

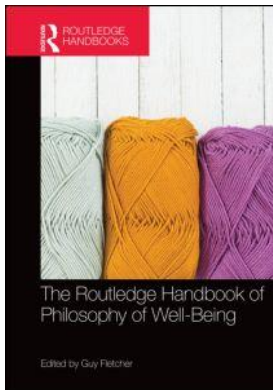
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## The Routledge Handbook Of Philosophy Of Well-Being

Guy Fletcher

### Well-being and subject dependence

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## 14

WELL-BEING AND SUBJECT  
DEPENDENCE*Alicia Hall and Valerie Tiberius***Introduction**

Prudential value is commonly thought to be distinct from other types of value by virtue of its special relationship to individual subjects. Well-being has to do with how people's lives are going *for them*, rather than with how their lives are going from the moral point of view, say. In other words, well-being is, as L.W. Sumner puts it, subject-relative. Sumner argues that this subject-relativity is a central part of our ordinary concept of well-being, which any plausible account of well-being must be able to accommodate. Theories of well-being need to explain why a putative contributor to well-being is good *for* the individual whose well-being it is (Sumner 1996: 20).

Sumner does not say much about the specifics of this relation of subject-relativity; he seems to assume that the exact nature of the relation will be determined by substantive theories of well-being. This may be the right way to think about it, but there are efforts in the meta-ethics of well-being to characterize this feature more precisely. Connie Rosati, for example, proposes a rational fit theory of well-being, according to which the contributors to a person's well-being must be suited to her individual nature. She writes, "We each come into the world with a basic physical and psychological makeup, and the bundle of features we each possess not only creates opportunities for but sets limits for our future development" (Rosati 2006b: 49). Whatever counts toward our good must be something that fits with our own particular "bundle of features." According to Rosati, then, something can provide a prudential benefit for a person only when a relation of "fit" or "suitability" holds between them. To explain further what this means, she analogizes the relation of fit to successful loving relationships. Engagement with activities and goods that fit or suit us will not merely provide shallow feelings of enjoyment or pleasure, but, like excellent friendships or romantic relationships, will help develop and sustain an orientation toward ourselves as individuals with inherent value. Things that fit us will also feature significantly into our self-conception and are self-perpetuating: we are invigorated when engaged with things that fit us and motivated to continue to pursue these goods and activities (Rosati 2006a; Rosati 2013: 45). Since people will find these qualities in different sources, well-being will be relative to the individual differences between subjects.

Another way of characterizing subject-relativity is provided by Stephen Darwall's rational care theory. On Darwall's view, what it is for something to be good for you is for it to be what

a person who cares about you ought to want for your sake (Darwall 2002). The attitude of caring for another person for his or her own sake provides a way to understand the sense in which a person's well-being is specially related to him or her.

There are a number of ways of characterizing the relation of subject-relativity, then, and we will not take a stand on which of these is correct. However we characterize this relation, it is widely agreed that some kind of subject-relativity is a feature of the concept or property that substantive theories of well-being should respect and we will turn now to these substantive theories. It might be, as Sumner seems to assume, that we will come to a better understanding of subject-relativity through the process of defending a substantive theory of well-being.<sup>1</sup> Sumner's own view is that the best way to explain the subject-relativity of well-being is to defend a *subjective theory* of well-being, according to which something counts as good for a person only if that person has the right attitude toward it. On this view, subject-relativity is explained by a particular feature of subjects, namely, their psychological attitudes (e.g., desires, or assessments of life satisfaction). (According to this common way of defining subjective and objective theories, objective theories are then those that deny the dependence of well-being on the individual's attitudes. Elsewhere in this volume, Woodard offers a different definition of objective theories (see Chapter 13); we will return to these definitions later.)

