that the function of a lyre player and a good player are the same in kind (i.e., some sort of lyre-playing). While the function of a lyre player is to play the lyre, the function of a good lyre player is to play the lyre well. If we know the function of an instance of a kind, then, and seek the function of a good or an excellent instance of that kind, according to Aristotle, "we add to the function the excess according to virtue." (1098a11-12) Thus, if the function of a man is activity of the soul in accordance with reason, then the function of a good man is *well-done* activity of the soul in accordance with reason. To do something well means to do it excellently or according to virtue, for Aristotle. Hence, Aristotle concludes that "the good of man is an activity of the

soul according to virtue and, if the virtues are multiple, in accordance with the best and most complete virtue." (1098a15-18)

Insofar, then, as the good of man is an activity of soul in accordance with virtue and insofar as eudaimonia is identified with the good of man, eudaimonia is an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. We might characterize Aristotle's general strategy in the following way: Aristotle notes an empirical fact about human action, that it seems to aim at some good. This good, he takes it, is an end in itself and is not chosen for the sake of anything else. He acknowledges that it is generally agreed that this good is eudaimonia. This general agreement about the good, however, is uninformative, since there is no general agreement about what eudaimonia is. A way of getting at what eudaimonia, or the good, is, according to Aristotle, is to look to the function of man whose good eudaimonia is thought to be. The function of man is an activity that is naturally characteristic of him. A way to locate this naturally characteristic activity is to consider what sorts of distinctive activities man performs or engages in. Man's characteristic activity turns out to be activity of the part that has reason. The characteristic activity of a good man, then, is well-done activity of the soul in accordance with reason or activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.

This conception of eudaimonia, then, is objective in that man's good derives from his unique natural capacities as a human being and the characteristic activities that issue from them, independent of his subjective stances. What makes it the case, then, that eudaimonia is activity of the soul in accordance with virtue are various natural facts about man which define his characteristic activity as such.

III. Well-Being: Profile of the Concept

Aristotle's argument to the effect that eudaimonia is an activity of the soul in accordance with reason reveals either directly or indirectly several salient criteria of well-being.⁷ This section outlines these criteria, together which constitute a profile of Aristotle's concept of well-being.

(1) *Proper to man* (1095b15-20) – Aristotle suggests a criterion of well-being in his discussion of the three sorts of lives that the populace and the refined take to be candidates for the eudaimon life. He rules out the first type of life, the life of enjoyment, in which well-being would be pleasure, presumably on the grounds that pleasure fails to meet a criterion of well-being. Aristotle does not explicitly formulate the criterion he has in mind, but it is worthwhile to attempt to

⁷ David Keyt furnishes a list of criteria from which these criteria differ. He includes six criteria: accordance with excellence, continuous, pleasurable, self-sufficient, loved for itself, and leisured, (Keyt, 1983, p. 376).

formulate the sort of criterion he implicitly takes to disqualify pleasure as well-being.

Recall that Aristotle's stated grounds for disallowing pleasure as the appropriate content of well-being are that those who choose the life of enjoyment appear to be utterly slavish since they choose the life of grazing animals (1095b 19-20). It is difficult to get at just what Aristotle might be objecting to about the life of enjoyment, and, thus, about hedonism as a theory of well-being. Aristotle may be suggesting that the life of pleasure cannot be the good life because this sort of life is like the lives of the akratic and the youth, both of whom he argues are dragged about like slaves by their passions. The life of enjoyment, then, improperly focuses on pleasures and does not attend properly to reason. This lack of attention to reason, or ill-proportionate attention to pleasure over reason, consigns one to a mindless and slavish life more appropriate for grazing animals than for human beings. And, of course, since well-being is the chief good for human beings (our interest is in *human* well-being, if you will), it cannot be like the sort of life led by just any animal.

The criterion of well-being that Aristotle takes in this section to rule out the life of enjoyment is likely an early statement of his view that well-being must involve a life proper to man and that at least some of what a life proper to man

involves is a focus on the use of reason in action, as opposed to mere slavishness to one's desires and pleasures or appetites. The sort of life that is proper to human beings tracks their unique natural capacity to reason and their corresponding rational activity. Of course, many different features of Aristotle's conception of well-being seem to be packed into this criterion and one might fairly criticize its early, pre-function argument, appearance here to rule out the life of pleasure. Nonetheless, perhaps it is reasonable to suggest that the criterion of well-being which Aristotle has in mind is that it must be something proper to man. This would make sense of Aristotle's disqualification of pleasure and the life of enjoyment, albeit with as yet unargued premises.

(2) *Something of our own* (1095b25-30)-- Aristotle posits as a criterion of well-being that it must be something of our own or something that resides in us. It is on these grounds that he argues that well-being cannot be honor. For, recall, honor is something which is bestowed upon us by the esteem of others and, therefore, is more from or about those who honor us than something within or about us. This criterion, then, seems to specify that well-being is something fundamentally in or about us. It connects or attaches our welfare to us in such a way that our good is in some significant way part of or tied to its

subjects. Well-being is affixed to individual human beings by virtue of their well-done rational activity.

(3) *Stable or enduring* (1095b25-30) -- When Aristotle excludes the political life as a candidate for the well-lived life, he argues that honor cannot be well-being both because well-being is something that resides in or belongs to us (and honor is not something that resides in or belongs to us, but is a benefit or a title, as it were, conferred on us by others) and because well-being is something difficult to deprive us of. Insofar as our possession of honor depends on the esteem of others, it is not difficult to deprive us of since the esteem of others may very well be conferred and withdrawn whimsically or affected easily by other external factors. However, according to Aristotle, well-being is not something easy to take away or, for that matter, something easy to lose, but is something stable and enduring.

It is further discussion of this criterion in Book I chapter 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that gives rise to a debate about the role of goods of fortune in Aristotle's theory of well-being. John Cooper, for example, in his paper "Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune"⁸ suggests that Aristotle took certain goods such as wealth and friends and good looks to be necessary

⁸ Cooper 1985.

conditions of it. This suggestion, in turn, gives rise to the question what role fortune in general, good and bad, has in Aristotle's account of well-being. Aristotle does not seem to have a clear and settled view about this matter; he seems to vacillate in the text between the claim that good fortune (or at least absence of misfortune) is necessary for well-being and the claim that it is not necessary. He also seems to suggest at times that the *degree* of good or bad misfortune is relevant to whether it respectively is necessary for or detracts from well-being. At any rate, the criterion that human good is something stable and enduring is discussed in the context of Aristotle's discussion of fortune. He argues,

[We hesitate] out of reluctance to call [a man] happy [eudaimon] during his lifetime, because of the variations, and because we suppose happiness is enduring and definitely not prone to fluctuate, whereas the same person's fortunes often turn to and fro. For clearly, if we are guided by his fortunes, so that we often call him happy and then miserable again, we will be representing a kind of chameleon, insecurely based. But surely it is quite wrong to be guided by someone's fortunes. For his doing well or badly does not rest on them; though a human life, as we said, needs these added, it is the activities expressing virtue that control happiness [eudaimonia], and the contrary activities that control its contrary. (1100b1-11)⁹

Aristotle clearly thinks, as evidenced by his discussions of honor and fortune, that stability and endurance are criteria

⁹ All translations of Nicomachean Ethics are by Irwin from Aristotle 1985.

of well-being. As for his overall conclusions about fortune, that certain external goods such as wealth and friends might be necessary conditions, these conclusions are, on their face at least, quite consistent with the stability criterion. For, the stability criterion seems to specify only that well-being is difficult to take from us or difficult to lose. It may well yet be the case that Aristotle takes well-being to be quite difficult to achieve, its achievement depending, among other things, on external goods. To suggest that goods of fortune make human good difficult to get or achieve in the first place is a quite different claim than and quite consistent with the thought that once had or achieved, it is stable, enduring, or difficult to take away.

The stability criterion does, however, make difficult to sustain the contention that reversals of fortune can deprive an individual of his well-being. Again, it is not clear precisely what Aristotle's view is about this matter; he seems to waver. It may not be wholly inconsistent with the stability criterion to suggest that bad fortune can deprive one of one's good; for the claim is that well-being is difficult, not impossible, to take away or to lose. Thus, while the stability criterion may rule out the detriment of just any minor reversal of fortune, profoundly bad fortune consistently may be supposed to deprive one of one's good or at least adversely impact it; for while it

is not easy to deprive one of well-being, profoundly bad fortune may be enough to do so. Elsewhere, however, Aristotle seems to suggest that even extreme bad fortune does not prevent one from being eudaimon, but that it is an impediment to being counted supremely blessed (μακάριος) (1101a6-8). Perhaps one might best understand the stability criterion as a relative-stability criterion. At any rate, it bears repeating that Aristotle's view on this issue seems unsettled, but that there may be ways to accommodate all that he says about fortune. Nonetheless, it does seem clear, even in the wake of Aristotle's possible indecision about the place of good and bad fortune in his account of well-being, that he does intend to count stability or endurance (even if relative) as a presumptive criterion of human good.

(4) *Finality or completeness* (1095b26-1096a2; 1097b1-7) -- Aristotle states that the best good, which is well-being, must be something final (τι τέλειον).¹⁰ This criterion is often referred to as the completeness criterion. It might also, based on translation of the Greek word τέλειον, be considered to be a perfection criterion. The finality criterion of human good mandates that well-being be an end in itself and not for the

¹⁰ At the suggestion of Fred Miller in discussion, I translate this as a finality criterion. Translating "τέλειον" as "final" loads into the concept the least normative content of the alternatives. For discussion of the alternatives, see Keyt, 1983, pp. 377-78.

sake of anything else. Aristotle identifies three sorts of ends: ends that are chosen instrumentally or solely for the sake of something else; ends that are chosen both instrumentally and for their own sake; and ends which are chosen for their own sake and not for the sake of anything. This latter sort of end is final and is also that for the sake of which everything else is chosen. This is the sort of end Aristotle requires welfare to be. It is chosen and choiceworthy for itself.

Aristotle's employment of this criterion is clear in his discussion of the political life as a candidate for well-being. One of the grounds on which honor is eliminated as the good life is that those who seek honor do so for some other end, i.e., to convince themselves that they are good (1095b27-28).

(5) *Self-sufficiency* (1097b14-22) -- Aristotle also states that the chief good and therefore, well-being, is something self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης). By suggesting that they are self-sufficient, Aristotle means to convey that the good and happiness lack nothing and are choiceworthy all by themselves. Thus, if the addition of something could make well-being more choiceworthy than it is alone, then the good would not count as self-sufficient. For instance, if well-being would be more choiceworthy than it is alone if honor were added to it, then well-being would not count as self-sufficient. Aristotle

actually seems to suggest at one point in his discussion of fortune, that well-being plus goods of fortune would make a life supremely blessed (1100b1-1101a14). Perhaps this is simply an aberration, but if it is true that the addition to eudaimonia of good fortune would render one supremely blessed and if supreme blessedness is more choiceworthy than eudaimonia, then, it would seem, eudaimonia is not self-sufficient. This passage notwithstanding, Aristotle does state that well-being must meet the self-sufficiency criterion.

(6) *Peculiar or Unique to Man* – (1097b35 - 1098a5) During the course of the function argument, Aristotle excludes the life of nutrition and growth from the activities definitive of human good on the grounds that these activities are common to plants and human beings. He similarly rules out the life of perception since it is common to every animal. What we are seeking, Aristotle states, is the unique (τὸ ἴδιον).¹¹ Hence, according to Aristotle the function of man must be an activity unique to human beings. Since Aristotle suggests that the good for human beings is in their function and since uniqueness is a criterion

¹¹Whiting 1988. Whiting argues that the function argument is more plausible if τὸ ἴδιον is construed as "the essence." Ultimately, I do not think that rendering τὸ ἴδιον in this way is necessary for Aristotle's argument to proceed. Doing so merely front-loads the concept of the peculiar with Aristotle's assumptions. It strikes me as much more faithful to Aristotle's favored methodology to look to the world for what is literally peculiar to man and then to add tacit premises to his argument afterward in order to deal with counterexamples.

of the function of man, uniqueness is also a criterion of well-being.

Aristotle seems to view the uniqueness of an activity to a type of thing as a mark of its being a characteristic activity of that thing. And, the function of a thing is its characteristic activity. This, at any rate, is the way in which Aristotle's analysis in the function argument seems to proceed. And so uniqueness or peculiarity to man is fairly construed as a criterion of eudaimonia.

(7) *Pleasantness* (1099a7-20) -- Aristotle argues that a necessary condition of something's being a virtue is that the individual who is virtuous because of it finds it pleasant. Since virtuous activity constitutes well-being, this seems to introduce a strain of the subjective into Aristotle's account of well-being. He writes, "[S]omeone who does not enjoy fine actions is not good . . ." (1099a17-19) Aristotle's example which best meshes, perhaps, with contemporary intuitions is the virtue of generosity. He thinks that if a man fails to enjoy or be pleased by a would-be generous act, it fails to count as a generous act. This is quite intuitive. For we do not ordinarily think a person is generous if he gives grudgingly and without enjoying the act of giving. Hence, we might even say that enjoying the generous act is constitutively necessary for its

virtue in the same way that the steps of a dance are constitutively necessary for the dance. It is constitutively necessary, that is, because the enjoyment of the act of giving is an essential and indispensable part of what it is or what it means to be generous. Aristotle seems to think that the other virtues have this feature of being pleasing to the virtue bearer in the same way. Justice also, for instance, requires the person who acts justly to be pleased or to enjoy his just act. We do not regard as just the man who does not enjoy the would-be just act, according to Aristotle.

Precisely how strong this subjective condition should be understood to be is a difficult question. Aristotle may affirm: (i) that virtue and enjoyment simply coincide (this is the weakest subjective condition [and is not truly a condition strictly speaking]); (ii) that enjoyment is a necessary condition of virtue (this is an intermediate subjective condition); (iii) that enjoyment of virtuous activity is constitutively necessary for the virtue (this is the strongest subjective condition). On the one hand, it is at least in part by virtue of an agent's enjoyment of a generous act that the act qualifies as generous. For in a significant way, part of what we mean when we call an individual generous is that he takes pleasure in giving. This seems to render virtue quite strongly subjective. Being pleased, in this case, does not seem to be a

mere condition of virtuous activity, in the way that, for example, finality and stability are conditions; rather, enjoying the generous act is part of what makes it the case that an act (and, perhaps, a person) is generous. If we ask if the act is enjoyed because it is generous or generous because it is enjoyed, it makes good sense to respond that both disjuncts are true. Part of being generous is enjoying giving.

Aristotle suggests that justice is analogous to generosity in just this sense, in that enjoyment of the just act is constitutively necessary for its qualifying as just. Moving away from the virtue of generosity, however, the case for the constitutive necessity of the subjective becomes much less clearly intuitive. And, unfortunately, Aristotle does not provide an argument to this effect, but rather relies on the opinions or intuitions of those of his time. Further, in the case of some virtues, such as courage, this subjective model is downright counterintuitive. The virtue of courage implies facing fear and painful situations. It requires too great a stretch of the imagination to suppose the person who acts courageously is courageous in part by virtue of the fact that he somehow "enjoys" his actions in these situations, i.e., that being courageous is in part a matter of such enjoyment of fearful and painful situations, even though he may feel satisfaction after successfully overcoming the situation.

