

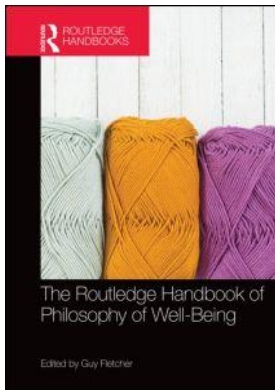
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## The Routledge Handbook Of Philosophy Of Well-Being

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### Well-being and animals

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## WELL-BEING AND ANIMALS

*Christopher M. Rice*

Animal well-being has received significant attention over the past several decades as philosophers and the wider public have begun to question the way that non-human animals (henceforth “animals”) are treated in contemporary society. Much of this debate has centered on the moral status of animals and on how much weight should be given to their interests in moral decision making. These questions, in turn, relate to debates about practices such as factory farming, animal experiments, zoos and aquariums, and the pet trade. In this chapter, I will not directly address the morality of these practices or the question of how much weight should be given to animal interests. Rather, I will focus on the related question of what these interests are—on what makes life go well for animals. To do this, I will examine several theories of animal well-being.

Most basically, animal well-being concerns what is good for an animal—what is in its interests, benefits it, and makes life go well for it. The term “animal welfare” is often used to refer to this as well. Almost everyone would agree that things such as adequate food, shelter, and socialization are generally good for animals, but different people might explain the value of these things in different ways. This suggests the need for a general theory of animal well-being that identifies what is ultimately (or non-derivatively) good for animals. The search for such a theory raises interesting philosophical issues, but is also of practical importance since there are cases where people want to promote an animal’s interests but disagree on what these are. For example, some debates about the proper care of pets and zoo animals hinge on this question.

Theories of animal well-being can be classified as subjective or objective. Subjective theories hold that states of affairs benefit animals because of some positive subjective attitude or attitudes that animals hold toward them (or might hold toward them under certain conditions). In contrast, objective theories hold that states of affairs benefit animals for reasons that are independent of the subjective attitudes that animals hold toward them (or might hold toward them under certain conditions). There can also be hybrid theories that combine both subjective and objective elements. In the next two sections, I will examine some subjective and objective theories of animal well-being.<sup>1</sup> Then, I will discuss some strategies for resolving—or at least understanding—the disagreement between proponents of these two approaches.

## **Subjective theories**

Some of the most prominent thinkers in recent animal ethics have appealed to some set of animals' feelings or desires in explaining their well-being. In this section, I will first consider hedonism. Then, I will consider the preference-based theories of animal well-being that have been defended by Peter Singer and Tom Regan, as well as some related issues that are raised by their views.

Hedonism is perhaps the most straightforward theory of animal well-being. This view, which identifies well-being with the balance of pleasure over pain in individual experiences, was famously defended by the classical utilitarians as an account of both human and animal well-being (Bentham 1988: 310–311, n. 1; Mill 2001: 12). Contemporary hedonists about human well-being, such as Roger Crisp (2006: 98–125), would presumably extend their accounts to the case of animals as well.<sup>2</sup> Many people are first moved to show concern for animals because animals can feel pleasure and pain. Hedonism captures the thought that these feelings are important to animal well-being and so gains support from this kind of sensitivity. Significantly, though, hedonism holds that an animal's well-being is determined entirely by the quality of its mental states. This means that an animal's activities and the external circumstances of its life can affect its well-being only to the extent that they affect its pleasure or pain.

Hedonism is sometimes assessed by considering cases where individuals lead lives that are pleasant but lack other things that are often associated with well-being. For example, Robert Nozick describes the case of the experience machine in which people can plug into a device that produces a series of pleasant illusions for them while they remain passive and unconnected to reality (Nozick 1974: 42–45). This presents a challenge to hedonism since the machine yields a life that is high in pleasure but that many people would not want for themselves. But, should we want this kind of life for animals? We can imagine plugging an animal such as a dog into the experience machine. As in the human case, people are likely to have mixed reactions about this. It may seem less troubling to deprive a dog than a human of active engagement with reality, and even less troubling to plug a frog or a fish into the experience machine. Still, while these animals would experience a continuous input of pleasure in this scenario, it is unclear whether this would be the best possible life for them.