Appeal to subjects' attitudes is not the only way to account for subject-relativity, however, since individual people have other features to which we might appeal. For this reason, a broader category than "subjective theories" has been introduced, which Dan Haybron calls *internalist theories*. Internalism about well-being, according to Haybron, "maintains that the constituents of an agent's well-being are ultimately determined wholly by the particulars of the individual's make-up *qua* individual (vs. *qua* group or class member)" (2008: 156–157). We think the acknowledgment of this broader category is important in the well-being literature, but we also bemoan the proliferation of "internalisms" in philosophy. For this reason we are going to take this opportunity to label this broad category *subject-dependent theories*. Subject-dependent theories make what is good for someone dependent on some particular features of the person whose good it is. Alternatively, *subject-transcending theories* (formerly "externalist" theories) are theories that reject subject dependence, as defined here; such theories ground well-being in factors that transcend the particular individual, such as species-level traits or objectively valuable goods.

It is useful to distinguish subject-dependent theories from subjective theories. Non-attitudinal subject-dependent theories typically get classified as objective, which may imply an indifference to variation between welfare subjects. Categorizing these theories as subject-dependent allows us to see that there are ways theories can be sensitive to individual variations without making well-being depend on people's *attitudes*.

With this taxonomy in hand, we can say that subject-relativity is a property of well-being that any theory of well-being (including so-called objective theories) may endeavor to explain. Subjective theories are one type of subject-dependent theory, but there are theories that are subject-dependent without being subjective. Desire satisfactionism is a paradigm example of a subjective (and hence also subject-dependent) theory; since desire satisfactionism is covered elsewhere in this volume (see Chapter 11), however, our chapter focuses on other subject-dependent theories. First, though, we will explore in more detail the advantages of staying within the family of subject-dependent theories.

### The advantages of subject dependence

One of the benefits of distinguishing subjective theories from subject-dependent theories is that this allows us to see the benefits of the latter type of theory without being distracted by

the myriad problems that have plagued desire satisfactionism (the most prominent subjective theory). The category of subject-dependent theories allows us to consider that there are other promising ways of explaining subject-relativity.

Subject-dependent accounts of well-being explain the subject-relativity of welfare by tying well-being to particular features of the individual. It certainly seems simpler to accommodate and explain subject-relativity if one accepts a subject-dependent theory rather than a subject-transcending theory of well-being. To explain why something is good *for* some individual person, after all, it is natural to turn to features of that person herself. For instance, to determine whether taking up a competitive sport would benefit Sarah, we would normally ask whether Sarah herself is the type of person who would thrive on athletic competition; questions about whether competition fulfills a natural human need, expresses a species-typical human trait, or achieves an objective value seem less significant. Of course, knowledge about species-level trends and traits is useful in making predictions about the likelihood that any given individual will benefit from something, or making general claims about the types of things (such as relationships or accomplishment) that tend to be good for people. However, when it comes to more specific claims of benefit—for instance, whether someone would be better off pursuing accomplishment in one activity or another—it does seem like our normal practice for ascertaining prudential value aims to ascertain distinctive individual predilections and talents.

Subject-dependent theories also provide a way of explaining the motivating power of well-being. Facts about well-being are widely held to be reason giving, at least for the individual well-being subject.<sup>2</sup> As long as someone cares about how her life goes, the fact that something would benefit her should provide at least a *prima facie* reason in favor of pursuing it. This will of course not always be an overriding reason, since we typically care about things other than how our own lives go, but a claim of prudential benefit should generally be motivating to normal people. By connecting a person's well-being to aspects of her own individual makeup, subject-dependent theories make better sense of the fact that we are motivated by considerations that have to do with our own well-being than subject-transcending theories.

These concerns about motivation tie into a related concern about well-being: that a person's well-being, whatever it may turn out to be, should not be something that appears alien to her.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it should not be something she would be indifferent to, that leaves her cold, or seems irrelevant to her life. This does not mean that we must always immediately recognize the value of that which benefits us: subject-dependent theories do not require that well-being be something that is immediately transparent to the well-being subject. People can be held in the sway of misinformation or incapable of thinking clearly about their lives. But if someone is open to correction and advice about how to live well, then she should at some point be capable of seeing how the claims about what would benefit her are relevant and meaningful to her life. Since subject-dependent theories tie well-being to the individuals themselves, the connection between the explanations the theory provides and the things the person can care about are built in. In subject-dependent theories, our well-being is bespoke.