Perhaps the case that enjoyment is constitutively necessary for virtue should only be taken to apply specifically to the virtue of generosity and should not be considered constitutive of virtue generally. While this may make for a most plausible reconstruction of Aristotle's position, it does seem clear that he takes justice and all of the other virtues to be analogous to generosity. Thus, if Aristotle thinks that enjoyment is constitutively necessary for generosity, perhaps he genuinely does hold that enjoyment is constitutively necessary for all the virtues. Perhaps, alternatively, the subjective condition Aristotle intends to place on generosity is weaker.

Other statements Aristotle makes concerning the relationship of enjoyment to virtue seem less strong than the claim that taking pleasure in the generous act is constitutively necessary for its being generous and, therefore, virtuous. He seems at some points to suggest that as a descriptive matter the virtuous person simply *will* take pleasure in his virtuous act (1174a4-10). That is, Aristotle seems to posit enjoyment of one's virtuous act as a natural and necessary consequence of acting virtuously, but falls short of arguing that it is either a condition of or constitutively necessary for virtue. Aristotle here does not seem to be offering a necessary condition in any sense, but merely notes a regular concomitance of our response of enjoyment to our own virtuous deeds and character. In this

sense, we are naturally and regularly pleased by our virtuous actions because they are good.

Nonetheless, the intermediate claim that Aristotle views enjoyment of the virtues as a condition of their virtue also seems to be plausible. For, recall, he indicates that " . . . someone who does not enjoy fine actions is not good." (1099a19) This might simply be taken to be a statement of a necessary condition. In this case, however, it would seem to be an overstatement to say that fine actions are fine (in part) because they are enjoyed by those who do them in the same way that generous activities may require enjoyment to count as generous.

Based on what Aristotle says about the pleasantness criterion, the most plausible interpretation of his position is that he affirms the weakest thesis, that pleasure naturally and regularly follows virtuous action. This gives Aristotle's conception of well-being a subjective flavor (since virtuous activity is constitutive of well-being and everything that applies to virtue here applies also to well-being). The truly and thoroughgoing subjective Aristotelian thesis, however, would be one which affirms the strongest subjectivist condition above, that it is at least in part *because of* an agent's subjective response to or stance toward an action, habit, disposition, that this action, habit, or disposition is a virtue. While this sort

of account of virtue would give a genuine defining role in well-being to the subjective stance of the agent in question, Aristotle clearly remains on the objectivist side of the debate over well-being. Aristotle does not offer any principled reason to justify a thesis that actions that are virtuous because they represent expressions of activities proper or fitting to man must also be enjoyed in order to qualify as virtuous. Furthermore, the enjoyment of virtuous activity does not create the value of the activity for the virtuous person, according to Aristotle; virtuous actions are valuable because of facts about the nature of human beings and the world, not because they are pleasurable. Well-being does not fundamentally *derive from* subjective stances, for Aristotle.

Nonetheless, pleasantness naturally follows virtue and, so, given the constitutive relationship of virtue to pleasure, pleasantness naturally follows eudaimonia as well in this sense.¹²

The profile of Aristotle's concept of well-being, then, includes the conditions that human good is both fitting and unique to human beings. Well-being tracks capacities, traits, features and the like that belong to human nature and do not overlap with those of other animals. Well-being is something that belongs to the person whose good is in question; he owns it

¹² See Kraut, 1999, *passim* on this criterion.

and it resides in him, rather than being conferred on him from the outside as in the case of honor. The good for a person is, thus, relatively stable and difficult to deprive him of.

Furthermore, well-being is an end in itself and is not valuable for the sake of any other end beyond itself; it is self-sufficient or choiceworthy on its own since it lacks nothing.

Lastly, pleasantness is a marker of well-being. It is a natural concomitant to excellent activity. Well-being has a subjective flavor because of this and also because Aristotle seems to hold that pleasantness is partly constitutive of certain virtues.

Nonetheless, well-being, for Aristotle, is fundamentally objective and independent of subjective stances, based rather on the characteristic traits and activities of human beings.

IV. Subjectivist Critiques

Despite the aforementioned subjective flavor of Aristotle's concept of virtue, his account of well-being is still deeply objective; what defines the virtues and locates human good as rational activity in accordance with virtue is a conception of human nature which identifies this sort of activity as characteristic of human beings. What makes it the case that the good man's function is to exercise the soul in accordance with virtue is that he is a thing of a particular kind whose good is defined by the nature of things of that kind. The decidedly

objective character of Aristotle's function argument has made his view, perhaps, the most prominent objective contender in the contemporary debate over whether well-being is subjective or objective.

This section considers the most damaging critiques of the objectivity of Aristotle's view. In his book *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, L.W. Sumner criticizes objective theories of well-being generally on the grounds that they are unable to account for the subject-relativity of welfare or well-being. They are unable, he argues, to account for the perspectival nature of well-being or its character as distinctively belonging to the individual whose well-being is at issue. Aristotle's objectivism, according to Sumner, represents the objectivist's best hope for capturing this subject-relativity since Aristotle's perfectionism invariably ties well-being to the subject by virtue of tying it to functioning.

Sumner and many others have criticized the sorts of functional analyses that Aristotle uses to establish his account of well-being. For someone might argue that knives and other artifacts of human making have functions only by reference to the purposes human beings have for them. Their functions are not fixed by any natural end they may have. These "functions," then, might be thought to be malleable or nonexistent in Aristotle's sense of function. Artifacts such as knives may be assessed as

good because of their performance of any number of functions besides cutting. Their functions and, therefore, their goodness is relative to the purposes to which we human beings put them. We may employ a knife as a cutting utensil or as a doorstop or a bookmark, etc. Hence a good knife may very well be one which marks the page well. Nothing, the critique challenges, may be thought to privilege the knife's function of cutting. Hence, according to this argument, even knives fail to have functions in any sense like the one Aristotle intends. And we can hardly make any progress determining what the human good is using a functional analysis if such analyses cannot even locate the goods of artifacts such as knives.

This critique, however, seems somewhat overstated. It is certainly true that artifacts such as knives may be used in many different ways to serve many different sorts of human purpose. Nonetheless, even the critic of functional analyses must concede that a knife is not equally well-suited to each use to which it is capable of being put. For the combination of the characteristics of a knife does seem to limit the set of purposes for which it would be good. One certainly could use a knife as a bookmark, for example; the sharp edge of the knife, however, might tear the page or injure the reader (though it is good for cutting) and the width of a knife and handle may cause a tendency to slip out from between the pages more than

desirable, necessary, or ideal, thus failing to mark the page (though it is just right for gripping). Aristotle, I take it, is concerned to define the function of artifacts in the light of the characteristics they have and the fit between those characteristics and the uses to which the artifacts might be put. After taking seriously into account the particular characteristics of an artifact in question, a plurality of possible functions may well remain. These sorts of considerations, however, do seem to undermine the claim that functional analyses as such are incoherent.

The objector may argue, however, that even if it is granted that artifacts can be plausibly thought to have functions, Aristotle's argument relies on the fact that human beings also have a function of their own, independent of anyone's purposes. This is a natural function, as it were. To suppose that human beings have such a natural function requires too great a stretch of the imagination, according to the objector. To make more natural the claim that human beings have a function of such a kind, perhaps the practice of translating the Greek *εργον* as "function" should be abandoned in favor of "work," "business," or "characteristic activity." What Aristotle thinks the good resides in is the characteristic activity of human beings, i.e., the activity he carries out by virtue of his natural characteristics. The strategy of the function argument,

consequently, is to look to the sorts of things human beings do, that is, to observe the business or work of being a human being. Some of these activities can be ruled out as characteristic of human beings on the grounds that plants and animals also engage in them. The most basic of what remains should then be taken to be the function or characteristic activity of human beings.

Functional analyses, however, still face significant difficulties. Particularly problematic is that such analyses may be circular. When seeking the good of a thing it may be unhelpful to look to the function of that thing if in order to find the function we must consider what sorts of activities a thing's natural (or artificial) characteristics are good for. This approach may avoid circularity, however, when considered at the biological level in the context of Aristotle's natural teleology.

Aristotle's thesis of natural teleology states that, for example, the parts of animals come to be as they do because they are for the sake of and naturally suited to the ends they serve or the things for which they are good. For instance, front teeth are sharp because sharp teeth are good for biting and back teeth are flat because flat teeth are good for chewing. So front teeth develop as they do for the sake of biting and back teeth develop as they do for the sake of chewing. (*Physics*, II.8, 198b23-199a). If we were seeking what the good of sharp front teeth is

by looking for their function, we might observe the different things that sharp teeth can actually do. Though sharp front teeth may be capable of being used in multiple ways, Aristotle's view takes it that their function (and natural end) can be identified by observing that when animals that have sharp front teeth use them for biting, these animals tend to survive to pass on the trait to the next generation. A neo-Aristotelian, sympathetic to Aristotle's basic strategy who also appreciates the objection to functional analysis on grounds of potential circularity, may at this juncture attempt to reconcile Aristotle's biological teleology with Darwinian natural selection. When the trait of having sharp front teeth first appeared, it might have been difficult to determine what function sharp front teeth served. However, when subsequent generations who used sharp front teeth for biting appeared, biting could be identified as the function of sharp teeth owing to their survival value. Because certain traits or capacities prove to be adaptive, they reappear in subsequent generations.

Similarly, at first appearance, the uniquely human capacity for rational activity may have come about solely by material necessity; but when the human beings who engaged in rational activity tended to survive to pass on the capacity for rational activity, this capacity continued to appear in subsequent generations because engaging in rational activity is good. Human

beings, then, come about well-suited to engage in rational activity by virtue of their natural capacity to do so, and rational activity is well-suited to them by virtue of its survival value.

While problems with the use of functional analysis to determine the human good no doubt remain to be addressed, considering such analysis in this biological context at the very least shows both the direction the Aristotelian argument might take as well as the compatibility of a neo-Aristotelian approach with contemporary biology.

Potential remaining problems notwithstanding, Sumner grants such functional analyses for the sake of argument. His concern then shifts from the ability of Aristotle's account of well-being to capture the subject-relativity of well-being to the thought that the functional analysis that enables the account to capture this subject-relativity is the very downfall of the account as a theory of well-being. For Aristotle's theory of eudaimonia now appears not to be a theory of well-being at all, but a theory of perfection. It is not, argues Sumner, a theory about what makes things good for an individual, but rather a theory about what makes an individual a good specimen of his kind.

Sumner argues that Aristotle conflates perfection and well-being. Aristotle's argument vacillates between what makes

something a good specimen of its kind and what is good for or benefits it. The function argument considers what the function or characteristic activity of a good man is, but seems to be silent, according to Sumner, regarding what is good for man, the proper object of inquiries into well-being. The virtues, then, counsel man on how to be a good or excellent specimen of his kind, i.e., how to be a good man, but not on what is good for man.¹³

This complaint is troubling indeed. A more charitable interpretation of Aristotle's argument, however, is that he does not simply conflate the "good of" and the "good for," but that he is putting forth a substantive thesis about the well-being of human beings. This substantive thesis is that what is good for man *is* what makes him a good specimen of his kind. Hence, Aristotle is not merely conflating these two types of good, but he sees and means to propose the existence of a genuine, substantive relationship between the two. Critics often supply counterexamples to show that Aristotle's arguments conflate the good of a thing with what is good for a thing. They suggest that what makes something a good knife is not at the same time what is good for the knife. Similarly, what makes someone a good doctor is not at the same time what is good for the doctor. However, Aristotle does not evidently intend to offer an

¹³ Sumner, 1996, ch. 3, *passim*.

argument to the effect that the concepts "good of" and "good for" are one and the same. Again, a charitable construal of Aristotle's project supposes that Aristotle intends to make the substantive claim about man that what is good for him is to be a good man.

This move, of course, merely pushes the defense a step back and the ally of Aristotle is left to make explicit arguments in support of the substantive thesis. Sumner is correct that Aristotle himself in the *Ethics* does not do so.¹⁴ While the notions of prudential and perfectionist value are conceptually distinct, the following considerations narrow the gap between the two.

First, although Sumner's conception of subject-relativity is purportedly open to both subjective and objective theories of well-being, it seems clear that from the outset he views subjective conceptions of well-being as more akin to subject-relativity than objective conceptions. When contrasting prudential and perfectionist value he argues:

Once again, you can easily imagine yourself, at the end of your life, taking pride in your high level of self-development but none the less wishing that you had got more out of your life, that it had been more rewarding or fulfilling, and thinking that it might have gone better for you had you devoted less energy to perfecting your talents

¹⁴ In the *Eudemian Ethics* II.1.1219b8-11, Aristotle attempts to bridge the conceptual gap between being a good X and being good for X by arguing that the function of a thing is its end.

and more to just hanging out or diversifying your interests.¹⁵

The argument of the thought experiment resembles an open-question type of challenge.¹⁶ Sumner considers for the sake of argument that self-development is the good for individuals, and then asks whether the individual who was very successful at self-development truly lived a life that was good for him. The individual's life can be assessed very positively from a perfectionist standpoint. But is it good for him? The question is intended to reveal a conceptual difference between perfection and prudence, so as to argue that Aristotelian perfection cannot be the same as what is good for an individual. This inquiry, however, contrasts a subjective view of prudential value with perfectionist value rather than an objective view of prudential value with perfectionist value. It is not surprising, given the subjective standpoint, that the rift revealed by this "open" question is a gaping one. For the perfectionist value at issue is objective and it has already been acknowledged that it is a hallmark of objective well-being that the agent whose well-being it is may lack a positive attitude toward it. Asked from the standpoint of subjective prudential good, the inquiry targets the issue of whether the life of self-development is good by the individual's own lights. Moreover, as David Sobel argues, this

¹⁵ Sumner 1996, p. 24.

¹⁶ Sobel 1997, p. 507.

open-question thought experiment would equally compromise subjective accounts of well-being. For, he states, "we could also sensibly wonder if our life would have gone better for us if we had spent less time pandering to our attitudes."¹⁷

Second, certain terminology employed to describe perfectionist value seems to emphasize the gap between it and prudential value. To describe the eudaimon man as a "good instance of its kind" in particular seems to exaggerate the distinction. The conceptual gap between the good human being and what is good for a human being seems lessened if we discuss well-being in the context of the kind of life being led by the agent in question. To say, for example that someone is leading a successful life, living well, faring well, or doing well all seem to capture (or at least to remain neutral between) both the prudential value and the perfectionist value of the life.

In the light of these suggestions, the substantive thesis that being a good human being is good for man does not seem as difficult to establish. The plausibility of the argument, however, will depend on the particular content that Aristotle supplies to the concept of well-being. While examining this content is beyond the purview of this chapter the above considerations should be adequate to prevent the success of arguments like Sumner's from ruling out Aristotle's account of

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 508.

well-being on the grounds that it is an account of perfectionist value rather than prudential value.

V. Concluding Remarks

To conclude, while significant difficulties in fully defending Aristotle's account of well-being remain, the spirit of the Aristotelian project concerning well-being is an appealing and plausible alternative to contemporary subjective theories of well-being. Grounding well-being in human nature rather than in subjective states rings true in ways that will be examined extensively in the coming chapters.

Nonetheless, while the objectivity and the spirit of Aristotle's account of well-being is appealing, by his own account subjective stances are relevant in some manner to human good. Aristotle clearly claims that enjoyment of the activities that constitute well-being is a natural concomitant to those activities. This gives the account a subjective flavor, as it were, but does not assign a genuine role in defining human good to the subjective. Aristotle also seems to flirt with an argument for a much stronger claim, that enjoyment of excellent activity is an essential part of its excellence. Aristotle does not adequately establish the strong thesis, however, and it seems to be plausible, as described, only for certain virtues, not across the board. And yet his position glimpses an

intuitively appealing idea that subjective stances have a fundamental role alongside the objective features of human beings in the make-up of human good.