Peter Singer rejects hedonism and instead favors a preference theory of well-being (see Singer 2011: 13). Accordingly, he connects an animal's well-being to the satisfaction of its desires or preferences, which in some cases extend beyond its immediate pleasure and pain. Still, there is a significant overlap between this view and hedonism in the case of many animals. Singer, like the classical utilitarians, identifies the capacity for enjoyment and suffering as what first marks off individuals as having well-being and thus deserving moral consideration (Singer 2011: 50). Further, Singer describes the well-being of many cognitively simple animals in terms of pleasure and pain, presumably because they do not desire much, if anything, beyond this (Singer 2011: 85–87, 111–112).<sup>3</sup>

Still, Singer does stress that some animals have preferences that extend beyond their own immediate experiences. He argues that some non-human animals should be considered persons, mentioning the great apes as good candidates for this status, as well as elephants, dolphins, dogs, cats, pigs, and certain other animals as possible persons (Singer 2011: 100–103). Singer defines a person as a rational, self-conscious being and argues that persons can form desires concerning their futures that provide especially strong reasons against killing them (Singer 2011: 73–85). If the animals just mentioned can form desires for their futures, then they can presumably also

form desires for other things that extend beyond their own immediate pleasure and pain, such as the desire to eat certain foods, move and play in certain ways, and interact with other members of their social group. This would expand the scope of their well-being such that it consists in the satisfaction of their specific preferences for the present and future, not just in pleasant feelings of any kind.

Of course, it is hard to determine which, if any, animals can form the kind of complex desires just described. For that matter, there are gray areas about exactly which simple animals can feel pleasure and pain. In these cases, subjective theorists need to rely on empirical data from biology and other sciences to determine which animals have the kinds of feelings or desires that figure in their theories, as well as what different animals enjoy or prefer and how to compare the relative strength of these attitudes.

Beyond this, one challenge for preference theories of well-being is that both humans and animals sometimes desire things that do not seem to be in their best interests or fail to desire things that do seem to be good for them. This can happen when desires are formed in light of bad information, oppressive living conditions, or limited thought for the future. In response to these cases, theorists of well-being have often qualified preference theories in some way. Singer, for example, suggests that a preference theorist might identify a person's well-being with those preferences "that we would have if we were fully informed, in a calm frame of mind and thinking clearly" (Singer 2011: 14). Similar theories identifying well-being with the satisfaction of rational and informed desires have been defended by other thinkers as accounts of human well-being. This raises the question, though, of how to apply these conditions to the case of animals. This is a tough issue since, even if some animals are rational and self-conscious, they are presumably less capable than many humans of reasoning about facts that pertain to their long-term well-being.

Gary Varner has highlighted this issue by describing the case of a cat that desires to go outside but is not able to understand the risks that are present there, such as fleas and the feline leukemia virus (Varner 1998: 59–60). Here, it is not just that the cat is uninformed about these risks, but that it is completely unable to understand them given its limited cognitive abilities. For this reason, it does not really make sense to ask what the cat would want if it were fully informed.

One way to respond to this case would be to insist that an animal's well-being consists in the satisfaction of its actual preferences, or in the satisfaction of those preferences it would have if it were presented with any facts that it is capable of understanding. However, this would lead to counterintuitive results in cases like the one Varner describes. Of course, another option would be to reject preference theories in favor of hedonism or some other account of well-being, such as an objective view.

Yet another possibility is described by Nicholas Agar in his discussion of Varner's case (Agar 2001: 75–77). Agar suggests that this case might be addressed by linking an animal's well-being to not just its present desires, but also to the desires it is likely to form in the future under different scenarios.<sup>4</sup> If, for example, Varner's cat is allowed to go outside and gets a viral infection, it is likely to have many frustrated desires in the future as a result of this. If these are also used in determining the cat's well-being, then going outside may not advance its overall well-being, even if it has no current desire to avoid the outdoors. On this view, it is worth noting that the satisfaction of poorly informed desires would still count toward an animal's well-being in some way. It is just that this value could be outweighed by the frustration of other desires that would arise in the future as a result of this (Agar 2001: 76–77).