### Subject-dependent theories

Subject-dependent theories can be distinguished by which feature of the subject they take to be the central determinant of well-being. The theories we discuss here can be divided into two groups: first are the attitudinal theories that make individual benefit ultimately dependent upon pro-attitudes of some kind. (Notice that such theories are *subjective* theories in Sumner's sense.) In this category are L.W. Sumner's authentic happiness theory of well-being and two value-based accounts of well-being developed by Valerie Tiberius and Jason Raibley. Second, we will

turn to more inclusive theories of well-being that make well-being depend on non-attitudinal aspects of the self; here we will discuss theories developed by Dan Haybron and Richard Kraut.

### Attitudinal theories

L.W. Sumner develops a subjective theory that takes well-being to consist in authentic happiness. Because Sumner thinks of happiness as a subjective response to one's conditions of life, the theory is a subjective theory, and therefore also subject-dependent—whether some particular good benefits someone in a prudential sense depends on its effects on her attitude of life satisfaction.

Sumner argues that subjective theories can best explain and accommodate the subject-relativity of well-being. He writes,

Whatever their internal differences, the defining feature of all subjective theories is that they make your well-being depend on your own concerns: the things you care about, attach importance to, regard as mattering, and so on. What is crucial on such an account is that you are the proprietor or manager of a set of attitudes, both positive and negative, toward the conditions of your life. It is these attitudes which constitute the standpoint from which these conditions can be assessed as good or bad *for you*. It follows on this sort of account that a welfare subject in the merely grammatical sense—an individual with a distinct welfare—must also be a subject in a more robust sense—the locus of a reasonably unified and continuous mental life. Prudential value is therefore perspectival because it literally takes the point of view of the subject. Welfare is subject-relative because it is subjective (Sumner 1996: 42–43).

Because Sumner views a person's attitudes as central to well-being, the sense of happiness at work in his theory is attitudinal rather than hedonistic. Happiness, according to Sumner, consists in overall life satisfaction, which has both a cognitive and a conative aspect. The cognitive aspect of happiness involves "a positive evaluation of the conditions of your life, a judgement that, at least on balance, it measures up favourably against your standards and expectations" (Sumner 1996: 145). This cognitive aspect of happiness, then, largely amounts to a judgment or assessment that your life is going well according to whatever values, concerns, or standards you have regarding your life.

There is also an affective aspect to this sense of happiness, and this affective side of happiness involves what Sumner refers to as "a sense of well-being" (Sumner 1996: 146). To be happy in this way, we must not simply judge our lives to be satisfactory; we must also *feel* happy with them. While the evaluative aspect of happiness appears most central to Sumner's theory of well-being, these judgments are only constitutive of happiness when they are accompanied by positive feelings, such as feelings of fulfillment or satisfaction. Being happy in this sense is a matter of both judging and feeling that one's life is going well.

Happiness as life satisfaction is crucial to well-being, but it's not quite all there is to it. According to Sumner, happiness only constitutes well-being when it is *authentic*. Sumner's authenticity requirement is motivated by the same concerns that motivate his favoring subjective theories. Because they make well-being dependent upon people's attitudes of favor and disfavor, subjective theories are responsive to who we are as individuals with our own concerns, priorities, and interests. For various reasons, however—such as adaptation to adverse circumstances—our appraisals of how our lives are going (our satisfaction with life) may not accurately reflect our real concerns. In other words, we may be happy in a way that doesn't represent our real selves. Or, thinking of Rosati's analysis of well-being, we might put the point this way:

we can be happy in a way that doesn't really fit us. To capture fully the subject-relativity of well-being, then, happiness must be fitting to the individual. Sumner cashes this out in terms of an authenticity requirement, which he breaks down into two components: information and autonomy.