Subsequent chapters explore critically subjective accounts of well-being. The aim is to determine just what role subjective stances play in well-being. In the end, taking the objective foundations of Aristotle's account and incorporating a subjective component that plays a genuine defining role should yield a hybrid account that has the advantages of each, without the primary weaknesses of either.

CHAPTER 3
SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

I. Introduction

According to subjective accounts of well-being, what is good for a person is dependent on his subjective stances. These accounts take it that it is at least a necessary condition of something being a part of an individual's well-being that he have some positive attitude or disposition toward the thing. This positive attitude can be a wanting, an enjoying, a desiring, an approving, and the like.¹⁸ There are many other possible specific formulations of subjective accounts as well. It would be very difficult to attempt to enumerate all actual or possible such formulations here. However, the subjective accounts of well-being in which we are interested all hold in common that there is some strong sense in which well-being is fundamentally *a matter* of an individual's subjective states, that subjective states in some way *create* the good for an individual.

This chapter will briefly survey some of the prominent formulations of subjectivism in the literature on well-being and some of the now standard critiques of these views. In addition,

¹⁸ Sumner 1996, pp. 38-9; Griffin 1986, p. 32.

it will examine in sketch three specific accounts of subjective well-being, those of L. W. Sumner, Peter Railton, and Connie Rosati. There are two broad categories of subjective account that have been prominent philosophically: hedonistic and desire-satisfaction accounts. The different versions of these accounts will be discussed in this chapter.¹⁹

II. Hedonism

The first version of subjectivism about well-being under consideration is hedonism. The thesis of hedonism is that well-being consists in pleasure and the absence of pain.²⁰ Whether or not something contributes to or detracts from one's well-being, then, is a function of the extent to which it produces a pleasurable experience in the individual whose well-being is at issue and avoids painful experience in this individual.

Critics argue that this simple version of hedonism about well-being is multiply problematic. First, in order for the thesis of hedonism to be correct, well-being would have to be one particular kind of mental state or distinct type of feeling. Yet, there seems to be no single mental state that we can

¹⁹ The following discussion is influenced a great deal by Sumner 1996, chs. 4 and 5; Griffin 1986, chs. 1 and 2; Carson 2000, chs. 1-3; and Sobel 2002.

²⁰ Bentham and Mill are, of course, the major proponents of hedonism in some form. The following criticisms apply to Bentham. Note that for the purposes of this discussion, hedonism as a theory of well-being is to be distinguished from ethical hedonism and psychological hedonism.

identify with pleasure, by virtue of which we fare better or worse. In support of this critique of hedonism, Griffin gives the example of Freud who, when terminally ill, abstained from taking medication that would have eased his pain because he did not want the distorted state of mind accompanied by such medication. Griffin challenges hedonism by asking rhetorically, "[C]an we find a single feeling or mental state present in both of Freud's options [to ease his physical pain at the expense of mental clarity or to retain his mental clarity at the expense of physical pain relief] in virtue of which he ranked them as he did?"²¹ And in the same vein, Sumner argues, "There is a recognizable feeling tone to sexual arousal which is quite different from the relief of finally completing a long-standing task or the tranquility of a walk in the woods. If these are your options for the next hour, you might have a decided preference for one over the others (on purely prudential grounds). But it would be difficult for you to locate any particular felt quality, common to all three experiences, which you are thereby aiming to maximize."²² And again, Sobel argues, "The pleasures of walking barefoot through the grass arm in arm with your love have so little phenomenologically in common with the pleasures of winning a tense tennis match or eating a good burger or working through a challenging philosophical problem

²¹ Griffin 1986, p. 8.

²² Sumner 1996, pp. 92-93.

that we do not understand the instruction to maximize the sensation that these different activities share."²³

A second standard objection to this simple form of hedonism is that having the requisite pleasant mental state is not sufficient for individual good. For consider the possibility that one might be plugged in to a Nozickian experience machine capable of at all times generating directly the pleasant experience required by the hedonistic account of well-being.²⁴ The argument has it that one who lives life attached to the experience machine may be worse off than an individual who lives a genuine life in the real world even with less pleasurable mental states. If well-being were constituted by pleasure, however, we could not make sense of this notion that one's life might be made better by a condition that decreased the experience of the pleasurable state. Thus, an ordinary but authentic life may be argued to be better than the state of constant pleasure generated in the brain by Nozick's experience machine, and, hence, well-being cannot be identified as pleasure and lack of pain. In support of this argument against hedonistic accounts of well-being, Sumner argues that hedonism implies that

²³ Sobel 2002, p. 241.

²⁴ For discussion of this objection, see Griffin 1986, p. 9, Sumner 1996, pp. 92-93, and Carson 2000, pp. 49-55, and Nozick 1974, pp. 42-45.

"we may therefore track how well our lives are going just by attending to how they seem from the inside, bracketing off all questions of their anchoring in the external world. The lesson of the experience machine is that any theory with this implication is too interior and solipsistic to provide a descriptively adequate account of the nature of welfare. Since welfare does not consist merely in states of the mind, it does not consist merely of pleasurable states of mind, regardless of how these are characterized."²⁵

Additionally, it may be argued that pleasure is not necessary for well-being. For consider Mill's claim that it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.²⁶ And one may undergo a painful experience or process that nonetheless promotes one's good. Consider the difficulty of exercise or the struggle to accomplish an athletic or physical feat, for example. Also consider the strain involved in the pursuit of a challenging, stressful, and time-consuming career that is nonetheless all-things-considered satisfying.

III. Desire-satisfaction

The rejection of hedonism on the grounds that well-being seems to consist, at least in part, of something other than a mental state of a particular kind, leads to consideration of

²⁵ Sumner 1996, p. 98, Griffin 1986, p. 32.

²⁶ Mill 1910, p. 10.

desire-satisfaction accounts of well-being. These accounts seek to locate well-being at least in part among the states of the world, rather than solely in mental states as in the thesis of hedonism.²⁷

The most basic desire-satisfaction account of well-being posits that individual well-being is the satisfaction of the actual desires of the individual whose well-being is at issue. According to the simplest formulation of this view, one's well-being is served when the conditions, occurrences, states of affairs, actions, and the like that one desires obtain or happen.

The thesis that well-being is the satisfaction of actual desires faces some standard and clear objections and counterexamples. Actual desires can be argued to be defective in various ways. First, the actual-desire-satisfaction model of well-being does not account for the possibility of mistake. That is, an individual may want, for example, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Unbeknownst to him, this individual has a severe allergy to peanuts. The satisfaction of this desire would make the individual very ill, not better off. Similarly, someone may desire success in a certain profession, but ultimately may find success in that career unfulfilling. This agent desired the end,

²⁷ If an individual only desired to experience pleasure and avoid pain, however, the satisfaction of his desire would occur just in case he had the relevant pleasurable feelings.

falsely believing that the satisfaction of that desire would make him better off.²⁸

Second, an individual's actual-desire set may be problematically impacted by addiction, depression, or low self-expectation born of a deprived social, economic, or educational background. The well-being of the alcoholic, for example, who wants a glass of wine is not served by the satisfaction of this desire. In like manner, the satisfaction of the career preferences of an individual raised in an economically depressed urban area may not constitute his well-being since his preferences are radically limited by what he conceives his options to be. His conception of the options is a function of a perspective that is fundamentally diminished by his social position and economic deprivation. Failure to appreciate the possibilities in such circumstances may prevent actual desires from tracking well-being. And the satisfaction of the meager desires of the depressive may not promote his well-being since these desires are formulated in the context of a psychological condition that limits his capacity to care about much at all, let alone things he otherwise would desire.

A third problem with the actual-desire satisfaction account of well-being is that it seems plausible to suppose that one might be made better off by surprises and the actual desire

²⁸ This example is given by Sumner 1996, p. 129.

model cannot accommodate this supposition.²⁹ Yet, if a person's well-being can be advanced by an occurrence that he did not actually desire or even anticipate, for example a promotion at work or a surprise visit from a long-time friend, then well-being cannot be identified with actual desire fulfillment.

A fourth standard counterexample to the thesis that well-being is constituted by actual-desire fulfillment is a scenario according to which an individual may have a chance meeting with a stranger, say, waiting for a flight in an airport. At the end of this meeting, the individual may genuinely desire success in life for the stranger. The two never meet or even think about each other again. The actual-desire account should hold that the stranger's success makes a difference to the well-wisher. Yet, the objection suggests that it is implausible that the well-wisher's own well-being could be impacted by the stranger's success or lack thereof in life, despite the fact that he did at one time have an actual desire that the stranger do well. For the fulfillment of this desire does not make contact with the agent's experience in any way. These examples, again, seem to identify a rift between well-being and actual-desire satisfaction.³⁰

²⁹ Sumner 1996, pp. 132-33.

³⁰ Objections 1, 2, and 4 concern a denial that desire satisfaction is sufficient for well-being. Objection 3 concerns a denial of the necessity of desire satisfaction. The basic argument, though, is that these counterexamples reveal a rift

Subjectivists seem to adopt two broad strategies for repairing the desire-based model. On the one hand, some subjectivists continue to take as a starting point the full set of actual desires, but then constrain the account so as to limit the set of desires that count toward well-being to those that are not defective in the ways discussed above. The second broad strategy adopted by subjectivists is to do away entirely with the actual-desire set as a starting point, but to adopt a new principle, procedure, or vantage point grounded in subjectivity that yields a new set of conditions that track well-being.

IV. Constrained-Desire Satisfaction

Examples of the first broad strategy include Richard Brandt's theory that well-being is constituted by an individual's set of actual desires that survive a process of cognitive psychotherapy.³¹ Rational and informed desire models are also instances of this type of strategy. Any actual desires that are not rational or informed are excluded from the desire set the satisfaction of which constitutes well-being.³² The rationality and information constraints on the desire set can be spelled out in various ways. These accounts may take the

between desire satisfaction and well-being, whatever form the rift may take.

³¹ Brandt 1979, p. 113; Velleman 1988, pp. 353-71. Brandt's theory avoids objections 1 and 2 above, that actual desires can be defective, but not criticisms 3 and 4.

³² Sumner 1996, pp. 130-31

fulfillment of only those desires that are informed by all material data to be constitutive of well-being. Or, they may require that agents have a full appreciation of the object of desire in order to remain in the desire set relevant to individual good.³³ The precise nature of the information and rationality conditions is open to many other interpretations, but is, at base, aimed at ruling out the sorts of counterexample described above.

An additional constraint that some subjectivist theorists have defended (usually in conjunction with another constraint, e.g., an information constraint) is referred to as the "experience requirement." While not itself a type of subjectivist theory of well-being, some version of the experience requirement is purported to be necessary in order to limit the desires that can be plausibly taken to belong to the desire set that tracks well-being.³⁴ Thus, to adopt an experience requirement is to endorse a principle for restricting an individual's actual desire set to those desires relevant to well-being. The experience requirement restricts the relevant desires to those whose satisfaction makes contact in some manner with the agent's experience.

Different formulations of the requirement may necessitate the desire satisfaction to make contact with the agent's

³³ Falk 1986.

³⁴ Sumner 1996, 127; Griffin 1986, p. 13; Kagan 1992, pp. 169-89.

experience in different ways. For example, the principle may require that the agent be aware of the satisfaction of desires. This version of the requirement would make desires such as that for the success of the stranger whom the agent never meets again irrelevant to well-being.

Alternatively, the principle may require the agent to have *aimed* in some way at the satisfaction of the desire. Thus, the fulfillment of a desire for democracy in the Middle East would be irrelevant to the well-being of one who did not, in some sense, make that result a goal of action. The satisfaction of this sort of free-floating desire about how one would want the world to be, is taken by the experience constraint not to count toward well-being (although it may be argued to matter to the agent's well-being instrumentally).

Thirdly, the experience requirement may restrict the relevant desire set to those that are exclusively self-regarding for the individual in question. This last formulation may, for example, take the satisfaction of other-regarding desires to fail to enter the desiring agent's experience in the right way. This is a fairly strong constraint that limits the relevant desires to those that are actually about the individual's own experiences or good. The thought here is that well-being is an account of personal good and while the satisfaction of a desire

concerning others' lives may have value, it does not have prudential value, the kind of value that attaches to well-being.

The experience requirement and the other constraints discussed above are proposed to deal with the counterintuitive implications of the actual-desire account of well-being. In search of descriptive adequacy, subjectivists mine basic intuitions about our everyday notion of well-being and conclude that individual good is not constituted by the satisfaction of our full set of actual desires; some such actual desires will have to be banned from the set and other states of affairs that are not the objects of actual desires (e.g., surprises) should be included.

Subjectivists' dissatisfaction with the accounts that result from any of the above constraints on actual desires leads to their adoption of more-radical modifications of the actual-desire model. These modifications can be categorized under the second broad strategy noted above. Before considering two instances of the second broad approach, an additional approach must be noted and discussed. An alternative response to the difficulties with actual-desire and constrained-desire accounts is to revert to a modified brand of hedonism. This is the route taken by L.W. Sumner.

V. Constrained Hedonism

In response to difficulties with desire-based accounts of well-being plus an abiding attraction to the basic subjectivist project, Sumner takes hedonism to be the basis of his account of well-being. According to Sumner, classical hedonism consists in three theses (i) well-being is constituted by happiness, (ii) happiness is pleasure (and the absence of pain), and (iii) pleasure and pain are mental states or sensations. As is, this account of hedonism is subject to the objections launched above. Sumner argues that a promising starting point for a new theory of well-being is to retain the thought that well-being is constituted by happiness, without reducing happiness to the sensation of pleasure (and the absence of pain).³⁵ Happiness rather consists in life satisfaction and has an affective component and a cognitive one. The affective component of happiness is an experience of a sense of well-being, a settled feeling of being satisfied by one's life. The cognitive component involves judging one's life to be going well according to one's standards.³⁶

Given the nature of life satisfaction, according to Sumner, an individual is in the best position to evaluate his own happiness. But his self-evaluations can be defective by either failing to be autonomous or failing to be informed. If either of

³⁵ Sumner 1996, p. 139.

³⁶ Sumner 1996, p. 172.

these defects obtains, Sumner argues, the individual's happiness will not be authentic, i.e., will not answer to the subject's own point of view.³⁷ Therefore, Sumner defines well-being as authentic happiness.

Authenticity is comprised of an information constraint and an autonomy constraint. Whether an individual's happiness is threatened by inauthenticity and fails to answer to his own point of view can best, perhaps, be tested counterfactually.³⁸ Suppose, for example, that an individual's happiness is based on his belief that he is in a genuine committed and loving relationship with his wife, but in fact his wife married him only because of his wealth and social status. If this man were not mistaken about his wife's love and motives for marrying him, but rather appreciated the truth about the character of his relationship, he would not be happy. If his happiness is dependent on the false belief, according to Sumner's view, it is inauthentic. Similarly, if an individual's happiness is based on low expectations for himself that result from growing up in a profoundly abusive family setting, then his happiness is not autonomous. His social conditioning, in this case, has unduly influenced his evaluation of his life.

³⁷ Sumner 1996, p. 172.

³⁸ Sumner 1996, pp. 160-61. "The place to start is with a (slightly) different question: when is more information relevant? The obvious answer, on a subjective account, is: whenever it would make a difference to a subject's affective response to her life, given her priorities."