Tom Regan presents another account of well-being that is capable of responding to the concerns raised by Varner's example. Regan holds that animals enjoy well-being to the extent that three conditions are satisfied: "(1) they pursue and obtain what they prefer, (2) they take satisfaction in pursuing and getting what they prefer, and (3) what they pursue and obtain is in

their interests” (Regan 2004: 93).<sup>5</sup> The first two clauses here connect both pleasure and desire to well-being. In particular, Regan holds that the pursuit and attainment of goals must be both pleasant and desired in order for it to contribute to an animal’s well-being.

Beyond this, Regan includes a third clause in his account to further restrict the set of desired states that contribute to animals’ well-being, stating that these states must be “in an animal’s interests.” By this, he seems to mean that they must enable, or at least not compromise, future opportunities for satisfaction.<sup>6</sup> Regan notes that animals have biological, psychological, and social needs which they must satisfy as a way to access key opportunities for satisfaction (Regan 2004: 88–90). Further, Regan stresses that it is important that an animal’s various desires be satisfied in a harmonious way over time, stating that:

The notion of harmonious satisfaction is crucial. It is not enough for an animal to have all the water she wants but no food, or all the food she wants but no water. Neither is it enough to satisfy all her desires on rare occasions. To live well, relative to one’s capacities, is to have one’s several desires satisfied in a harmonious, integrated fashion, not occasionally but regularly, and thus not just today but generally, throughout the time one retains one’s psychophysical identity.

*(Regan 2004: 89)*

Forms of satisfaction that conflict with this kind of harmonious satisfaction are not in an animal’s interests, and so fail to satisfy Regan’s third condition for well-being (Regan 2004: 91). If, for example, going outside would not be in the long-term interests of a cat, then this would not form part of its well-being. Like Agar’s proposal, this restriction helps with many cases in which animals desire things that do not seem to be good for them. One difference is that Regan does not seem to count the satisfaction of these desires toward an animal’s well-being at all, since they do not satisfy his third condition for well-being, while the view Agar describes would give their satisfaction some weight while stressing that this might be outweighed by the frustration of their other desires.

David DeGrazia observes that it is not entirely clear whether Regan’s theory is subjective, objective, or some of each (DeGrazia 1996: 231, n. 41). On Regan’s view, the only thing that directly contributes to an animal’s well-being is the pleasant satisfaction of its desires. This gives his view a strong subjective cast. At the same time, though, the requirement that an animal’s interests be secured in a harmonious way always operates in the background, limiting the specific desires that can count toward well-being and requiring some attention to an animal’s overall biological, psychological, and social good. This requirement helps Regan avoid some counterintuitive implications, but also places limits on the kind of preferences that can be satisfied as part of well-being—limits that are not set by an animal’s desires themselves, but by the standard of integrated, harmonious satisfaction that Regan presents.

### **Objective theories**

Despite the influence of subjective theories in recent animal ethics, many thinkers have defended objective accounts of animal well-being. These views typically connect an animal’s well-being to its flourishing as a member of its kind, often described in terms of its natural functioning. In this section, I will focus in particular on the views of Rosalind Hursthouse and Martha Nussbaum.

Hursthouse presents an especially detailed account of what it means for an animal to flourish as a member of its kind. As part of her account, she holds that many animals can be evaluated in

terms of four aspects, their “(i) parts, (ii) operations/reactions, (iii) actions, and (iv) emotions/desires” (Hursthouse 1999: 200). These aspects, in turn, can be evaluated with respect to how well they serve a number of natural ends, namely, “(i) individual survival, (ii) the continuation of the species, and (iii) characteristic pleasure or enjoyment/characteristic freedom from pain,” as well as, in the case of social animals, “(iv) the good functioning of the social group” (Hursthouse 1999: 200–201). Hursthouse’s view, which extends the related work of Philippa Foot, is that an animal flourishes as a member of its species to the extent that it achieves its natural ends in the ways characteristic of that species (Hursthouse 1999: 197–205; see also Foot 2001: 25–37).

Hursthouse’s account of flourishing draws on the Aristotelian view that things are good as members of their kind to the extent that they exercise certain defining functions of their nature (Aristotle 1999: 8–9). Hursthouse explains that judgments about animal flourishing do not depend on people’s desires or values, but on facts about the species in question which form part of certain natural sciences, such as zoology and ethology (Hursthouse 1999: 202–203).

