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Antonella Delle Fave *Editor*

The Exploration of Happiness

Present and Future Perspectives

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Happiness Studies Book Series

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Aims and Scope

Exploring features and implications for personal and social empowerment from a substantially interdisciplinary point of view.
Like the Journal of Happiness Studies, the series explores happiness through both objective and subjective indicators. Subjective aspects comprise cognitive evaluations (like life satisfaction), positive affect and emotions, development of meanings, competences, and goals.
Key issues include appraisal of life, work conditions, mental and physical health, developmental trajectories throughout the life span, socio-economic conditions, cultural aspects, and their impact on individual and social wellbeing.

Antonella Delle Fave
Editor

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Editor
Antonella Delle Fave
Department of Pathophysiology
and Transplantation
University of Milano
Milan
Italy

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Contributors

Robert A. Cummins Deakin University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, e-mail: cummins@deakin.edu.au

Edward L. Deci University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Antonella Delle Fave Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation, University of Milano, Settore Didattico Ospedale Sacco, Via G.B. Grassi 74, 20157 Milan, Italy, e-mail: antonella.dellefave@unimi.it

Ed Diener University of Illinois and Gallop Organization, 901 West Illinois Street, Urbana, IL 61801, USA

Marissa Diener University of Utah, 1901 East South Campus Drive, Salt Lake City, UT 84112, USA

Grant Duncan School of People, Environment and Planning, Massey University Albany, Private Bag 102-904, North Shore MSC, Auckland, New Zealand, e-mail: L.G.Duncan@massey.ac.nz

Richard Eckersley 23 Garland Rd, Bundanoon, NSW 2578, Australia, e-mail: richard@richardeckersley.com.au

Tak Fung Information Technologies, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Linda Fung Statcomp Consulting Services Ltd, Calgary, AB, Canada

Tan H. Hoon Psychological Sciences, University of Missouri-Columbia, McAlester Hall, Columbia, MO 65211, USA

Veronika Huta University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada

M. Joseph Sirgy Department of Marketing, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0236, USA, e-mail: sirgy@vt.edu

Cheryl Kier Psychology Centre, Athabasca University, Athabasca, AB, Canada

Chu Kim-Prieto Department of Psychology, The College of New Jersey, 2000 Pennington Road, Ewing, NJ 08628, USA, e-mail: kim@tcnj.edu

Shinobu Kitayama University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Ambrose Leung Department of Policy Studies, Mount Royal University, Calgary, AB, Canada, e-mail: acleung@mtroyal.ca

Mike W. Martin Department of Philosophy, Chapman University, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866, USA, e-mail: mwmartin@chapman.edu

Vinai Norasakkunkit Minnesota State University, Mankato, MN, USA; Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA, USA

Jan Ott Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, e-mail: jan.ott@planet.nl

Nansook Park Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, 525 East University, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1109, USA

Christopher Peterson† Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, 525 East University, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1109, USA

Richard M. Ryan University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627, USA, e-mail: ryan@psych.rochester.edu

Carol D. Ryff Institute on Aging and Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, MI, USA, e-mail: cryff@wisc.edu

Jörg Schimmel United Nations Development Programme, PO Box 101, UN House, Deloitte Tower, Level 14, Douglas Street, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea , e-mail: jorg.schimmel@undp.org

Christie Scollon Texas Christian University, 2800 West Bowie Street, Fort Worth, TX 76109, USA

Martin E. P. Seligman Department of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA

Kennon M. Sheldon Psychological Sciences, University of Missouri-Columbia, McAlester Hall, Columbia, MO 65211, USA, e-mail: sheldonk@missouri.edu

Burton H. Singer Office of Population Research/Institute on Aging, Princeton University/University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, USA

Robert Sproule Department of Economics, Bishop's University, Sherbrooke, QC, Canada

Maya Tamir Stanford University, 450 Serra Mall, Stanford, CA 94305, USA

Yukiko Uchida Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies, Kokoro Research Center, Kyoto University, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501, Japan, e-mail: yuchida@umich.edu; yukikou@educ.kyoto-u.ac.jp

Jukka Varelius Department of Behavioural Sciences and Philosophy, University of Turku, 20014 Turku, Finland, e-mail: varelius@hotmail.com

Ruut Veenhoven Erasmus University Rotterdam, P. O. Box 1738, 3000 Rotterdam, The Netherlands; North-West University, Mmabatho 2745, South Africa, e-mail: veenhoven@fsw.eur.nl

Jiyun Wu Management and Marketing Department, School of Management, Rhode Island College, Providence RI 02908, USA, e-mail: JWU@ric.edu

During the preparation of this book Christopher Peterson—the first author of Chap. 9—suddenly and untimely passed away. With this publication we would like to pay homage to a colleague whose commitment and dedication to the study and teaching of well-being has been recognized by the whole academic and professional community of positive psychology.

Part I
Individual Well-Being: Theory and Research

Chapter 1
The Exploration of Happiness: Present and Future Perspectives

Antonella Delle Fave

Happiness is gaining increasing momentum as a core topic in research and intervention programs. The Journal of Happiness Studies was launched in 2000 as the first international scientific forum open to scientists and researchers belonging to the most diverse disciplines, who aimed at proposing and discussing conceptualizations, empirical findings, intervention programs, and social policy strategies related to this multifold and controversial construct.