Although it is a departure from the traditional subjective accounts of hedonism and desire satisfaction, it is difficult to see how Sumner's view is not subject to the same difficulties faced by the desire-satisfaction models discussed above. For since the authenticity constraint on happiness amounts to an autonomy constraint coupled with an information constraint, in order to count as happiness (and hence, well-being) the individual's experience of life satisfaction will have to be based on idealized conditions of some sort. If, as Sumner states, the authenticity of an individual's happiness precludes lack of information and just how much and what sort of information the individual needs in order for his happiness to be authentic depends on a counterfactual test of his happiness, then the information constraint will be problematically expansive.

Suppose, for instance, that if an individual were provided with access to information that if he had chosen a career in genetic research, he would have contributed to finding a cure for cancer, consequently saving countless human lives, this individual would be unhappy with his current career of teaching philosophy of biology. Call this the problem of the road not taken. For even though this individual is by his own account perfectly happy currently teaching philosophy, contributing to a cure for cancer better answers to his values and concerns. The

counterfactual test of authenticity entails that if knowing that he would have contributed to a cure for cancer in one life he cannot be satisfied with his current life, then his current happiness is not authentic and, therefore, he is not faring well. On Sumner's account of authenticity, all sorts of information about, for example what it would be like to live different lives or have different experiences or pursue different courses of action, might impact an individual's assessment of his life and happiness. It, therefore, seems that the authenticity condition on happiness would be very difficult to meet and that well-being would consequently require a radically idealized information constraint.

Of course, the problem might be the counterfactual test rather than the information constraint itself. But without the counterfactual test, it would be very difficult to specify in a principled manner just how much information authenticity requires.

Even setting aside the difficulties of specifying the nature of the information constraint, in the context of the subjectivist project, there may be a tension between the information constraint and the autonomy constraint. For when the information required for authenticity is idealized so as to avoid the problem of factual and other mistakes, the theory can serve to distance an individual's own good from his subjective

stances. This distancing may be taken by the subjectivist about well-being to compromise autonomy and therefore, authenticity. The autonomy constraint takes it that an individual's assessment of his life satisfaction reflects concerns, attitudes, and the like that are genuinely his own, i.e., are not problematically influenced by processes of social conditioning, depression, addiction, and the like. If none of these has unduly influenced the individual's concerns, values, attitudes, etc., then his assessment of life satisfaction based on his actual values is autonomous. In the case of the road not taken, for example, a tension between the information and autonomy constraints may arise in the following way. The individual issues a positive, autonomous assessment of his happiness in his current life according to his actual concerns and values, but the information constraint takes his happiness to be inauthentic because he would judge his life differently if he had information that he, in fact, can never access. Thus, by his autonomous account his life is a happy one, but the information constraint renders it inauthentically happy. Sumner's view must somehow reconcile the autonomy and information constraints to disallow the possibility that information to which an individual has only counterfactual access and that cannot make any actual difference to his choices, values, desires, and self-assessments can override his

autonomous evaluation of his happiness and well-being. The subjectivist cannot countenance this result.

VI. Idealized-Desire Satisfaction

The second broad strategy for addressing the counterexamples to the actual desire account of well-being, recall, is to build a model from the ground up, not taking the actual-desire set as a starting point but seeking from scratch the subjective stances relevant to well-being. One example of this strategy is Peter Railton's "ideal advisor" account of well-being.³⁹ Railton argues,

Give to an actual individual *A* unqualified cognitive and imaginative powers and full factual and nomological information about his physical and psychological constitution, capacities, circumstances, history, and so on. *A* will have become *A+*, who has complete and vivid knowledge of himself and his environment, and whose instrumental rationality is in no way defective. We now ask *A+* to tell us not what he currently wants, but what he would want his non-idealized self *A* to want – or, more generally, to seek – were he to find himself in the actual condition and circumstances of *A*.⁴⁰

The satisfaction of what *A+*, the ideal advisor, wants the non-idealized version of himself, *A*, to want, then, constitutes well-being. *A+*'s unqualified cognitive and imaginative powers will enable him to appreciate what the experience of each possible life for *A* would be like and, then, to base what he

³⁹ Railton 1997, pp. 137–63.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

wants *A* to want on this information. *A+* will have the same vantage point on choosing the different possible lives for *A* as he would have on choosing one from one hundred different flavors of ice cream after having tasted each one.⁴¹ More concretely, for instance, where *A* might be confronted with a choice to pursue a professional baseball career or a career in academic philosophy, *A+* will have access to unlimited information about what it would be like to live each life. Therefore, *A+*'s second-order wants for *A* will not be influenced by the sorts of uncertainties – not only factual but also experiential (i.e., what would be the experiential impact of the satisfaction of any particular want) – that ordinarily plague our decisionmaking. So, the counterexamples to the actual-desire account of well-being based on mistake that were discussed above would not undercut Railton's subjective account of individual good because the idealization process would eliminate the possibility of such mistakes. The idealization process would also eliminate problems with actual desires based on social conditioning and the like as well as desires whose satisfaction never enters the individual's experience because actual desires play no role in the determination of well-being. Surprises do not pose a problem for this subjective view either because well-being is not a function

⁴¹ Rosati uses this example in a different context. Rosati 1995b, p. 315

of anything an individual is necessarily aware of or actually desires in advance.

Perhaps the major problem with Railton's view is that it gives no practical guidance for the pursuit of well-being. Sobel argues that a negative evaluation of views such as Railton's on the grounds that they give no practical guidance for the pursuit of well-being fails to take account of the goal and nature of such views. These subjective views, according to Sobel, are actually offering truth-making accounts of well-being, not decision procedures for bringing about one's well-being. The complaint that such views give no practical guidance for action fails to make contact with these accounts such as they are, argues Sobel.⁴²

If Sobel is correct, Railton's view means to set out truth conditions for well-being rather than a decision procedure for action. Nonetheless, even granting the distinction between truth-making accounts and decision procedures for well-being, the greater part of the purpose of an account of well-being in human lives is the role such an account could play in informing our choices about what we should do. Thus, a plausible theory of well-being should, it seems, include some clue about what decision procedure might pair with the truth-making account it offers. At the very least, the truth-making account of well-

⁴² Sobel 2001, 462-63.

being should not appear to be incompatible with the sorts of decision procedure we might imagine. Railton's account of well-being, on the contrary, is so idealized that it is difficult to apprehend what decision procedure might successfully be coupled with it and, therefore, it is difficult to conceive how well-being so understood can ever be normative, or action-guiding, for us.

Connie Rosati argues against Railton's view suggesting that it renders well-being overly alien to the agent whose well-being it supposedly is. She argues that as persons, we occupy a particular point of view. In order to avoid the problem of mistake, Railton's ideal advisor model of well-being attempts to transcend that point of view, privileging the ideal advisor, whose second-order subjective states locate well-being, with information and experiences that the actual agent cannot even approximate. Yet one of the hallmarks of subjective well-being is that it is perspectival and embraces the particular point of view of the agent. Railton's process of idealization renders well-being too far removed in various ways from the actual individual whose well-being is in question.

Thus, argues Rosati, the process of idealization so thoroughly alienates the individual from his idealized good that one cannot even consider the determinations about well-being that result from such a process to be determinations about *his*

well-being. The process of idealization alters the identity, so to speak, of the subject of the process. And so the resulting account of well-being does not truly belong to the actual individual whose good is at issue. Along the same lines as the above argument, insofar as an individual's well-being will be so alien to his knowledge, his experiences, and even his desires, it is difficult to see how the individual can be motivated to act according to the prescriptions the idealization procedure yields. A guaranteed motivation to act to promote well-being is another of the hallmarks of subjectivism⁴³ and if Railton avoids the problems of the actual-desire account at the expense of subjective well-being's characteristic motivational pull, the victory will be pyrrhic indeed from the standpoint of the subjectivist. Rosati argues that the subjectivist should seek an account of well-being that resides in territory somewhere between the actual-desire model and Railton's ideal advisor model.

Rosati's own candidate for subjective well-being takes the idealization process that leads to the desires relevant to well-being itself also to be a function of the agent's subjective stances. The relevant desires are neither actual desires nor idealized desires, but desires that an agent would have under "ordinary optimal conditions."

⁴³ This hallmark of subjectivism will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

[Ordinary optimal conditions] would include that a person not be sleeping, drugged, or hypnotized, that she be thinking calmly and rationally, and that she not be overlooking any readily available information . . . By "ordinary optimal conditions" I mean whatever normally attainable conditions are optimal for reflecting on questions about what to care about self-interestedly. . . Ordinary optimal conditions are simply those that we already accept as the minimal conditions that must be met for a person to think sensibly about her good at all. (p. 305).

Rosati describes her model as a "two-tier" approach. She intends to be offering necessary conditions for individual good or well-being. What is relevant to the good for an individual, for Rosati, is a fit or match between (i) what an individual would want for his actual self under counterfactual conditions that he endorses under ordinary optimal conditions and (ii) what the individual actually wants under ordinary optimal conditions. She writes,

This link captures the thought that while a person's good might include things that she cannot in her present state care about, it must include only what she is capable of caring about. It avoids the alienation of treating as good for a person things that cannot matter to her, while not connecting a person's good too closely to her actual concerns.

Rosati's account is two-tiered because the desires the individual would have under ordinary optimal conditions serve as inputs for an idealization procedure that itself is endorsed under ordinary optimal conditions. So both the relevant desires and the idealization procedure itself have connections to subjective stances the individual is capable of having under the

right (ordinary optimal) conditions.⁴⁴ Again, Rosati does not take this to be the whole story about subjective well-being. That is, she does not attempt to offer a comprehensive account of well-being,⁴⁵ but rather focuses on reforming the idealization process that yields the desires relevant to well-being, reconnecting individual good with the subjective stances that individuals are at least capable of having under the right conditions. The truth about well-being, for her, is to be found in between the accounts offered by the actual-desire theory and Railton's ideal advisor account.⁴⁶

VII. Conclusion

This chapter has briefly surveyed the standard subjectivist theories and some of their problems. The major challenge for the subjectivist has proven to be to appropriately adjust the subjectivist model to deal with commonsense counterexamples to subjective well-being while remaining true to the perspectival spirit of subjectivism. The next chapter, rather than

⁴⁴ In his article "Full-Information Accounts of Well-Being," Sobel (1994) distinguishes between "who" internalism and "how" internalism. "Who" internalism specifies that the relevant idealization be of the agent whose good is in question, while "how" internalism involves constraints on the idealization procedure itself. Rosati's approach can perhaps, be understood as proposing a conjunction of "who" and "how" internalism.

⁴⁵ In fact, she discusses internalism, not well-being explicitly. On the relationship between internalism and subjective well-being, see chapter 4.

presenting arguments against specific refinements to subjectivist accounts, argues that subjectivism about well-being as a category of account is flawed.

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CHAPTER 4

ARE SUBJECTIVE ACCOUNTS OF WELL-BEING ILL-MOTIVATED?

I. Introduction

The preceding chapter surveyed some standard challenges to various proposed subjective accounts of well-being. This chapter argues that, in addition to the problems faced by particular versions of subjectivism, subjectivism as such about well-being is ill-motivated. Some theorists of well-being seem, in the first instance, to develop their subjective accounts on the basis of their perception that no objective account of well-being has been defended satisfactorily. They argue as if the inadequacies of objectivism provide sufficient evidence of the truth of some version of subjectivism, taking subjectivism to be a default position, as it were.⁴⁷ This tack is problematic inasmuch as the inadequacy of objective accounts of well-being would not entail the truth of subjectivism absent a positive argument in its favor.⁴⁸ Subjectivism must stand on its own merits rather than on any shortcomings of objectivism; subjectivism about well-being, then, must itself be satisfactorily motivated and defended.

⁴⁷ E.g., Sumner 1996.

⁴⁸ One might adopt one of a variety of mixed subjective/objective accounts or subscribe to eliminativism concerning well-being.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to consider what intuitions and arguments motivate subjectivism about well-being and to argue that these intuitions and arguments, in the end, fail to support subjective accounts.

Two primary considerations underlie the appeal of subjective accounts of well-being for those who endorse them. First, some theorists endorse subjective accounts of well-being because they regard objective accounts as problematically illiberal, and think subjective well-being better captures our intuitions concerning autonomy. The second primary argument for subjective well-being is the underlying thesis of internalism. Roughly, the thesis of internalism states that there is a necessary connection between the good for a person and what he is moved to do. The following sections provide arguments against each of these considerations in turn.

II. Subjective Well-Being and Autonomy

One might adopt a subjective account of well-being because one believes that objective accounts of what is good for agents are problematically illiberal. Sumner, for instance, argues:

Unlike objective theories, on which the sources of our well-being are dictated by unalterable aspects of our nature, the desire theory offers us a more flattering picture of ourselves as shapers of our own destinies,

determiners of our own good. In this way it internalizes within a conception of welfare the paradigmatically liberal virtues of self-direction and self-determination.⁴⁹

Objective values are quite literally alien to us because they emanate from a standpoint which is external to us as individuals, and because their status as values requires no affirmation or endorsement of them on our part. The problem for perfectionism can therefore be generalized: promoting any objective value as a foundational good for ethics will infringe autonomy or individuality.⁵⁰

The deep problem for any objective theory is that personal concerns play no role in determining why something (anything) counts as a good for an individual in the first place, or why one thing counts as a greater good than another. Any such theory will therefore be committed in principle to overriding the autonomous choices of individuals concerning their own lives, imposing on them what they themselves value less.⁵¹

According to such a view, if what constitutes an individual's good is independent of the agent's own subjective interest in it, then he will lack self-determination regarding what is good for him. This view takes agents to be in a privileged position relative to the determination of their own well-being. It therefore takes non-subjective accounts – which hold that the good for an agent need not be defined (solely) by him, but (also) by facts independent of his determinations, preferences,

⁴⁹ Sumner 1996, p. 123.

⁵⁰ Sumner 1996, p. 214.

⁵¹ Sumner 1996, p. 215.

desires, and concerns – to undercut individual autonomy. The argument can be distilled roughly as follows.

1. Objective well-being derives from facts external to an individual's point of view.
2. Autonomy is self-determination based on an internal point of view, values, concerns, priorities, and the like.
3. If well-being derives from facts external to an individual's point of view, well-being undermines autonomy.
4. Therefore, objective well-being undermines autonomy.

In order to understand this argument for rejecting non-subjective accounts and implicitly for subscribing to a subjectivism about well-being, it is important to understand in just what way agents are claimed to be in a privileged position in relation to their own good, in what autonomous action consists, and precisely how objective good would infringe the proper domain of agent autonomy and privilege.

Autonomy is defined, most basically, as self-rule or self-government. While autonomy is generally acknowledged to be at least *prima facie* valuable, there are different interpretations of just what self-government is. Gerald Dworkin proposed six different potential accounts of self-rule:

1. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he is the author of his moral principles, their originator.

2. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he chooses his moral principles.
3. A person is morally autonomous if and only if the ultimate authority or source of his moral principles is his will.
4. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he decides which moral principles to accept as binding upon him.
5. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he bears the responsibility for the moral theory he accepts and the principles he applies.
6. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he refuses to accept others as moral authorities, that is, he does not accept without independent consideration the judgment of others as to what is morally correct.⁵²

While this excerpt about autonomy is cashed out in terms of autonomous individuals' privilege in the domain of morality, the discussion is equally relevant to well-being. Consider a counterpart to the above list in terms of personal autonomy and well-being:

1. A person is autonomous if and only if he is the author of his well-being, its originator.
2. A person is autonomous if and only if he chooses the constituents of well-being (i.e., chooses what they are).
3. A person is autonomous if and only if the ultimate authority or source of the constituents of his well-being is his will.
4. A person is autonomous if and only if he decides which constituents of his well-being to accept as good for him.
5. A person is autonomous if and only if he bears the responsibility for the theory of well-being he accepts and the values he applies.
6. A person is autonomous if and only if he refuses to accept others as authorities concerning his well-

⁵² Holm 1998, p. 267. Quote excerpted from Dworkin 1978.

being, that is, he does not accept without independent consideration the judgment of others as to what is good for him.

The thesis under consideration in this section is that subjectivism about well-being is supported by broad considerations of autonomy. Objective conceptions of well-being take the human good to be independent of or external to subjects' pro-attitudes, choices, desires, and the like. For objectivists, individuals are not the authors of their own good in the sense that these subjective stances stipulate what their good is.

For subjectivists about well-being, however, an agent's well-being is dependent upon his own subjective stances, of which he is the author. Insofar as his well-being is a function of subjective stances he authored, he is, in some sense, the author of his well-being and chooses its constituents. Sumner writes of autonomy and subjective well-being: ". . . a person's values count as her own if she has identified with them, or acknowledged them as her own, or endorsed them as her standards for the conduct and assessment of her life."⁵³ and "On a subjective theory, individuals are the ultimate authorities concerning their own welfare. Their self-assessments are therefore determinative of their well-

⁵³ Sumner 1996, p. 168.

being unless they can be shown to be inauthentic, i.e., not truly theirs."⁵⁴

Objectivism cannot avail itself of these types of claim about individual autonomy and well-being. Well-being, according to the brand of objective view under consideration here, is a function of facts about a person and the world (and the relationship between the two) regarding which the individual has no choice or authorship. There is a sense in which the individual's good is "dictated to" or "foisted upon" him, independent of his unconstrained leanings.

But his good is dictated to or foisted upon him in much the same manner as is the physical law of gravity, the fact that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and the fact that smoking can cause lung cancer are dictated to or foisted upon him. The distillation of the argument that objective well-being undermines autonomy implies also that these basic facts undermine autonomy. Gravity, for instance, like objective well-being, is a fact external to and independent of an individual's point of view, values, concerns, priorities, and the like. If objective well-being is argued to undermine well-being for this reason, then gravity and countless other facts about the world also must be thought, unsustainably, to undermine it.

⁵⁴ Sumner 1996, p. 171.

The fact that subjectivism about well-being seems to comport better than objectivism with the value of autonomy is illusory. As discussion in chapter 3 reveals, when the subjective account of well-being is modified from its basic form and idealized in order to accommodate counterexamples, it bears little resemblance to the theory according to which individuals author their own good by desiring, choosing, caring, and the like. The subjective stances that become relevant when actual subjective stances are modified are those the individual would have or could have under some fail-safe conditions from some idealized standpoint. The only reason these modified subjective stances appear more compatible in the way argued by subjectivists is that the concept of autonomy is idealized in much the same way as and to correct for all the same defects in subjective stances.

Objective well-being is compatible with numbers 5 and 6 in the Dworkin excerpt above. Even though objective well-being takes individual good to be fact-based and potentially independent of the subjective stances of caring, enjoying, desiring, and so on, individuals are still responsible for making determinations about what their well-being is and how best to achieve it. Objective well-being does not dictate to or foist its constituents upon the individual in the way an excessively authoritarian parent dictates and foists demands

for compliance on a child, Sumner's language notwithstanding. It is fact-based, but is not a persona attempting to claim authority in the determination of others' good. Even though, for example, the quality of persistence in the face of adversity may be objectively good for an individual, it is the responsibility of the individual to make that determination and to decide what the quality requires and how best to enact it. This is part and parcel of autonomous action.

The fact that individuals are not able to stipulate their good simply by desiring and choosing should not be viewed as a setback to self-government. For subjectivism and objectivism alike embrace autonomy to the extent that they recognize the individual as sovereign to determine what will promote his well-being and to act accordingly. Insofar as subjectivism and objectivism both are accounts according to which individuals are in a privileged position to determine what constitutes their good (where "determine" does not mean "stipulate" that something constitutes their good – i.e., they could be mistaken, even when the determination is made in the right way, under all the right conditions), considerations of autonomy do not uniquely motivate subjectivism.

III. Internalism and the Question "Why Should I Do What is Good for Me?"

Subjective accounts of well-being seem to be motivated, perhaps most importantly, by the thesis of internalism and its attendant conception of normativity. In chapter 2, it was noted that a prominent subjectivist critique of Aristotle's objectivism is that objectivism allows for the possibility that an agent's well-being is completely alien to him – that it is not "his own" in the way we intuitively think an agent's good should be suited or tailored to him.⁵⁵ It was noted in that context that this critique fails because it employs a very narrow conception of what it is to "be suited to" or "belong to" an agent; the critique relies on the notion that an agent's supposed objective good is alien to him if he fails to take an interest in it, care about it, prefer it, desire it, or otherwise take a positive stance toward it. And, it is characteristic of objective well-being that what is good for an agent may be "alien" in just this way.⁵⁶ I suggested that

⁵⁵ For the view that an agent's well-being should be something tailored to him, see Rosati 1995a. Incidentally, Aristotle does seem to subscribe to a version of internalism. In the context of a discussion of weakness of will, he seems to agree with Socrates that people do not act contrary to what they know to be for the best. (*EN* VII.2 1145b20–33)

⁵⁶ For example, objectivism might hold that meaningful social relationships and interaction are a component of a hermit's good even if by his own report he desires and is perfectly happy

what is good for someone need not enter into his sphere of concern in order to avoid being alien to him, but could rather be connected to him by virtue of being relative, for instance, to his needs and nature, i.e., features of him other than his desires, preferences, and the like.⁵⁷ In this sense, objective well-being can still be good *for* the agent, while not being something toward which he takes a positive subjective stance. It is important to notice that to insist in this way that an agent's well-being will only qualify as his own if it is (or its constituents are) something favored by his subjective stances is to *assume* subjectivism, not to establish or

living a reclusive existence. The subjectivist may yet argue that living a reclusive life is not genuinely good for the hermit but that his desire to live this sort of life is corrupt in some way, e.g., by lack of information, traumatic social interactions earlier in life, depression, general fear of social interaction, and the like. The subjectivist cannot (and, I presume, would not want to) fix this result. The objectivist may even suggest that the hermit will likely report being better off once he is living a more social life, but this is not central for the objectivist to hold the social life to be a component of the hermit's good.

⁵⁷ For instance, one's good, perhaps, need not be "tailored to him" subjectively, but rather in the way a suit might be tailored to him, taking into account his measurements, the purpose of the suit, and, perhaps, social standards of good fit. Someone might express preferences for, suppose, a slightly longer sleeve length or looser fit around the chest than his strict measurements would dictate and we might still consider the suit to be tailored to him. However, if he, suppose, preferred the waist of his suit pant to fall mid-hip, revealing undergarments, and his pant legs to drag four or five inches on the floor, his suit may well satisfy his preferences or represent an expression of his personal style, but, arguably, just does not fit. Thus, the suit that is tailored to him may simultaneously be alien to his desires or preferences regarding the fit of the suit.

motivate subjectivism. As it stands, this subjectivist critique seems to amount to an objection to objective accounts of well-being on the grounds that they take well-being to be other than subjective.

However, the intuition underlying the subjectivist's critique may go deeper than this. The general, more substantial, thought seems to be that it is counterintuitive to suppose that someone might genuinely inquire: "Why should I do what is good for me?"⁵⁸ The notion that this might be a genuine, substantive normative question, seems to strike many theorists of subjective well-being as so absurd that the theories they defend are designed to guarantee the meaninglessness of the question. Such subjectivists view as bankrupt any account of well-being that allows for the possibility that our good is alien enough to us that we might sensibly ask why we should pursue it.

This more substantial way of understanding the intuition that leads to subjectivism provides support for the subjectivist's insistence, contra the objectivist, that the

⁵⁸ The question "Why should I do what is good for me?" is analogous in this context to the normative question "Why be moral?" For both normative questions pose a challenge to explain an agent's motivation for acting in the relevant way. The former question seeks a source for an agent's motivation to act morally and the latter question seeks a source for the agent's motivation to act for his own good. See David Schmitz "Self-Interest: What's in It for Me?" (Schmitz 1997) for brief argument that the question "Why do what is good for me?" is a genuine one.

relevant sense in which our well-being is our own is its connection to our desires and other pro-attitudes, rather than to our objective interests. If the subjectivist seeks to guarantee the meaninglessness of the question "Why should I do what is good for me?" then he will be motivated to posit a necessary connection between well-being and positive subjective stances; he will be motivated to posit this connection because such positive subjective stances are linked to what moves agents to act, implying that it would be unintelligible to inquire why the agent should do what is good for him. The unintelligible (or at least empty) question might be translated "What motivation have I to do what I want to do?" And the answer is obvious.⁵⁹ What is good for us will have built-in motivational pull because it is a function of our desires and concerns and these have built-in motivational pull. Of course, on such a view, the agent should do what is good for him, then, simply because it is good for him, and it is good for him by virtue of a positive attitude he already has toward it.⁶⁰ If well-being is subjective, then the agent

⁵⁹ The answer is obvious, though only *prima facie*. An agent may yet have competing wants, motivations for which he cannot sustain in the light of mutual exclusivity. His wants, however, will yield defeasible motivation.

⁶⁰ This suggests that the presence of these pro-attitudes is a sufficient condition for goodness. Almost no subjectivist, however, will hold this view. As was discussed in chapter 4, subjectivists about well-being will require that these pro-attitudes be corrected, for example by stipulating that they

need have no additional reason to do what is good for him than that it is good for him, owing to the necessary connections between subjective well-being and positive subjective stances and the connections between positive subjective stances and motivation. The thesis that captures this connection between well-being and motivation is the principle of internalism.

The general internalism/externalism debate ranges roughly over two primary issues: the relationship between morality and reasons for action and the relationship between reasons for action and motivation. The relevant dispute for the present purposes is between reasons/motives internalism and externalism.

The reasons/motives internalist holds that one has reason to act in some particular way only if he is motivated so to act. Contrapositively, then, if an individual lacks the motivation to engage in a behavior, he lacks a reason to

cannot be founded on false information, brainwashing, addiction, and the like. Sumner 1996, for example, requires that these pro-attitudes be "authentic," where authenticity has an information component and an autonomy component. Other subjectivists hold that the pro-attitude tracks goodness if the agent would have it (or could have it) under specified counterfactual conditions. Nonetheless, since I am attempting to consider the motivation for subjectivism as such, I focus on this basic principle, that well-being is fundamentally about the satisfaction or realization of agents' subjective stances, ignoring, for the moment, clear counterexamples. It is this primitive principle, after all, that unites subjectivists, notwithstanding the idiosyncrasies of their attempts to deal with counterexample. Subjectivism takes well-being to be about, at base, individuals' subjective states.

engage in said behavior. According to Stephen Darwall, reasons/motives internalism is the following thesis: "[A] necessary condition of p's being a reason for S to do A is that S can have, and under suitable conditions would have, some motivation to do A by virtue of a suitable awareness of p." The reasons/motives externalist denies any such necessary connection between reasons for action and motivation to act.⁶¹

There are multiple kinds of reasons for action that might be relevant to the general dispute over internalism. There are moral reasons, legal reasons, epistemic reasons, reasons of etiquette, grammatical reasons, and prudential reasons, for instance. Arguably, however, nothing about the formal nature of reasons entails that the agents to whom they apply are necessarily motivated to act as the reasons dictate. For example, it seems that we have grammatical reason not to end sentences with prepositions and reasons of etiquette to refrain from resting our elbows on the dinner table. Nonetheless, it seems plausible to argue that these reasons fail to provide us with any motivation whatsoever to act in accordance with the reasons stated. The case against internalism is more difficult to argue when the relevant reasons are moral, prudential, or even legal. The reasons/motives internalist may even dispute the cases of

⁶¹ Darwall 1997b, pp. 305-312. This distinction was originated by Bernard Williams in Williams 1981.

grammatical reasons and reasons of etiquette, arguing that the lack of agent motivation is actually evidence that these are not genuine reasons at all. It is at this stage, however, that internalists and externalists about reasons for action seem to be left little recourse against each other save mutual question begging. If the examples of grammatical reasons and reasons of etiquette have some intuitive force, however, the subjectivist about well-being is most charitably understood as subscribing to an internalist thesis about specifically prudential reasons, rather than a general internalist thesis about reasons as such. The internalism to which he may be taken to subscribe, thus, is a substantive thesis about the relationship between the reasons connected to what is good for agents and such agents being moved to act.

The endorsement of reasons/motives internalism about prudential reasons seems to underlie well-being theorists' attraction to subjective accounts. They seem to take as a requirement on a satisfactory account of well-being that agents are necessarily moved to do that which they have (or judge themselves to have) prudential⁶² reason to do. Subjective accounts of well-being are conveniently well-suited to meet this internalist requirement. For if it is (at least) a necessary condition of something's contributing to an agent's

well-being that he take an interest in it, in the form of desiring it, approving of it, valuing it, etc., then, given the close relationship between taking an interest in something and being moved to do it, an agent will be guaranteed to be moved (at least *prima facie*) to do those things he has prudential reasons to do.

What, however, motivates internalism about well-being? That is, what arguments or intuitions lead theorists of well-being to insist that the normative question "Why should I do what is good for me?" is unintelligible and that our well-being necessarily motivates us?

In her paper "Internalism and the Good for a Person," Connie Rosati discusses an argument in support of internalism about the good for a person. Rosati takes the argument, originated by David Velleman⁶³, to be the most compelling one offered in the body of literature on well-being in support of internalism. Velleman argues that the principle that "ought" implies "can" implies a version of the thesis of internalism about well-being. Rosati modifies the thesis of internalism from the simple understanding of it offered heretofore in this chapter. Rather than considering the basic principle that it is a necessary condition on our having prudential reason to do

⁶³ Velleman 1998. I am treating the discussions of Rosati and Velleman jointly, as one position except where departures are noted. The basic argument is Velleman's and is credited by Rosati as such.

something that we are motivated so to act, she (and Velleman) take the necessary condition to be that we are *capable* of being motivated so to act. Hence, if, for example, it is to count as part of an agent's well-being that he exercise moderately three days a week, then it must be the case that he is capable of being motivated to exercise moderately three days a week, whether or not he actually is so motivated.

Rosati justifies the shift from actual motivation to possible motivation on the grounds that a requirement that the agent actually be moved to pursue what is good for him represents too narrow a conception of well-being. She takes the original internalist condition to be too narrow because it allows our good to consist only in what we are actually motivated to do, while our actual motivations can be defective (by virtue of lack of information, for example) in various ways.⁶⁴ What we could be moved to do according to our constitutional capacities if only such defects were corrected, according to Rosati, should also have a place in our conception of well-being. So, for example, perhaps an individual could be motivated to quit smoking if he were able truly to appreciate the damage to his lungs the smoking causes. As things stand, while this individual is aware of the stated dangers of smoking, these health risks are only

⁶⁴ See my chapter 3 for discussion of subjectivist modifications to the basic internalist thesis.

theoretical to him. If he did fully appreciate the dangers, he could be motivated to quit. These versions of internalism involve weaker constraints than and, hence, are presumably easier to support than is the more basic internalist position formulated herein. Hence, if one or the other of these weaker constraints is not satisfied, it is reasonable to infer that the stronger constraint will fail as well.