First, to count as authentic, a person's endorsement of her life must not be based on mistaken perceptions; it must be an endorsement of her life as it actually is. People therefore need to be informed about the conditions of their lives. However, Sumner does not require that a person have "full" information about her life in order for her assessment of her life to be authoritative. This criterion itself is subjectivized; Sumner writes that a person must not be deceived "in sectors of her life which clearly matter to her" (Sumner 1996: 160), making the individual's own concerns establish the realms in which accurate perception matters. In areas of her life that do not factor into her assessment of how her life is going, accurate information is less important. But when a person's perception of a particular aspect of her life (such as her perception of the quality of her personal relationships or her success at work) is driving her evaluation of her life, it is important that this perception not be dependent on her having faulty information. To the extent that we care about how our lives are *actually* going, our feelings and judgments that our lives are going well are only authoritative signs of our well-being when they derive from an accurate understanding of the relevant facts. The information requirement is therefore a way of aligning well-being with people's actual concerns. (See Sobel 2009 for further discussion of information requirements.)

In addition to being informed, a person's positive evaluation of her life must also be autonomous in order for it to be authentic. Sumner develops the autonomy requirement in response to concerns about adaptive preferences, famously raised by Amartya Sen (1987). Even when someone has a clear, informed understanding of the conditions of her life, we might still worry that her assessment of her life does not reflect who she is as an individual if she was never allowed the chance to develop or act upon her own values and priorities.

The important thing here, for Sumner, is that the values and concerns that inform our assessments of our lives be our own. Since our values are crucial to our own identity and to the way we shape our lives, we should form them autonomously. This requires the ability to engage in critical reflection, which can be hampered by some socialization processes. If we have been subjected to social pressures that deny us our autonomy, then our values may not truly represent who we are. Rather than developing a full account of autonomy, however, Sumner argues that a person's assessment of her life should be considered autonomous unless we have strong reason to believe it is not.

According to this theory, then, a person is living well when she is satisfied with her life, as long as this judgment is not based on non-autonomous values or factual mistakes that would change her assessment if corrected. Sumner holds that this theory of well-being best accommodates the subject-relativity that is central to the concept of well-being by ensuring that it connects well-being to what matters to us as individual well-being subjects.

Some have criticized that the life satisfaction theory for making happiness (and well-being) depends on judgments that are fundamentally dependent on one's perspective. There can be more than one assessment a person could authentically make of her life depending on which standards she brings to bear on this judgment, and it seems largely arbitrary which standard gets emphasized at any time (Haybron 2008). For instance, someone might be satisfied with her miserable life because she is resigned to it and doesn't think she could do any better; in this case, the assessment that her life is satisfying doesn't seem to amount to what we ordinarily think of as either happiness or well-being. Others have tried to solve this problem by defining the perspective from which life satisfaction assessments should be made to count as relevant to well-being (Tiberius and Hall 2010; Tiberius and Plakias 2010).

Sumner's life satisfaction theory ties well-being to what seems particularly important from the individual's own point of view. We might wonder, however, whether these assessments of life satisfaction are important enough in the scheme of a person's life to constitute well-being. Value fulfillment theories aim to avoid the problems related to the potential arbitrariness and transience of life satisfaction judgments by making well-being dependent upon what seems more stably meaningful to a person.

Valerie Tiberius, for example, defines well-being in terms of individuals' *values* (rather than their desires or their satisfaction with life) where achieving or fulfilling our values constitutes a reason-generating ideal (Tiberius 2008). According to her value fulfillment theory of well-being, a person's life goes well to the extent that she pursues and fulfills or realizes a subjectively appropriate system of values together over time.<sup>4</sup> The best life for a person is the one in which she gets the most value fulfillment she can, given her circumstances, and what is good for a person now is to do what contributes to some specification of the best, value-full life. In short, we live well when we realize what matters to us. This includes achieving certain states of affairs (such as career goals) and also maintaining the positive affective orientation that comprises valuing something. If your values include your own enjoyment, relationships with family and friends, accomplishing something in your career, and contributing to certain morally worthwhile projects, then your life goes well for you insofar as you realize these values for as long as they continue to be the things you care about.