Significantly, Hursthouse does not present her account of animal flourishing as a theory of animal well-being or welfare.<sup>7</sup> Still, her account fits well with many people’s views about what is good for animals. For example, people are often concerned when a pet or zoo animal is not acting in a natural way, even if it is otherwise happy and content. Further, several thinkers have employed the idea of natural flourishing in their accounts of animal well-being or closely related concepts (see, for example, Nussbaum 2006: 325–407; Rollin 2006: 94–142; Walker 2007; Taylor 2011: 60–71).

One important feature of Hursthouse’s view is how closely it connects an animal’s flourishing as a member of its kind to what is characteristic of its species. Hursthouse holds that only “characteristic” pleasure and freedom from pain form part of an animal’s flourishing as a member of its kind and that this flourishing involves the pursuit of each of an animal’s natural ends in ways that are typical of its species (Hursthouse 1999: 197–205).<sup>8</sup> She notes, for example, that what counts as contributing to the good functioning of a social group will vary among different social animals. Flourishing wolves typically hunt in a pack and defer to a leader, while members of other species might bond with each other by grooming or playing in ways that are typical of their kind (Hursthouse 1999: 201). Her view is that the flourishing of these animals as members of their species is tied to the particular activities that characterize these kinds.

In fact, Hursthouse stresses that an animal’s flourishing as a member of its species is tied to the pursuit of its natural ends in ways that are characteristic of its species even when this conflicts with the pursuit of certain of these ends, such as survival (Hursthouse 1999: 204). For example, Hursthouse describes the way in which birds of some species typically put themselves at risk to distract predators from the nests where their young are developing. Hursthouse explains that a member of one of these species that did not distract predators in this way would be deficient with respect to its flourishing as a member of its kind, even if this enhanced its own survival and freedom from pain (Hursthouse 1999: 204). This is because avoiding pain and danger in this way is not characteristic of the species in question, while promoting the continuation of the species by distracting predators is typical of these kinds of birds.

This case presents a challenge for thinkers who wish to use Hursthouse’s account as not just a theory of animal flourishing, but also an account of animal well-being. It may make sense to say that the bird that does not distract predators is not a good specimen of its kind, but it is harder to say that this defect is bad for the bird in the sense relevant to well-being. This is especially true if, as Hursthouse seems to assume, the bird in question is not frustrated by its disinclination to distract predators and will not mourn the loss of its young if they are killed. This is an area where intuitions are mixed. If a captive bird is prevented from flying, nesting, or spending time

with its young, many people would say that the bird is worse off at least in part because it is prevented from engaging in these characteristic behaviors. Yet, if the captive bird is prevented from defending its young in a way that puts its life in danger, that would be less troubling—and possibly not a loss of well-being at all.

Martha Nussbaum defends a connection between animal well-being and flourishing, but would not analyze the case just described in the same way as Hursthouse. As part of her view, Nussbaum identifies a list of basic capabilities that typically benefit animals when they are exercised. These capabilities—which parallel her well-known list of basic human capabilities—are (i) life, (ii) bodily health, (iii) bodily integrity, (iv) senses, imagination, and thought, (v) emotions, (vi) practical reason, (vii) affiliation, (viii) relation to other species, (ix) play, and (x) control over one's environment (Nussbaum 2006: 393–401). Nussbaum explains that these are objective values and contrasts her account with subjective views that define an animal's well-being in terms of pleasure or desire-satisfaction (Nussbaum 2006: 338–346). While she affirms that certain kinds of pleasure and freedom from pain form part of the capability of “senses, imagination, and thought” and certain other capabilities (Nussbaum 2006: 393–401, especially 396), she also holds that the appropriate exercise of capabilities can benefit animals even when this is not experienced as pleasant or would not be missed in its absence (Nussbaum 2006: 345, 393–401).

Nussbaum explains that the ways in which different animals should be supported in exercising their capabilities are “species-specific and based upon their characteristic forms of life and flourishing” (Nussbaum 2006: 392; see 365). Still, Nussbaum does not hold that everything that is characteristic of an individual's species and relates to a basic capability will form part of its well-being. Rather, she refines her account by appealing to people's judgments about what is good and worth having for animals.