Now Velleman's argument suggests that (1) if something promotes (or constitutes) our well-being, then we ought (prima facie) to care about (be motivated to do) it. By the principle that (2) "ought" implies "can," (3) if we ought to care about something, then it must be the case that we are capable of caring about it. And so, (4) if something promotes our well-being, then we must be capable of caring about (and, hence, being motivated to do) it.

The first premise of Velleman's argument seems quite sensible. It is intuitively plausible to think that our well-being as such is something that we ought to care about and ought to be motivated to pursue.⁶⁵ Further, the thought that we ought to care about the constituents and instruments of our well-being (at least as constituents and instruments of our good) is also plausible. The second premise, that "ought"

⁶⁵ I'll grant this thesis for these purposes, though, see Schmidtz 1997 p. 108. Also, this may not be true of particular instantiations of what is good for an agent.

implies "can," though controversial philosophically, is fairly well-established (at least with limits) and will here be granted. Velleman argues that this principle is true at least in the sense that "inability sometimes entails lack of obligation" and that, generally speaking, "obligatoriness attaches to things that are options" and "inability threatens something's status as an option."⁶⁶

The problem with the argument, however, is that it appears to equivocate over the word "ought." The meaning of "ought" in the principle that "ought" implies "can" seems different as it is applied to the first step than it is as it is applied to the third. Yet the first and third steps are purported to be linked in the argument by the principle that "ought" implies "can." Consideration of what is meant by the word "ought" both in the first step and in the principle that "ought" implies "can" helps to elucidate the problem.

The plausibility of the first step, that we ought to care about something if it promotes (or is part of) our well-being, rests on several possible interpretations of the meaning of "ought" in that context. The "ought" in that premise seems to be either explanatory or rational in meaning. The "ought" might convey the thought that if something promotes our well-being, we are justified in caring about or being motivated to

⁶⁶ Velleman 1998, p. 94.

do it, in that its contribution to our good explains our caring about or being motivated to pursue it. Alternatively, the word "ought" in that step may be taken to connote rationality; that is, it may convey the idea that if something contributes to our well-being then it is rational or makes sense for us to pursue it. This possible understanding of the meaning of "ought" might be formulated in terms of reasons for action as well. If something is part of our well-being, then we have a prudential reason to do it.

Additionally, the "ought" in the first step may play a different kind of justificatory role. The thesis that we ought to care about that which promotes our well-being might be translated into the premise that it is good, from a God's eye viewpoint, to care about that which promotes our well-being. Any of these alternatives seem to be possible ways of understanding the meaning of "ought" in the first step.

The meaning of "ought" in the second step of the argument, however, seems to be quite different from any of the alternative uses just considered. The principle that "ought" implies "can" that is utilized in the argument is ordinarily associated with morality and obligations or duties to others. Thus, if we ought to do something, in the sense of being obligated to do it, then it must be the case that we can do it, i.e., that it is an option for us. It does not make sense

to suggest that we are obligated or have a duty to do something of which we are incapable. In this context, we associate the principle that "ought" implies "can" with ascriptions of moral responsibility. If we are financially incapable of rendering aid to starving families, then it cannot be said of us that we ought to or are obligated to do so, and therefore, moral responsibility for the starving of such families cannot be attributed in any sense to us.⁶⁷ We cannot be found blameworthy morally for failing to do something of which we are incapable. The principle that "ought" implies "can" is, perhaps, unassailable so understood.

If we plug in the alternative understandings of "ought" that made premise (1) plausible, however, the plausibility of the general principle that "ought" implies "can" becomes suspect. If the claim underlying the general principle that "ought" implies "can" were that if it is good from a God's eye view to do something (i.e., it would be a good thing writ large) then it must be the case that we can do it, the general principle clearly would be subject to counterexample.

Presumably, it is good to bring about peace on earth; this implies nothing about our capacity to bring about peace on earth. Further, for instance, it might be a good thing for

⁶⁷ Actually, there may be some sense in which moral responsibility for the starving of such families could properly be attributed to us, but it would not be by virtue of our failure to render aid.

someone to refrain from injuring others, but impossible for her to do so given her intractable clumsiness.

If we understand in the general "ought" implies "can" principle the rational sense of "ought," the principle again seems subject to counterexample. For, to say that we have reason (or it makes sense) to stop at red traffic lights, for instance, does not depend upon our ability to do so; our brakes may not be in working order or the road may be too slick to stop. Hence, it seems that the possible meanings of the word "ought" employed in the first step cannot be the same as the meaning of "ought" in the general principle that "ought" implies "can." So, it is not the case that the principle that if we ought to do something, then we must be capable of doing it is plausible if we mean either if it is good to do something or if it makes sense to do something then we must be capable of doing it.

Similarly, if we plug into the first premise the meaning of "ought" ordinarily conveyed by the general principle that "ought" implies "can," the first premise seems false. It does not seem plausible to argue that if something promotes our well-being we are obligated or have a duty to care about (or be motivated to do) it, in the sense that we owe this concern to others and subject ourselves to moral blame for failure to do so.

Someone may argue that this sense of "ought" does make sense in the context of the first premise because we may have duties or obligations to ourselves. If something is good for us, the argument may go, we are ordinarily obligated to care about it in such a way that it would be appropriate for others to hold us responsible or take us to task morally for our lack of concern. Hence, quitting smoking may be good for a particular agent, while he remains unconcerned about doing so. As spectators to this indifference, we may view the agent with moral disapproval and hold him responsible for his bad behavior.

Adopting this line of argument is intuitively questionable, however. It may well be true that spectators to the individual's lack of concern would express or feel a sense of disapproval of the agent who disregards his own good. They may, and it would be appropriate to, come to believe that the agent *should* care about quitting smoking and that his failing to do so constitutes bad form in some respect. However, the possible respect, I think, in which we view his behavior as exhibiting bad form was admitted already as a possible understanding of "ought" in the first premise. We may criticize the individual for not caring about quitting smoking because his not caring about quitting does not make sense to us. It appears as though he has good reason to quit and good

reason to care about the well-being that provides that reason to quit smoking. If he fails to care about quitting, we do, then, perhaps criticize him as irrational. We would not, however, criticize his action as immoral on the grounds that he should and could care about quitting, but does not.

We would not criticize the agent's failure to care about quitting, in the example, as anything more than irrational or nonsensical, because, in the end, it is he alone who suffers from his lack of concern over his own good. We may think his lack of concern for his good, particularly regarding his health, is problematic in relation to others by virtue of his not caring enough about his own good to do what would promote his health when others must suffer in ill-health due to no choices of their own. Those who suffer from cancer due to exposure to chemicals previously unknown to cause the disease, for example, may criticize the agent who does not care about quitting smoking, because he could do something to decrease his chances of cancer (and other ill-effects of smoking) while they were not in a position to informedly make choices to protect their health. They may understand the agent to take for granted his own good.

In this case, however, the most the hypothetical agent's critics could say or would be likely to say (beyond that his lack of concern for himself is irrational, perhaps) is that

his actions are wasteful – wasteful of opportunities to promote his good that these individuals regrettably lacked. Thus, even these critics would be unlikely expressing the sort of moral disapproval of his lack of concern associated with obligation. It is not as if the agent's lack of concern for his own good has any effect whatsoever on the health of those who would criticize him.

It is precisely because agents' lack of concern, as such, for their own good does not affect others, in conjunction with the fact that we take things other than well-being to be values (most relevantly in this context, autonomy), that these agents are not morally obligated to be concerned about their good and things that promote it. Such agents are morally entitled to disregard their own good in a way we do not regard them to be entitled to disregard the well-being of pedestrians crossing a busy street in front of them. Hence, even if one were to posit the existence of a duty or obligation to oneself to care about one's well-being, the sort of obligation advocated would not be akin to the sorts of duties that motivate the principle that "ought" implies "can." Presumably, the subjectivist would not want to commit himself to a controversial theory about self-regarding duties, in any event. Therefore, even if the "ought" in the first step were taken to imply obligation, the equivocation noted above would

still taint the argument. For the sort of obligation that drives the principle that "ought" implies "can" would not be the same in kind as that which may be argued to make sense in the first premise.

It looks, then, as if the argument is equivocal over the meaning of "ought" in the first and second premises, thus breaking the link between steps (1) and (3). Perhaps the argument might be repaired by omitting the second step, the principle that "ought" implies "can." If the argument can stand without premise (2), then perhaps Velleman's argument can adequately support the thesis of internalism after all.

To determine whether step (2) can be safely omitted, it is necessary to consider whether the possible meanings of "ought" employed in the first step are plausibly used in the third. When plugged into the third step of the argument, that if we ought to care about something, then it must be the case that we are capable of caring about it, the proposed senses of "ought" from the first premise also seem to yield counterexamples. If the premise is translated to suggest that if we have reason to care about something, then it must be the case that we can care about it, the following example might be put forth to counter the premise. Allison has reason to care about propriety in social settings. However, because of certain facts about her psychology, e.g., she lacks an ability

to control her impulses, is excessively uninhibited, is extremely egocentric, and the like, she cannot care about social propriety. This seems, on its face, to be a plausible instance in which someone "ought," in the sense of "has reason to" care about something, but is incapable of so caring. If this is a plausible counterexample to the third step, utilizing the same meaning of "ought" in the first step, then the argument would still be unsound owing to the falsity of (3).

The plausibility of the counterexample, however, depends upon what it is for someone to be capable of caring about something or being motivated to do it. The proposed counterexample employs the simple notion that being capable of caring about something is a function of one's current beliefs, values, psychological dispositions, etc. Hence, Allison is incapable of caring about social propriety due to a variety and combination of facts about her now. In defense of Velleman's argument, however, one may argue that Allison does not pose a counterexample to the third premise because Allison might undergo a process of intensive "therapy," for example, that would alter her current psychological disposition, beliefs, etc., sufficiently to enable her to care about social propriety. Thus, as she is now Allison *does not* and, arguably, *cannot* care about social propriety, but strictly, she is

capable of caring, where "capable of caring" is translated as "not constitutionally incapable of caring."⁶⁸ Nothing we so far know about Allison rules out the sorts of alterations in her character that would enable her to care about social propriety.

This sort of defense against the proposed counterexample holds off the charge against Velleman that his third premise is false, but at a steep cost. It seems that we could propose any number of counterexamples to (3), but that they could all be dismissed by appeal to possible ways in which the person who "ought to care" might be made to come to care about something. It looks, therefore, as though the new problem with the argument is that if the locution (a) "is capable of caring" is understood to mean (b) "is not constitutionally incapable of caring" and that for our test for the falsity of (b) we seek to establish (c) "under some counterfactual conditions does care," then step (3) will be unfalsifiable. Under such a view no one will be incapable of caring about anything, and so, of course, it will never be the case that someone ought to care about something while being also incapable of so caring.

One might propose that capacity to care be defined as something "in between" that about which we are currently and actually capable of caring and that about which we are capable

⁶⁸ There is some evidence that this is how Velleman means to translate capacity to care. See pp. 93-97.

of caring in some possible world. Any such proposal would bear the burden of giving a convincing principled, versus ad hoc, account of what alterations and counterfactual conditions could appropriately track the relevant sense of being capable of caring. The proposals that have been offered up by well-being theorists to solve this problem, I think, are susceptible to the charge of arbitrariness. There does not seem to be an independently defensible principle for determining which counterfactual conditions are to be excluded and which are to be allowed for the purpose of determining capacity to care. Concerning step (3), however, absent a convincing principled account of capacity to care, I conclude that it is either false (based on counterexamples like the case of B) or its truth relies on the inclusion in the argument of (2). However, as I've argued, the inclusion of (2), that "ought" implies "can" renders the argument problematic due to equivocation.

More globally, even if Velleman's subjectivist argument did work, the modification from the simple internalist thesis to one that rests on a notion of capacity to care seems to stray problematically from the intuitions that motivated the pursuit of subjectivism in the first place. For, it seems, any alteration to the basic internalist thought that if someone has prudential reason to do something then she must be

motivated so to act, seems to alienate the agent from her well-being in a way problematic to the subjectivist. The subjectivist was guided by the intuition that our good must be something that is well-suited to or belongs to us. The sorts of unlimited (or even limited) counterfactual conditions introduced by the capacity to care (or be motivated) modification to the internalist thesis become so distant from the agent, that his good no longer bears the sought for connection to his subjective stance and, therefore, does not seem to belong to him in the way the subjectivist sought.

Further, the "capacity to care" internalist account does not render unintelligible the normative question "Why should I do what is good for me?". Contra the intuition of the subjectivist, it makes sense according to his own account of well-being to ask why anyone should do what is good for her. The connection between what the agent takes an interest in and her well-being is lost in the modified account, and so, this normative question remains meaningful.

Lastly, insofar as the subjectivist resolves challenges to his account by modifying the thesis of internalism in ways that require him, I argue, to betray the initial intuitions that motivated his account, internalism provides no more motivation for adopting a subjective conception of well-being than for adopting an objective one. The initial complaint

against the objectivist must be that objective accounts of well-being violate the internalist thesis, allowing that something can be part of an agent's good even though he is incapable of caring about or being motivated to do it. It looked, however, as though, based on infinite counterfactual conditions, the subjectivist account provided no reason for thinking that there is anything about which we are incapable of caring. It seems, therefore, as if objective and subjective well-being are either equally alien to agents or equally well-suited to them. Hence, the subjectivist seems to be left with no reason to favor subjective well-being over objective well-being, leaving subjective accounts as yet unmotivated. Thus, the validity and soundness of Velleman's argument are undermined by his equivocation over the word "ought." The possible meanings of "ought" that would make the first premise true are incompatible with the truth of the second premise; the meaning of "ought" that makes the general principle that "ought" implies "can" and, hence, the second premise true, makes the first premise false.

The principle that "ought" implies "can" cannot, therefore, serve to support the thesis of internalism. If internalism and the subjectivism about well-being that rests upon it are to be defended, we must seek elsewhere what ultimately motivates them.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter argues that the claims that objective accounts of well-being are illiberal and the view that subjective accounts comport better with an appropriate understanding of autonomy rely on a conflation of what makes it the case that a statement about the good for an individual is true and the authority of agents to decide or determine what promotes their good. Objectivism is at least equally able to accommodate a plausible conception of autonomy and so subjectivism has no advantages over objectivism in this regard. Moreover, this chapter critically examines the thesis of internalism about well-being and attempts to show that even if the principle of reasons/motives internalism is true, this principle and the arguments brought to bear in its defense do not necessarily support subjectivism about well-being and seem equally compatible with objective good. Thus, subjectivists still need to motivate subjectivism as such, independent of the particular forms the view takes, and to show why this position has any prima facie plausibility in the first instance. Chapter 5 considers the prima facie plausibility of a partnership of the subjective and objective in the make-up of well-being.

CHAPTER 5

BEYOND SUBJECTIVISM

I. Introduction

Contemporary accounts of well-being are predominantly subjective owing to the intuitions subjectivism seems to satisfy regarding autonomy and the conceptual connection between prudential value and motivation to act. Subjectivists about well-being focus on refining the details of their subjectivism to deal with counterexamples; they do not seem to expend as much effort critically examining the relationship between their basic conclusions about well-being and these underlying intuitions that motivate their view in the first instance.