The notion of a value is central to Tiberius's theory. The sense of "value" that is significant for well-being, according to Tiberius, is one wherein to value something is to care about it in a particular way. Values in this sense are reason giving (at least from the first-person perspective) and serve as the individual's standards for evaluating her life. For example, if you ask someone how her life is going, she may reflect briefly on the important domains in her life (such as family, work, and health) and consider how she is doing in terms of these important ends. In this way, values are different from mere desires; people can have desires that are trivial or even unworthy of satisfaction from their own point of view. This is not to say that the satisfaction of our trivial desires is worthless according to the value fulfillment theory. Value fulfillment theory can say that the satisfaction of even fairly trivial desires (e.g., for a beer this afternoon) is relevant to overall well-being when it contributes to something the person values, such as enjoyment, relaxation, or health. Values, then, are well suited to play a central role in a theory of well-being because they are the very thing that people take to make their lives go well.

A person's values, then, are comprised of patterns of relatively robust attitudes (such as emotions and desires) that we take to generate reasons for action.<sup>5</sup> For example, if you value your job, then you will be disposed to enjoy what you do, to feel proud when you get promoted and disappointed when you don't do your best work. When you reflect on how your life is going you will tend to consider how you're doing in your work, and you'll tend to take your job into account when making plans for the future. Valuing, therefore, has both an affective and a cognitive dimension—it involves our emotions and our judgment. This sense of valuing is broadly inclusive: people can value activities, relationships, broad aims, ideals, principles, particular goals that serve these more general ends, and so on. This characterization thus has features that make it compelling on its own as an account of valuing (as opposed to wanting or desiring). It also comports better with psychological research on values than philosophical theories that identify valuing with either a belief or a desire (Lewis 1989; Smith 1995; Dorsey 2012).

Jason Raibley, drawing on Tiberius's conception of values, also defends a theory that defines well-being in terms of the fulfillment or realization of a person's values: the "agential flourishing theory." According to Raibley, "valuing involves stable identification with one's pro-attitudes"

(Raibley 2010: 606–607). This identification will be “whole-hearted”; values are things we see as central to or representative of who we are. Values that are particularly stable in a person’s life Raibley calls one’s “ownmost” values: while we expect that some of our concerns will appropriately shift as we move through different stages of life, we see other values as more central to our identities and will be disposed to maintain and protect these values from change (as when we think, “I never want to be the type of person that . . .”). The realization of these “ownmost” values will be most beneficial for a person.

Of course, finding success in the things we value is not simply a matter of luck; a significant part of it, according to Raibley, comes down to possessing certain habits of mind, as well as a body that enables us to pursue a variety of activities. He writes,

In order to truly *flourish* as an agent, one must do more than successfully realize one’s values. One’s valuational and motivational systems must be functioning in a particularly robust way, so that one is *stably disposed* to realize one’s values to a sufficient degree. In particular, one must be ready to cope with the various forms of adversity that one is likely to encounter in the pursuit of one’s values, and one must be poised for further success. In order to count as having these dispositions, it is probable that one must develop certain aptitudes and habits and enjoy a variety of states ordinarily associated with good physical and psychological health. These states constitute the *causal basis* for the disposition to realize one’s values. It is therefore directly—as opposed to instrumentally—beneficial to be in these states.

(Raibley 2012: 1117)

Raibley focuses on the importance of dispositions in part as a response to one common criticism of subjective theories. It is often claimed that subjective theories cannot adequately explain the widespread intuition that states such as physical and mental health are prudentially beneficial *on their own*, regardless of whether they are explicitly valued or desired. Raibley argues that subjective theories can account for the intrinsic value of these states. Living well is a matter of realizing one’s values, and certain states—such as physical and emotional health—make the successful realization of values more likely. Someone who is severely depressed or seriously ill is less likely to flourish because achieving one’s values often requires being able to take action, to persevere in the pursuit of one’s goals. Good mental and physical health make it easier to take these actions and are therefore directly beneficial. Raibley argues that these states are part of the project of valuing, so while they are themselves non-attitudinal they still fit within an overall subjective framework. According to Raibley, “an adult human person is doing well at a time to the degree that they resemble the paradigm case of the flourishing agent at that time” (Raibley 2012: 1106), and a flourishing agent is one who both successfully achieves her values and has the physical and mental dispositions that enable her to continue to do so.