Nussbaum notes that her account of well-being is not purely descriptive, but draws on people's normative judgments. As she explains:

In the human case, the capabilities view refuses to extract norms directly from some facts about human nature. We should know what we can about the innate capacities of human beings, and this information is valuable in telling us what our opportunities are and what our dangers might be. But we must begin by evaluating the innate powers of human beings, asking which ones are the good ones, and the ones that are central to the notion of a decently flourishing human life, a life with human dignity . . . The conception of flourishing is thoroughly evaluative and ethical; it holds that the frustration of certain tendencies is not only compatible with flourishing, but actually required by it.

*(Nussbaum 2006: 366)*

Nussbaum continues by stating that, in regard to animal well-being, “[t]here is a danger in any theory that alludes to the characteristic flourishing and form of life of a species” (Nussbaum 2006: 366–367). The danger is that humans will “worship” or “romanticize” nature and be unwilling to criticize those aspects of an animal's characteristic behavior that are detrimental to its good or to the good of others (Nussbaum 2006: 366–367). Nussbaum concedes that it is often difficult, if not impossible, to ethically evaluate an animal's life and that it is often best to let animals live the lives they choose for themselves, especially in the wild (Nussbaum 2006: 367, 371–372). Still, her appeal to people's normative judgments gives her theory some latitude in determining what counts as an animal's well-being.

For example, Nussbaum explains that lions have genuine predatory instincts but that these can be satisfied in ways that do not involve hunting gazelles, as would be typical of lions in the wild. In place of this, Nussbaum states that lions kept in captivity can flourish by playing with

balls that approximate the size and resistance of gazelles (Nussbaum 2006: 370–371). Given this flexibility, she might also judge the bird described above could enjoy well-being even if had no opportunity to distract predators from its nest. Nussbaum holds that “altruistic sacrifice for kin” can form part of an animal’s good (Nussbaum 2006: 345), so she would find some value in the bird’s protective behavior when it occurs as part of a rich social relationship in the wild. But, she would presumably judge that a bird is faring better when it can express social affiliation in less dangerous ways, as might occur in zoos or in areas where the bird’s natural predators are no longer a threat.

I do not want to overstate the contrast between Hursthouse and Nussbaum here. Although Hursthouse suggests that animal flourishing should be defined by appealing to sciences such as zoology and ethology (Hursthouse 1999: 202–203), these disciplines themselves embody certain kinds of evaluation. This is especially true if, as Hursthouse suggests, experts in these fields typically endorse the four natural ends on her list and evaluate animals by reference to them. The difference between Hursthouse’s and Nussbaum’s views seems to be that Hursthouse only allows evaluative judgments at this level (when identifying natural ends) and then ties an animal’s flourishing as a member of its species to the pursuit of these ends in whatever way is typical of its kind.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, Nussbaum allows evaluative judgments to enter into the process at two points: first in identifying the list of basic capabilities, and second in determining which ways of pursuing these are consistent with broader ethical concerns and what she calls “the well-being and dignity of the individual creature” (Nussbaum 2006: 357).

Still, as noted above, Nussbaum does appeal to a species’ characteristic form of life in some way within her theory. It does not, as just indicated, define an exact way in which animals must behave in order to enjoy a life of flourishing according to her view, but it does play a role in determining which general ways of expressing capabilities have significance from the perspective of justice. In this regard, Nussbaum holds that what justice requires of human agents is that each sentient animal be supported in reaching or maintaining a level of capability that is typical of its species (Nussbaum 2006: 365)<sup>10</sup>. Accordingly, she concludes that it is appropriate to provide an injured dog with a special wheelchair if its back legs are injured, but that justice does not require teaching language to chimpanzees (Nussbaum 2006: 363–366). Nussbaum notes that it may not be practical to secure even a species-specific level of flourishing for every animal—especially those in the wild (Nussbaum 2006: 372–380)—but that, when animals’ good is being considered, the species norm should determine what is due to them as a matter of justice. In this way, it can serve as an objective standard that governs human interaction with animals. Whereas subjective theories might focus exclusively on pleasure or desire-satisfaction in determining how animals should be treated, Nussbaum favors connecting concern to support for animals’ basic capabilities.