Chapter 4 argued that the considerations that motivate subjectivism about well-being from the outset do not uniquely yield traditional subjective accounts, but are also compatible with objective and mixed accounts of human good. In the face of the difficulties encountered by subjective conceptions of human well-being, this chapter represents an attempt to look beyond subjectivism, often treated as a default view, as it were, toward a conception of well-being that is neither exclusively subjective nor objective, but embraces elements of both. This conception is capable of accommodating all of the subjectivist's

original reasons to think well-being is subjective, but at the same time is anchored by a conception of human nature. It is thus able to deal with the aforementioned counterexamples more satisfactorily than pure subjectivism.

The view developed in this chapter takes seriously a relationship between facts about human nature and well-being. It takes well-being to be tailored to human beings in their entirety, not just tailored to the subjective stances that they happen to now have (or could have under ideal conditions) or some other singular or arbitrary feature of them. It is also individualistic and responsive to the fact that there are a multitude of possible instantiations of the good life based on a multitude of individual traits and talents as well as the value of autonomy in the pursuit of well-being. It is pluralistic in that it embraces multiple values as constitutive of well-being. According to this view, well-being is defined as (i) excellent activity, where excellent activity is the development or exercise of our natural abilities, strengths, or talents as human beings and individuals, plus (ii) endorsement, where endorsement takes the form of an autonomous choice to engage in this activity. Thus, well-being is the autonomously chosen exercise of an individual's natural human and personal abilities or strengths.

The following sections develop and attempt to defend this account of well-being by considering the position of Martin Seligman as well as by showing how this conception of well-being satisfies the concerns of the subjectivist about well-being. The hope is that this conception of human good will at least make a start in a direction away from the desire-satisfaction accounts that dominate the discussion about well-being toward fertile territory beyond subjectivism. For objectivism and subjectivism both have intuitive appeal and a mixed view of well-being holds promise to satisfy the intuitions and capture the strengths of both while avoiding the major drawbacks each faces in its stark form.

II. Excellent Activity

Well-being is defined here as excellent activity plus endorsement by the agent whose well-being is at issue. "Excellent activity" supplies the objective portion of the account and "endorsement" supplies the subjective part of the account. Chapter 4 considered the question what reasons in the first instance motivate subjectivism about well-being. This section begins by likewise explaining why the present account starts, at base, with an objective component.

The thought underlying the objective component of the conception of human good is that well-being is to the individual

person as a whole what health is to the body. Just as health is, in large part, a matter of the good functioning of the various systems and parts of the body, defined in terms of various facts (such as their needs and purposes in the body) about these systems and parts, so human well-being tracks the "good functioning" of the human being as a whole. Questions about whether something, e.g., food, exercise, medication is good for an individual in a health context are answered by reference to the effect the thing in question has on the functioning or condition of body parts, mechanisms, or systems. Whether something is "good" for one's health is not a mere matter of subjective desires, preferences, enjoyment, and the like.

Similarly, questions about whether something is good for a person in the context of an inquiry about well-being are answered by reference to how well it serves to promote the "good functioning" of the person, or how well it enables the person to act according to his nature as an individual and a human being. This "good functioning" is determined at least in part by reference to facts about human beings: what kind of thing human beings are, what are their needs, abilities, and capacities as human beings and individuals, and what realities of the world thwart or enable them in the pursuit of their good. These are the "parts", "mechanisms", and "systems" of the human being, as it were. Thus, the appropriate follow-up question to "What is

the good for a human being?" (i.e., "What is the good for a thing of this kind?") is "What is a human being?" (or, "What kind of thing is this?").

To develop and defend a comprehensive account of human nature, however, is not the task for this dissertation. At any rate, all the details of an account of human nature are not available for such a comprehensive account. The focus here is not on what particular activities, states of affair, or conditions constitute well-being (which would require a detailed account of human nature), but on the prior question what well-being is. It is crucial to note, however, that whatever facts are relevant to human nature, it is not reasonable arbitrarily to isolate some particular feature of human nature and deem it alone relevant to well-being. If human nature is relevant to well-being in the way sketched above, then all the facts about human nature are potentially material to the concept of human good.

Referring to functioning in the context of the health of the body is somewhat less abstract than referring to functioning in relation to the well-being of the individual. Thus, it is necessary to flesh out the notion of good functioning in the context of well-being. The spirit of the account under consideration is clearly Aristotelian and referring to the manner in which those who work on well-being in this tradition

extend the basic thought may help to illuminate the account. Aristotelian functioning is variously extended and associated with perfection, self-development, capabilities, and the exercise of virtues or strengths.⁶⁹ The Aristotelian view can be characterized as eudaimonic and is contrasted with a hedonic view. Hedonic views focus on pleasures, while the eudaimonic focus on the aforementioned exercise of virtues or strengths, functioning, perfection, capabilities, and the like. Psychologist Martin Seligman is the proponent of a view which takes well-being to be the exercise of virtues or strengths. The advantage of this approach is that it attempts to answer the questions of well-being from a social-scientific perspective.

In his book *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman argues for an aretaic or strength/excellence-based eudaimonism. He explores a concept of well-being based on "positive psychology" and supported with social scientific data. Seligman's "positive psychology" represents a reaction to the emphasis in the field of psychology on mental illness and disorder and, rather, shifts the focus of inquiry to a social science of the positive psychological condition. He and colleagues in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, as part of the project of positive psychology, are attempting to create a system that is the opposite of the central manual of mental disorders and illness

⁶⁹ See Sen 1993, Nussbaum 2000, Galston 1980, Wall 1998, Seligman 2002.

in the mental health fields, the *DSM* (the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association*)⁷⁰. This would, in essence, be a manual to well-being or the good life from a social-scientific perspective, and would be supported by data within that field.

Within the context of positive psychology, Seligman argues that happiness consists both in pleasures and, what he terms, gratifications. The pleasures are "delights that have clear sensory and strong emotional components, what philosophers call "raw feels": ecstasy, thrills, orgasm, delight, mirth, exuberance, and comfort"⁷¹, they can vary in intensity and form (i.e, can be "higher" or "lower" pleasures as these terms are commonly understood), are momentary, and their contribution to happiness can be increased by spacing them apart, savoring the pleasures, and increasing mindfulness.⁷²

The gratifications, on the other hand, are the constituents of eudaimonia or well-being.⁷³ "Eudaimonia, what I call gratification, is part and parcel of right action. It cannot be derived from bodily pleasure, nor is it a state that can be chemically induced or obtained by any shortcuts. It can only be had by activity consonant with noble purpose . . . the

⁷⁰ Seligman 2002, p. 11.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 102.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 104-110.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 112.

gratifications are about enacting personal strengths and virtues".⁷⁴

While the particular content or meaning given to these virtues may differ, positive psychology identifies six core virtues that are ubiquitous across cultures: wisdom and knowledge, courage, love and humanity, justice, temperance, and spirituality and transcendence⁷⁵, and twenty-four "strengths" or routes to enacting these virtues. There are multiple distinct routes to the achievement of each virtue. For example, "one can display the virtue of justice by acts of good citizenship, fairness, loyalty and teamwork, or humane leadership." While the virtues are abstract, the strengths are traits that are measurable and acquirable. They are also intrinsically valuable.⁷⁶

Among the strengths, Seligman argues, some are "signature strengths," i.e., strengths that resonate more strongly with the individual to whom they belong. "These are strengths that a person self-consciously owns, celebrates, and if he or she can arrange life successfully, exercises every day in work, love, play, and parenting".⁷⁷ According to Seligman, the good life is "using your signature strengths every day in the main realms of

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 112.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.133.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 160.

your life to bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness".⁷⁸

The phenomenology of the gratifications, and, therefore, of enacting both strengths and signature strengths as means to virtue, is quite distinct from the phenomenology of pleasure. A chief characteristic of the gratifications, and hence, enacting the strengths, is the phenomenology of "flow." Flow is an absence of pleasure, conscious experience, sense of time, in favor of complete absorption or immersion in the enactment of the strength.⁷⁹ Seligman cites a study that shows what sorts of activities are associated with flow and the connection between activities that cause flow and well-being. The psychologist conducting the study

tracked 250 high-flow and low-flow teenagers. The low-flow teenagers are "mall" kids; they hang out at malls and they watch television a lot. The high-flow kids have hobbies, they engage in sports, and they spend a lot of time on homework. On every measure of psychological well-being (including self-esteem and engagement) save one, the high-flow teenagers did better. The exception is important: the high-flow kids think their low-flow peers are having more fun, and say they would rather be at the mall doing those "fun" things or watching television. But, while all the engagement they have is not perceived as enjoyable, it pays off later in life. The high-flow kids are the ones who make it to college, who have deeper social ties, and whose later lives are more successful.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 161.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 117.

In such teenagers, there is an apparent rift between eudaimonic well-being and hedonic well-being, or, in short, objective good and subjective good defined as enjoyment, respectively. However, one may argue that the teenagers' expressed preferences for the hedonic activities of their "mall" kid counterparts simply reflects an absence of a point of comparison. If the high-flow kids were given an opportunity to experience the life of the "mall" kids and could therefore compare their subjective responses to both kinds of life, they may well prefer and report a preference for the life of "flow. This cannot be settled in advance, however. What explains the fact that high-flow teenagers perceive themselves as having less fun and report that they would rather be at the mall or watching television than engaging in activities that track their objective good, Seligman believes, is the fact that pursuit of the gratifications requires effort, skill, and the possibility of failure.⁸¹ Seligman argues that this may help explain why people seem routinely to choose watching a sit-com on television over pursuing a gratification, when "surveys show again and again that the average mood while watching sit-coms on television is mild depression."⁸²

Nonetheless, Seligman cites numerous studies that associate enacting the strengths with greater happiness and life

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 119.

⁸² Ibid., p. 117.

satisfaction on the part of those surveyed. Engaging in philanthropic activity, for example was correlated with higher life satisfaction than pursuit of a simple hedonic activity⁸³, and Seligman cites studies that associate depression (arguably, the absence of well-being) with activities and patterns of activity that oppose pursuit of the strengths.⁸⁴

In short, Seligman's work gives us reason to think that the exercise of human strengths or virtues is a necessary constituent of well-being and that the rejection of purely subjective accounts of well-being is indeed supported by research into human psychology. Seligman, drawing on empirical psychological research, is critical of a purely subjective conception of well-being. The enactment of an individual's strengths is associated with the experience of flow and, hence, well-being, and the pursuit of purely subjective "good," simple pleasure, or enjoyment is associated with depression and lack of well-being.

III. Well-being and Self-governance

If the above is convincing regarding the objectivity of well-being, one might wonder what considerations give rise to the subjective component of the account. If the facts about human nature, the world, and the relationship between the two

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 8, 9.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 118, 179.

yield conclusions about what would be better or worse for individuals, why introduce the endorsement condition? Recall that the general claim in favor of subjectivism is that the constituents of human good must resonate with the individual whose good is in question; the possibility – admitted by objectivism – that an individual's good might be alien to him in that its constituents in no way answer to his own concerns, is anathema to the very concept of human good subjectively understood. Instead, the argument proceeded, an individual's well-being must be tailored to him.

In response, I argued that there are multiple respects in which an individual's good could be tailored to him. In fact, this metaphor employed by subjectivists more aptly supports a mixed account of well-being than a strictly subjective one. If well-being is tailored to an individual in the same manner a suit is tailored, the objective measurements of the body to be fitted clearly enjoy more than a marginal relevance to the tailor. Indeed, both objective and subjective factors are taken into account in the fitting of a suit. It would be as much a mistake arbitrarily to connect one feature of the human being, namely his set of subjective stances, with well-being as it would be to define the fit of a suit solely in terms of the preferences of the person who is to wear it. We will return to this analogy shortly.

Yet just as it would be arbitrary to define well-being solely in terms of subjective stances, it would be equally arbitrary to exclude the subjective features of human nature from the account of well-being. For well-being does seem to involve personal choice. Seligman contrasts talents with strengths. Talents are generally skills about which we do not exercise much choice. They are relatively automatic. Strengths, however, the development and exercise of which he argues constitute well-being, do require personal choice. One must choose which strengths to acquire, which to build, and when and in what manner to enact or deploy them.⁸⁵

Human subjectivity must be taken into account if our definition of well-being is to be tailored to human beings and accurately to capture their nature as wholes. The integrity of the account of well-being requires both objective and subjective constituents. Thus, the argument for the endorsement condition relies on the premises that well-being must be tailored to the human being, that for well-being to be tailored to the person it must connect up with both objective features of his nature and his subjectivity, and that, therefore, well-being has a subjective component. The question thus becomes, in just what way is well-being subjective and how does it relate to the objective constituents of the good for an individual.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 135.

Well-being was here defined as the development or exercise of our natural abilities, strengths, or talents as human beings and individuals plus endorsement. The above argument is intended to justify the subjective constituents of well-being. But why should we think the subjective component takes the form of endorsement?

First, it is crucial to emphasize that endorsement of the activities constitutive of objective well-being is here cashed out as autonomously choosing or pursuing these activities. Part of the value of the actions derives from its satisfaction of objective requirements of well-being and part of the value of the action derives from the choice to do it.⁸⁶ Autonomously choosing the relevant activities entails endorsement of them; it both presupposes endorsement and expresses endorsement. Indeed, it *is* the endorsement. On this view, endorsement need not be an overt speech act, or a separate subjective stance such as liking, preferring, enjoying, or desiring. Engaging in the activity under the conditions required by autonomy is a kind of endorsement and serves to give the individual ownership of his actions, and thus, makes his well-being his own in the relevant sense. Choosing a constituent of well-being is, in this regard, much like voting. Voting for a candidate is the endorsement of

⁸⁶ See Seligman 2002 p. 135, for a discussion of the role choosing plays in making a course of action valuable, especially when choosing requires an effort.

that candidate. One need not like the candidate and may not intend to express approval of the candidate by virtue of the vote. But one makes the candidate one's own in a sense, by the endorsement of voting for him. In like manner, by choosing autonomously, one endorses, even though that endorsement is not reducible to any other subjective stance, such as liking, preferring, or desiring.

Second, the endorsement condition and, hence, the subjective component of well-being arise because of the fact of autonomy understood in its most basic sense as self-governance.⁸⁷ All things being equal, adult human beings must govern themselves. Confronted with a need to act, individuals must choose more or less consciously and conscientiously a course of action. They must decide what to do and enact it. This is a reality of adult life, at least in modern western societies. Individuals must choose their own courses of action in life, seek the conditions of life that enable the path they choose, and bring their plans to fruition. The vast majority of individuals simply cannot escape this fact. This claim does not require that individuals are not constrained by external

⁸⁷ The fact of self-governance to which I am referring is of the practical, commonsense nature described in the text. The fact is underscored by the alternative. Consider the consequences of an adult individual who does not govern himself in even the most basic way. The choice to undertake any action at all is evidence of the fact of self-government. For if this individual does not govern himself, he literally will just sit there until he dies or is rescued and force-fed.

realities in their self-governance. Such external realities do not undermine the basic notion of autonomy of which we are making use here. Indeed, it might be argued that part of the very task of self-governance is to navigate these external constraints. Nor does it deny that individuals can, in various ways, turn over their choice-making to others. Very often, however, doing so itself is an act of autonomy.