Value fulfillment theories, like other subjective theories, confront objections that stem from the fact that our actual psychological attitudes (desires, assessments of life satisfaction, or values) can be defective in various ways. As we saw, Sumner solves this problem by adding an authenticity requirement to the subjective state of happiness for it to count as well-being. Tiberius and Raibley aim to solve the problem by appealing to an ideal that can be used to criticize current values. Raibley argues that we should understand the ideal as a paradigm case of someone who successfully and sustainably achieves her values. Tiberius employs the notion of a value-full life and argues that we do not need to specify the precise contours of this ideal in order to apply the value fulfillment theory (Tiberius 2014).



### Whole-self theories

The distinction between subject-dependent and subjective theories allows us to see that a theory of well-being can have the benefits of the former without the costs of the latter. The theories we consider in this section are subject-dependent in that they make a person's good depend, at least in part, on her individual features, but they are not subjective theories because they do not take the person's *attitudes* to be the crucial feature for well-being. We are calling these theories "whole-self," because they invoke a more comprehensive or inclusive picture of the self in developing their accounts of well-being, making well-being dependent upon aspects of the self beyond our conative stances.

For instance, Dan Haybron develops a subject-dependent theory of well-being focused upon the idea of self-fulfillment. This account is eudaimonistic but differs from Aristotelian theories in being non-perfectionist and in focusing on individual natures rather than essential human traits.<sup>6</sup> The nature that most individual humans share, according to Haybron, is one in which sentiment and reason have "shared governance" (Haybron 2008: 16) and our powers of reason are quite fallible, particularly in their capacity for achieving well-being. Happiness—an emotional state—plays a crucial part in Haybron's account of well-being and is intrinsically valuable even if the person herself does not judge that it is valuable.

According to Haybron, "to be happy is roughly for one's emotional condition to be broadly positive with only minor negatives, embodying a stance of psychic affirmation" (Haybron 2008: 194). Happiness in this sense does not consist merely of positive affect—it's not simply about *feeling* happy, nor is happiness an assessment of life satisfaction. Rather, it includes, along with positive emotions, longer-term moods as well as emotional dispositions. It is a robust emotional condition that affects a person's response to life, instilling peace of mind, making her more interested and actively engaged in life, and predisposing her to feel more positive emotions. When this happiness is *authentic*—when it reflects who she truly is as a person—then it forms a vital part of her well-being.

Haybron contests the view that subjective accounts of well-being will necessarily be less alienating than non-attitudinal theories like his own. If our emotional natures are important parts of who we are, then focusing only on attitudes to the exclusion of all other parts of our natures presents a picture of the self that is artificially narrow. Haybron writes that, "the objective value of happiness is precisely that it is *not* alien to us: it is deeply bound up with the self" (Haybron 2008: 194). In other words, if someone does not recognize the importance of emotions to her well-being, then perhaps it is her own self, and not the account of well-being, from which she is alienated.

Haybron's self-fulfillment theory is subject-dependent because it defines well-being in terms of a feature of the individual, namely, the person's emotional state. This theory allows that different people, due to differing emotional and physical makeups, will be happy in different circumstances, but it does not make well-being dependent on our attitudes. In Sumner's terms, then, well-being is objective (that is, not dependent on subjective attitudes such as desires). We would be better off, Haybron says, pursuing lives that suit our emotional natures and thereby increase our happiness even if we do not, even *could* not, come to desire it or judge that it is valuable.

The final theory we consider in this subject-dependent category is Richard Kraut's "developmentalism." Like Rosati, Kraut argues that the "good for" relation is one of suitability; for *x* to be good for someone, it must suit her or serve her well. In contrast to the other theories considered in this chapter, Kraut draws on an Aristotelian account of human to nature to inform and fill out his conception of prudential value. According to Kraut, what is good for us is to flourish, and humans (along with all living beings) flourish when they develop and fully utilize

the “potentialities, capacities, and faculties, that (under favorable conditions) they naturally have at an early stage of their existence” (Kraut 2007: 131). The capacities the development and exercise of which benefit human beings include our “cognitive, affective, sensory, and social powers” (Kraut 2007: 137) as well as our physical capacities. Because the development of these capacities benefits someone independently of her attitude toward them, this is a whole-self account of well-being.