### Comparing approaches

As is true in the case of human well-being, subjective and objective theories of animal well-being often overlap in practice. Both, for example, would conclude that many animals raised on factory farms have a low level of well-being since they experience significant pain and desire-frustration and fall short of the characteristic flourishing of their species. Still, there are important differences between objective and subjective views at the level of theory and there are presumably some real cases in which subjective and objective theories come apart. For example, there may be some animals that can be kept in small cages with relatively few frustrated desires but which are still prevented from exercising certain basic capabilities of their nature. These animals might score high in well-being according to some subjective theories but low according to objective views.



In practice, animal welfare legislation and those involved in animal industries often adopt a mixed approach to animal well-being. This is exemplified in the five freedoms proposed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council of the United Kingdom, which include both subjective and objective criteria for well-being. These five freedoms are:

1. **Freedom from Hunger and Thirst**—by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. **Freedom from Discomfort**—by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. **Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease**—by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. **Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour**—by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. **Freedom from Fear and Distress**—by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

*(Farm Animal Welfare Council 2009)*

These freedoms are not meant to provide a philosophical theory of animal well-being and do not include an account of how to balance concern among the five freedoms listed to determine an animal's overall well-being. Still, it is noteworthy that they include subjective and objective criteria side by side. This illustrates the extent to which both subjective and objective judgments about animal well-being operate in contemporary discussions of animal welfare.

When presented with this set of judgments, and with the subjective and objective theories I have described above, proponents of either approach might try to argue that the most important concerns of the opposing side are captured within their view. For example, subjectivists can suggest that the best way to promote an animal's pleasure and preference-satisfaction is usually to allow it to live in a way that is characteristic of its kind. This would give concern for natural flourishing an important derivative role in their theories and might explain our intuitive wariness of cases where animals are prevented from living in a natural way. Similarly, objectivists can point out that a favorable balance of pleasure over pain and the satisfaction of an animal's most central desires are fairly reliable indicators of natural flourishing and so could play an important derivative role within objective views. The most controversial cases are those in which animals enjoy pleasure or desire-satisfaction apart from their natural flourishing and those in which animals flourish in ways that do not bring them significant desire-satisfaction or enjoyment. As in analogous cases concerning human well-being, a lot depends on how these cases are evaluated.

David DeGrazia discusses another context in which subjective and objective theories of animal well-being function differently and that can accentuate the differences between these two approaches. This concerns the comparison of well-being across species. DeGrazia focuses, in particular, on comparing the harm that premature death causes to typical members of different species—say, a human and a dog, or a dog and a mouse (DeGrazia 1996: 231–257). Here, DeGrazia understands harm as the loss of future well-being so this closely corresponds to the question of which kinds of animals typically enjoy the greatest well-being as they live their lives. In what follows, I will focus on the question in this positive form and so set aside further issues related to the ethics of killing and letting die. Many people agree that humans typically enjoy greater well-being than other animals and that, beyond this, cognitively sophisticated animals typically enjoy greater well-being than cognitively simpler ones (DeGrazia 1996: 232, 237).

In fact, as DeGrazia notes, even thinkers who defend strong duties to animals have often been willing to affirm this general view (DeGrazia 1996: 232–234, 237; see also, for example, Regan 2004: 324). But, as DeGrazia explains, subjectivists and objectivists about well-being will have to support this claim in different ways.

Subjectivists will want to connect their arguments to the kinds of subjective goods that figure in their theories. With respect to the comparison of humans and other animals, they will most likely want to argue that typical humans experience quantitatively more pleasure, desire-satisfaction, or whatever other subjective goods count toward well-being than typical non-human animals (DeGrazia 1996: 237–240, 252–253). In particular, they will presumably want to argue that typical humans enjoy, on balance, stronger or more satisfying subjective fulfillments than typical members of other species (DeGrazia 1996: 238–239). Significantly, though, this analysis will need to take into consideration not only the special highs that are open to humans on account of their distinctive abilities, but also the lows of human life that are not typically experienced by other animals (DeGrazia 1996: 239–240, 252–253).<sup>11</sup>

Objective theorists, in contrast, can choose to focus on qualitative differences between how the objective goods they affirm are realized in human and animal lives (DeGrazia 1996: 243–247, 253–254). For example, these thinkers might argue that humans typically attain objectively more valuable forms of reasoning, social affiliation, and other goods than non-human animals and that this explains their differing levels of well-being (DeGrazia 1996: 243–244). Here, it is not a quantitative difference in how much of something is realized in different lives, but a qualitative difference in the value of certain objective goods.