The basic, descriptive fact that individuals must govern themselves gives rise to a corollary normative fact of self-governance. At this juncture, an objector may charge that the argument violates the naturalistic fallacy in that it illicitly derives an "ought" from an "is," attempts to derive a normative fact from a descriptive one, or, at best, simply conflates the descriptive and normative features of autonomy. The basic descriptive fact of self-governance and the normative fact of self-governance, however, are situated on opposite sides of the same coin. By the fact of self-governance, individuals face a fundamental alternative to act or remain inactive. They cannot avoid the choice, in any event. By making a choice to act, an individual makes his actions his own. And like most things people own, our actions begin to own us in a way as well. We are responsible for our choices and actions, for better or worse.

The fact and responsibility of self-governance are continuous; though fundamental, self-governance does not involve

a one-time-only choice. Individuals continue to choose to act and choose the nature of their actions as a fact of their nature and the world in which they find themselves. By continuous self-governance, individuals' actions begin to take a certain shape, they begin to form a complex web that is constructed of the individual's commitments and patterns of commitment. Self-governing by constructing this web well and in accordance with individual good is one of the activities that constitutes objective well-being. Self-governance is both instrumentally relevant to the exercise of human strengths and when done well, itself constitutes the exercise of a human strength.

Regarding the naturalistic fallacy, then, the attempt of the argument is not to derive an "ought" from an "is" but to expose a fact with built-in normative implications. One might argue that the normative fact of self-governance and the descriptive fact of self-governance are actually two different aspects of the same irreducibly normative fact. This interpretation is likely consistent with the present argument, as long as the fact of self-governance is treated as another fact of human nature. On this interpretation, then, human nature is an irreducibly normative cluster of facts.

To return to well-being, then, relevant facts about human nature and the world anchor human good. One such relevant fact is the reality of self-governance. The fact of self-governance

gives rise to the necessity of subjective endorsement, since autonomy anchors human action. Subjective endorsement of the activities that constitute objective good consists in autonomously choosing these actions. Thus, subjective endorsement in the form of autonomous choosing and the activity of exercising or developing one's natural strengths, talents, and capacities must come together to constitute well-being. We do well, that is, when what we actually, autonomously choose (i.e., endorse) and our natural strengths/talents as human beings and individuals non-accidentally converge. Thus, (i) activity to develop our individual and human strengths plus (ii) the autonomous choice to engage in this activity are each necessary and are jointly sufficient conditions of well-being.

Well-being has subjective features in another respect as well. The flip-side of the responsibility of self-governance is the liberty or latitude of self-governance. Interlocutors about well-being notoriously press objective accounts of well-being to explain how matters of taste are accommodated by objectivism. If well-being does not track subjective stances, how, the subjectivist might ask, can the contribution to one's good of, for example, the consumption of one's preferred vanilla ice cream over chocolate be explained? For the satisfaction of matters of taste like this does seem, all things equal, to make human lives better. A perk or fringe benefit of the fact and

responsibility of self-governance, on this account, is that individuals have the sanctioned latitude to choose according to taste so long as such choice is compatible with well-being as endorsed objective good. If the individual were allergic to vanilla, however, even if he preferred this flavor to others, he would not have the sanctioned latitude to choose it because its consumption would result in a setback to his well-being.

Individuals also have the sanctioned latitude to pursue desired or preferred courses of action among alternative routes to the endorsed objective exercise of strengths. So, for example, suppose that one of Bob's endorsed objective strengths is interpersonal conflict resolution. He might choose to express this strength by becoming a school counselor, a diplomat, or a lawyer/advocate. Any of these would be instances of the exercise of Bob's strength.

These forms of latitude are sanctioned by the value of well-being because the exercise of self-governance is itself a constituent of objective well-being and the objects of choice are sanctioned so long as they do not conflict with other constituents or distract from the pursuit of well-being as a whole. The proviso is needed because it is possible that an individual would spend so much time and energy seeking the objects of latitude that — though these are not in themselves incompatible with well-being — he devoted inadequate time and

energy to the constituents of well-being. Indeed, this seems to be an all too common scenario. For instance, suppose that sports-watching is an object of latitude, a hobby, for Dave. Watching sports is not itself incompatible with well-being. In fact, if this pastime is enjoyable for Dave, it can make a significant contribution to his well-being. Yet if Dave were to become so immersed in sports-watching that he had inadequate time or energy to exercise his strengths, his well-being could be compromised. This extent of latitude would not be sanctioned by well-being, no matter how much he enjoys it. Although more might be said about how much latitude an individual may exercise before his well-being is adversely impacted, the above proviso is warranted.

Because of this liberty, well-being is profoundly individualistic on multiple levels. If we return to the metaphor of tailoring a suit, we can perhaps arrive at a concrete vision of this individuality and the manner in which the subjective and objective work together in order to form well-being. The process of tailoring a suit begins with the basic physical measurements of the body who is to wear the suit. This corresponds to objective well-being. The individual can then choose among alternative suits: he may choose among colors (black, brown, gray, etc.), among materials (wool, silk, etc.), and among styles, for example. During the fitting process, the individual

may express preferences for slightly longer-than-usual sleeve, and roomier collar. Thus, there are many possible variations of suit that connect with individual preferences. This corresponds to the sanctioned latitude of self-governance, part of the subjective component of the tailoring. As in the case of well-being, this latitude has limitations since the fit of the suit must be true to objective measurements. Finally, once the suit is fitted to the individual, he must choose to put it on and wear it. There may be any number of suits that satisfy objective criteria and his sanctioned preferences, among which he must choose, or there may be only one such suit. The other elements of the tailoring process are moot and there is no way to assess fit if the would-be suit wearer does not, in the end, don the suit. Putting on and wearing the suit corresponds to the endorsement condition of well-being. Putting on the suit constitutes his final endorsement and autonomous choice of it, his making it his own and his identification with it.

Likewise, actions that constitute an individual's objective well-being and include elements of personal preference in the form of the sanctioned latitude of self-governance do not make up his well-being until he autonomously chooses these actions. The endorsement consists in the choice and need not bear any relation to any other subjective stances of the individual, such as liking, desiring, or preferring. Choosing autonomously *is*, on

this account, a subjective stance in its own right. Suppose, for instance, that exercise is objectively good for Clark. Clark does not like, desire, prefer, or care about exercise. And yet he endorses exercise by choosing autonomously to do it. The endorsement creates his subjective connection to it. Clark's endorsement of exercise may be argued to be arbitrary if it is not based on prior subjective stances. However his endorsement is or gives rise to his subjective identification with it and is based on the facts that make exercise good for him from the objective standpoint.

IV. Conditions of Self-Governance

While adequately treating the nature and conditions of autonomy would require its own full-length inquiry, it should suffice here to offer a sketch of the relevant concept of self-governance.⁸⁸ For our purposes, autonomy is a fairly thin concept. Its use in this context is intended to be based on commonsense and practical concerns. The relevant concept is, therefore, not radically idealized⁸⁹, but is based on the idea

⁸⁸ See chapter 4 for somewhat more extensive discussion of various articulations of the concept of autonomy.

⁸⁹ The symmetry between the sorts of idealizations subjectivists about well-being impute to their accounts of well-being and the idealizations considered by theorists of autonomy is striking.

discussed above that self-governance is, all things equal, a reality of adult life. Our task here will be simply to indicate what it takes for a basic threshold of self-governance to be achieved.

The first issue to be considered is how much information is required for an action to be a genuine product of self-governance. On the present view, an action is a result of self-governance just as long as it is informed by ordinarily available factual and other information. The lengths to which an individual must go in order to have adequate information as well as the extent to which he must appreciate the information in order to act autonomously will, presumably, differ from individual to individual above a minimal threshold, as information can have differential impact within an acceptable range on individual decision making. The basic thought here, however, is that self-governance does not require anything beyond an ordinary, real-world access to information or vigor in processing this information. On this minimalist view, individuals can act autonomously and make mistakes.

Subjectivists and theorists of autonomy are concerned to escape many of the same counterexamples. Desires and would-be autonomous choices are subject to being defective in the same ways. Thus, both subjectivists and autonomy theorists propose information constraints of various kinds, and constraints on the processes that lead to the formation of desires and the undertaking of would-be autonomous action, e.g, ruling out brainwashing, social control, depression, and the like.

The primary constraints on self-governance take the form of external interference. Coerced actions do not qualify as self-governed. Actions that result from brainwashing, deception, programming, indoctrination, manipulation, and the like do not count as self-governed. Any unsolicited external interference that intentionally (even if indirectly) disrupts or distorts the flow of information or the decision-making process for the purpose of influencing the individual's actions corrupts or negates the ability of the individual to govern himself. Actions that issue as a result of these interferences cannot count as endorsed by the agents who enact them even if they coincide with objective well-being.⁹⁰

There are also some ways in which autonomy can be compromised from the inside. Choices made by a patient addicted to pain medication that are aimed at drug-seeking are not autonomous. This individual may well be capable of making autonomous choices, but those that are based on a desire to get pain medication will not count as autonomous because the addiction drives these actions. Choices made by an individual based on delusions cannot be autonomous. His other choices may be autonomous, but not those that issue from his delusions. Various other psychological and psychiatric disorders impact an individual's ability to make autonomous choices, but these

⁹⁰ See chapter 4 for more on autonomy.

choices must be evaluated on a case by case basis, since most of these disorders will not affect an individual's ability to make autonomous choices wholesale.

V. The Compatibility of the Subjective and Objective

One might pose the challenge to the mixed account: What if the subjective and objective components of the account come into conflict?

It is quite possible that the subjective and objective components of well-being will yield conflicting conclusions. One example of such a conflict was already discussed in the form of Dave the sports watcher. Note that in that case Dave's pursuit of his hobby ultimately compromised his well-being due to limits on his time and energy. Since Dave's latitude to pursue this hobby is derivative, sanctioned as a result of the objective value of autonomy, the objective well-being that justified autonomy retains primacy over the preference to watch sports. Hence, if the pursuit of subjective preferences or matters of taste compromises objective well-being, it can no longer count as part of well-being in that case. For the preference to watch sports is not even an appropriate candidate for endorsement insofar as this preference is contrary to objective well-being. The individual could endorse the preference over what promotes

objective well-being, but since well-being is endorsed objective good, enacting the preference will not promote his well-being.

The suit analogy deployed throughout this chapter is again informative. While the preferences of the person who is to wear the suit play a genuine defining role in the fit of the suit, these preferences cannot override the objective measurements of the individual in question, since fit is defined by a convergence of his objective measurements and his choice of the suit. For if four inches of the pant legs are dragging on the ground under his feet and the bottom of the jacket rides up to his shoulder blades, we simply cannot affirm that the suit fits.

Thus, the objective component of the account retains primacy as against the latitude of self-governance, or the preferences, tastes, and likes of the agent. If the individual's preferences are in conflict with objective good, the agent may choose either to endorse his preferences or to endorse his objective good, but only his endorsed objective good can make up his well-being. What, however, about self-governance itself and the objective component of well-being? Suppose that an individual autonomously chooses, i.e., endorses, an action that is not a part of objective good, endorsing his preferences instead. The present account is clear on these matters. The objective and subjective conditions are each necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of well-being. If both the

objective and subjective conditions are met, well-being is realized, if not, well-being is not realized. It would be a problem indeed if nothing were both a constituent of objective good and endorsed, because then nothing would be a constituent of well-being. But, there is no principled argument to suggest these two conditions would never converge.

VI. The Hybrid Account: Both For and Against Subjectivism and Objectivism

The hybrid account here developed is superior to either subjectivism or objectivism because it is able to accommodate the intuitively plausible features of both, while avoiding the demerits of each.

Now that the basic components of this hybrid account of well-being are in place, we can answer to the considerations that originally motivated subjectivism about well-being. This result may be unsurprising since it is the subjective component of the hybrid account that does the primary work in accommodating these concerns. And yet, the fact that the hybrid account can answer to the concerns offered in support of traditional subjective views notably confirms the compatibility of objectivism with the intuitions that led some theorists down the path of subjectivism. Recall that subjectivism was supported

by the thoughts that (i) subjective well-being better comports with the value of autonomy and that (ii) subjectivism explains the conceptual connection between value and motivation.

Regarding claim (i), it was argued in chapter 4 that objectivism is just as compatible with the concept and value of autonomy as is subjectivism. Indeed, the hybrid account is also compatible, and may be argued to represent a superior account of autonomy. Subjectivism is faced with all the same problems establishing the idealization of the conditions of autonomy in order to avoid counterexample that various accounts face idealizing desires or other subjective stances. The account of autonomy herein is minimalist and does not resort to radical idealization to do the work that requires an objective component of well-being. One may argue that the account of autonomy employed in this hybrid account is too minimalist. Perhaps another benefit of the account outlined here is that the concept of autonomy it employs is flexible and admits of further constraint. There appears to be no reason to believe that thickening the concept of autonomy in such a way would serve to undermine the hybrid account as a whole. It would merely impact what endorsement requires.

As for consideration (ii), the subjective component of the mixed subjective/objective account of well-being discussed herein does explain the connection between value and motivation.

Given that endorsement is one of the necessary conditions of well-being, it supplies the sought-for conceptual connection between value and motivation to act, i.e., it links value and motivation by autonomous choice. It may be argued, again, that the mixed view answers to this concern in a more satisfactory manner than does subjectivism. For while subjectivism can appear somewhat contrived and "too good to be true" in that it definitionally fixes the motivation by identifying prudential value with motivationally salient desires or other subjective states, the endorsement called for in the mixed account supplies the motivation to act by means of autonomous choice, but has independent justification in the form of its responsiveness to the fact of self-governance. The reason endorsement is part of well-being at all is because the basic fact of self-governance gives rise to a corollary normative fact of self-governance in the form of a responsibility to govern oneself which in turn links value to motivation by means of the condition of autonomous choice. This observation underscores the primacy of the objective in the hybrid account and serves to ground the subjective constituents of well-being in facts about the world, human agents, and the relationship between the two.

The final, very general, argument that subjectivists routinely launch against objectivism is that objective well-being may be alien to the individual whose good it supposedly

is. This alienation is purported to be a result of the fact that objectivists reject the claim that well-being depends on the subjective stances of the individual in question. Since the hybrid account defended here takes endorsement in the form of autonomous choice to be necessary for well-being, this account avoids this subjectivist complaint. A corollary subjectivist complaint is that negating the necessity of subjective stances in the make-up of well-being is problematic because well-being should be tailored to the individual. Employing the suit analogy, it was argued that subjective good alone is equally untailored to individuals. The hybrid theory provides the best account of fit between well-being and the individual whose good it is, because it accommodates the individual's objective measurements, his preferences limited by these objective measurements, and his ultimate endorsement of his well-being.

The hybrid account also accommodates the objectivist's primary arguments against subjectivism. The subjective condition of endorsement of the account does not rely on radical idealizations. It does not rely on arbitrary subjective stances the agent just happens to currently have. Nor does it entail that subjective stances stipulate the good for an individual. Rather well-being is based on natural facts about individuals as such and as human beings, facts about the world as they find it,

and their relationship to it. The subjective endorsement condition is grounded in and justified because of these facts.

VII. Conclusion

To conclude, this dissertation has argued that a defensible theory of well-being must incorporate both objective and subjective elements. Such a hybrid theory has a distinctive advantage over either subjective or objective accounts alone because it is able to avert the major drawbacks and to embrace the primary strengths of each. It reflects an integrated vision of the human good based on a conception of the nature of human beings and human action that reconciles the roles played both by our subjective stances and independent objective facts about us and our world.

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