Although Kraut’s conception of human well-being is built upon a species-level account of human development, it is developed in a way that makes it, ultimately, subject-dependent. Kraut allows that there are differences between something’s being good for humans and something’s being good for a particular individual. According to Kraut,

there is no saying what is good for some particular individual living being, unless we know a great deal about him or her or it. Some of what we must know pertains to the peculiar circumstances and idiosyncrasies of that particular individual, though other facts we must know pertain to the species to which S belongs.

*(Kraut 2007: 4; see also Kraut 2011 for further discussion of this point)*

In this way, what is good for any given individual will depend on what she, specifically, is like. Although, according to Kraut, all humans could be said to possess certain capacities and potentialities at an early stage of development, these capacities can be developed and exercised through a wide range of activities. Which of these will be beneficial for any given individual will depend upon her specific nature, which may differ in a variety of ways from others of her kind. Unlike other Aristotelian accounts of well-being, according to developmentalism, to say that some good or activity would benefit all humans, it is not enough simply to say that such an activity constitutes the development of species-*typical* capacities. Such capacities must be possessed by all humans from an early age for such a statement to hold, and where there are any variations in specific abilities, prudential value must similarly diverge. It is in focusing on self-fulfillment in this way that Kraut’s developmentalism is a subject-dependent account.

## **Conclusion**

Theories of well-being are normally categorized as being either objective or subjective, but the taxonomy we discuss in this chapter may have some advantages over the usual way of dividing up theories. Thinking of theories as either subject-transcending or subject-dependent, and if subject-dependent, whether dependent on attitudes or other features of the subject, can draw our attention to issues sometimes obscured by thinking of theories as either subjective or objective.

First, as noted earlier, definitions of subjectivity and objectivity vary. According to a common definition (the one we employ in this chapter), subjective theories are those in which well-being depends on a person’s attitudes, while objective theories are those that reject this attitude-dependence. However, another common definition holds that subjective theories are those in which a person’s well-being is determined by her mental states (including, but not limited to, her attitudes), while a separate definition of objective theories (employed by Woodard in this volume: see Chapter 13) holds that they are those in which only objectively valuable goods and states can prudentially benefit a person. Depending on which of these definitions is being used, a theory like hedonism, for example, could be classified as either subjective or objective—objective when using the attitude-dependence criterion (if we say that pleasure benefits someone regardless of her attitudes toward it), subjective according to the mental-state conception of subjectivity, and objective again if pleasure is argued to be objectively valuable.

On one hand, it may not matter how we divide up theories, as long as we are clear about which definition we have in mind. On the other hand, our taxonomy can serve to highlight other salient differences between theories, and it is in this way that thinking of theories as subject-dependent or subject-transcending can be useful.

Consider, for example, the debate in the well-being literature about people's authority over their well-being. Subjective theories are often held to grant the individual some amount of control over, or special knowledge about, what counts as her own good. In response, objective theorists argue that what we want (or care about, or enjoy, etc.) may not be good for us, and what would be good for us we don't always value or appreciate (see, for example, Haybron 2008). This debate is related to the discussion of alienation, mentioned earlier—a commonly raised objection to objective theories of well-being is that, if something can be part of a person's well-being even if she in no way enjoys, desires, or values it, then her well-being will end up being something from which she is alienated. Given the typical subjective/objective framework, this debate often centers on the connection between a person's attitudes and her well-being. Thinking of the various ways in which a theory can be subject-dependent, however, presses this debate further by encouraging us to consider the variety of ways in which a theory can be sensitive to the unique characteristics of individual well-being subjects. Are our attitudes the only or most crucially relevant aspects of ourselves as subjects? Or, as Haybron argues, are other aspects of ourselves at least equally important, in which case any theory that neglects those aspects should also be considered alienating? If, as is often accepted, other aspects of ourselves beyond our attitudes—such as our emotional natures—are important parts of who we are, it may seem odd to call theories that incorporate these aspects into their accounts of well-being objective, and such a label may be unhelpful. Focusing on the differences between subjective and objective theories of well-being seems to encourage a battle of intuitions about particular prudential goods. The focus on the different ways in which a theory can be subject-dependent draws the attention back to the other half of the good-for relationship: the individual subject to whom well-being is thought to be relative. It may be that this shift in focus will also result in a battle of conflicting intuitions, but it seems a strategy worth exploring.