As DeGrazia notes, there are also other ways in which thinkers have tried to address the issues he raises. One way is to insist that it is impossible to compare well-being across species, or at least decline to do so (DeGrazia 1996: 247–248). Another possibility is to use hypothetical choice situations in which people are asked to imagine lives from different species and choose which they would want for themselves—a method suggested in some way by both John Stuart Mill and Peter Singer (DeGrazia 1996: 240–243). Returning to the subjective and objective strategies described above, both have some intuitive appeal but also face challenges in working out the precise details of how to compare well-being across species. These concerns can prompt defenders of both views to further specify how they define well-being and how they would use their theories in interspecific contexts.

DeGrazia's concerns also raise a more fundamental question about the extent to which theories of animal well-being should be integrated with theories of human well-being, such as those considered in the other chapters of this volume. Some thinkers have argued that it is important for the best theory of animal well-being to share a common structure with a theory of human well-being, such that the two form a single theory and explain human and animal well-being in similar ways (see, for example, Sumner 1996: 14–15; Kraut 2007: 3–8). The alternative possibility would be that human and animal well-being are so different that they do not share a similar structure, even at the level of theory. While it is not entirely clear how much weight should be given to the concern for a unified theory, some degree of unification between theories of human and animal well-being does seem desirable.

If this concern is given significant weight, then it is not necessary to consider animal well-being in isolation from human well-being but would be best to consider both together. This would allow insights from the debate about human well-being to inform our assessment of various theories of animal well-being and allow examples and arguments concerning animals to inform our views about human well-being. Here, animals would represent a special case that could help test and refine our more general thoughts about well-being. Many animals are less capable of rational thought than humans, but also possess special skills and inclinations that are

not shared by our species. These factors make animal well-being an important area of inquiry in its own right, but also allow discussions of animal well-being to contribute in a unique way to the debate about human well-being.<sup>12</sup>

### Notes

- 1 While hedonism is variously classified as a subjective or an objective theory, I will group it with the subjective theories in this chapter.
- 2 Fred Feldman defends a somewhat unorthodox form of hedonism (Feldman 2004), which he believes applies to animals as well as humans (Feldman 2002: 607).
- 3 In *Animal Liberation* (Singer 2009), Singer also describes animal well-being in terms of pleasure and pain, but this may be part of his desire to remain open to competing moral theories in that work (Singer 1999: 292).
- 4 This is a dialectical point Agar makes in considering the case Varner describes. Agar's own detailed theory of value is presented throughout Agar (2001).
- 5 Although some of his points may hold true more broadly, Regan typically uses the word "animal" to refer to "mentally normal mammals of a year or more" in age (Regan 2004: 78).
- 6 In the text, Regan connects the idea of "welfare-interests" to that of "benefits," which he describes as instrumental goods that "make possible, or increase opportunities for, individuals attaining the good life within their capacities" (Regan 2004: 87–88; see also Regan 2004: 92).
- 7 One indication that Hursthouse would not directly equate an animal's well-being with its flourishing is her remark that some animals are "individually benefitted" by things that detract from their flourishing as members of their species (Hursthouse 1999: 205).
- 8 In some cases, she would also consider an animal's subspecies, sex, or social role within a species in assessing its characteristic flourishing (Hursthouse 1999: 205).
- 9 Hursthouse draws on further evaluative judgments in her assessment of humans and their ways of pursuing the natural ends (Hursthouse 1999: 192–193, 222–224, 228–229), but I confine my remarks here to her account of animal flourishing.
- 10 While non-sentient animals may have a good of some kind, Nussbaum restricts her account of justice to sentient animals or (were they to exist) non-sentient animals that have other higher capabilities on her list, such as reason or emotion (Nussbaum 2006: 361–362).
- 11 Rather than merely aggregating all of an individual's subjective benefits, DeGrazia notes that a theorist might give special weight to the highest highs in calculating overall well-being. While this strategy might help to vindicate the greater value of human over animal well-being, DeGrazia worries that it is ad hoc and not well motivated (DeGrazia 1996: 240).
- 12 I would like to thank Matt Ferkany, Christopher Gowans, Richard Kim, and William Lauinger for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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