If well-being is, as Sumner and others maintain, subject-relative, then we need to give careful attention to what it is that makes someone a subject. Subject-dependent theories vary in terms of which aspect of the individual they hold to be crucial to well-being. For instance, according to Sumner, what makes human beings *subjects* is consciousness; in particular, we are subjects because, unlike plants or inanimate objects, we have a perspective on the world, and it is that perspective—our attitudes and stances toward the world—that is central to our well-being (Sumner 1996: 27–41). According to Haybron, however, we are emotional as well as rational beings, and as a result our well-being must be responsive to more than simply our cognitive and conative states. Some theories thus make well-being depend solely upon a person's attitudes, while others, such as value fulfillment theories, tend toward inclusivity insofar as the ideals to which values are held go beyond subjective attitudes, and still others cast a wider net in making emotional and physical states or the development of certain capacities important to well-being independently of a person's attitudes toward them. What all of these theories share, however, is a particular way of accounting for the subject-relativity of well-being. According to these theories, something can be good for someone in a prudential sense only when it is in some way responsive to who she is as an individual. Our well-being must fit the quirks and contours of our own lives, whether it is shaped by our attitudes, our values, our physical and emotional natures, or our aptitudes and capacities. While these theories do not offer full-fledged accounts of personal identity, they press us to examine our intuitions about the central or defining aspects of what it is to be a subject.

Furthermore, by drawing more attention to the question of how accounts of well-being can be appropriately subject-relative, thinking about theories in terms of subject dependence also encourages us to consider the meta-ethical question of what exactly the good-for relation consists in. For instance, if Rosati is correct that this relation is one of fit or suitability, then, depending on the correct analysis of fit or suitability combined with a particular conception of subjective agency, this may limit the set of plausible theories of well-being. If, as Haybron (2008) argues, our preferences and judgments of life satisfaction do not always align well with our emotional natures, then conative conceptions of well-being may not be ones that suit us. Other accounts of the good-for relationship could push us back toward conative theories. This is an area that could be explored further in developing subject-dependent theories of well-being.

If well-being is in fact subject-relative, then it may be that we cannot make concrete claims about prudential benefit without attending to the individual welfare subject; and if this is so, then it seems that any plausible theory of well-being must be subject-dependent. In taking seriously the question of which aspects of our selves—our attitudes, values, or emotional or physical natures—are definitive of who we are as persons, subject-dependent accounts strive to ensure that our well-being is subject-relative in a truly meaningful way.

### Notes

- 1 Alternatively, we may find that it is useful to come back to the metaethical characterizations of subject-relativity just canvassed in order to decide between competing theories. We suspect that some back and forth between analyses of subject-relativity and defenses of substantive theories of well-being will be productive and we will come back to some of these analyses later in the chapter.
- 2 See, for instance, Scanlon (1998), Kraut (2007), Haybron (2008), and Rosati (2009), among others. For an opposing view, see Sarch (2011).
- 3 See, for instance, Railton (1986) and Rosati (1996). Fletcher and Woodard also discuss alienation in their chapters of this volume (Chapters 12 and 13, respectively).
- 4 Tiberius actually claims to be defending an account of what it is to live a good life from your own point of view. Since this is a notion closely related to well-being, however, we include it here.
- 5 For a more detailed version of the account of valuing and values, see Tiberius (2000, 2008). For sympathetic treatments see Anderson (1995), Schmuck and Sheldon (2001), and Raibley (2010).
- 6 For a discussion of perfectionism, see Bradford (Chapter 10 in this volume).

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