In the last few years the number of submissions to the Journal of Happiness Studies steadily increased, and in June 2011 the Journal received its first Impact Factor. This success represents both an indicator of the high scientific quality of the contributions, and an uncontroversial sign of the ceaselessly growing interest in the investigation of happiness, well-being and related topics from a variety of epistemological perspectives, ranging from economics to sociology, from psychology to philosophy, from education to medicine.

This book represents the first volume of a series that aims at complementing the Journal of Happiness Studies. Each book will provide readers with an articulated overview of a specific topic, investigating it from various points of view. The distinctive feature of gathering multidisciplinary contributions around a unifying theme will be unique for this series in the current domain of well-being publications. It will help strengthen cross-disciplinary synergies among authors investigating the same topic, and it will raise the interest in happiness research among professionals and experts belonging to a broad range of domains.

This first volume includes a selection of contributions published in the Journal of Happiness Studies during its first decade of life, with the aim to provide readers with a general overview of the prominent issues, problems and challenges that well-being research has been facing since its appearance on the scientific stage.

The chapters address issues that lie at the core of the lively debate going on around happiness, ranging from theoretical frameworks and models to social and

A. Delle Fave (✉)
Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation, University of Milano,
Settore Didattico Ospedale Sacco, Via G.B. Grassi 74, 20157 Milano, Italy
e-mail: antonella.dellefave@unimi.it

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political action. They tackle still controversial issues, such as the contextualization of happiness within the subjective or the objective realm, the adequacy of the instruments used to assess it, its relevance for individuals and societies as a goal *per se*, or rather as a means or a by-product of a life well-lived.

1.1 Book Overview

1.1.1 Part 1: Individual Well-Being—Theory and Research

The first two chapters of this volume address the nature of happiness and its function in human life. Varelius (2004) contrasts objective and subjective theories of happiness; the former are grounded into the assumption that well-being can be described through behaviors and activities that contribute to shape the good life in accordance with shared values, moral principles, and universal features of the "human nature"; the latter identify happiness with the fulfillment of subjectively perceived desires and aspirations. Varelius offers a solution to this conceptual opposition, suggesting that while subjective well-being (SWB) can be empirically evaluated, no scientifically sound techniques are currently available to measure the objective components of happiness. Therefore, considering that subjective evaluations of well-being are necessarily contextualized within an external system of social values and moral principles, and that they arise from the individual interaction with this system, further developments in the empirical investigation of SWB can fruitfully help shed light on its relationship with objective dimensions.

Martin (2008) offers an overview of some paradoxes that the conceptualization of happiness conveys. Moving from the well-known assumption "to get happiness, forget about it", he discusses a set of paradoxical statements that characterize the history of happiness investigation, categorizing them as paradoxes of aim, success, freedom, and attitude. His final summary focuses on the need for an integrated perspective, interpreting these paradoxes as one-sided truths that are in tension with each other, rather than conflicting and mutually exclusive perspectives. Martin calls for a broader framework in which the subjective experience of happiness is interwoven with socially constructed values, standards, and ideals, rather than being identified with them. He also stresses the dynamic nature of happiness, whose subjective evaluation changes with time in relation with the individual development process and life experiences.

The subsequent chapters are grounded in well-defined psychological theories developed in the last three decades. Their authors conceptualize individual wellbeing from two different but complementary perspectives: hedonism and eudaimonism, both rooted in ancient Greek philosophical systems. The origins of the hedonic view of happiness can be traced back to Aristippus of Cyrene (IV century B.C), who equated happiness with pleasure, stating that only what is pleasant or has pleasant consequences is intrinsically good. Today, the hedonic approach to happiness is centered on the concept of SWB that includes positive affect and global life satisfaction judgements (SWB; Kahneman et al. 1999). The eudaimonic view stems from Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia, described as the fulfillment of one's true nature, that includes both self-actualization and commitment to socially shared goals. Today this approach to the study of well-being comprises a wide range of constructs, such as self-actualization and self-acceptance, perception of purpose and meaning, self-determination, cultivation of competences, trust in relationships, and cooperation. One of the basic differences between these two perspectives is that the eudaimonic approach focuses on the process of living well, investigating the factors that contribute to it; the hedonic approach is instead prominently focused on the outcomes of this process.

Two chapters endorse the hedonic perspective. Kim-Prieto et al. (2005) propose a integrated and time-sequential framework for the investigation of SWB. In particular, they highlight the dynamic structure of SWB, grounded in the sequential addition and integration of new information that takes place throughout the individual life, thus contributing to changes in SWB ratings. This sequential framework is articulated into four stages: the first one refers to objective aspects, such as life circumstances and events occurring in the individual life; the second stage is represented by the subjective emotional reactions to these circumstances and events; the third stage is constituted by the retrospective recall and reconstruction of the emotional reactions previously experienced; the fourth stage refers to global life satisfaction judgements. Kim-Prieto et al. discuss objective and subjective factors that can influence each of these stages, and emphasize their interrelationship rather than their developmental progression. More than one sequence can take place at the same time; reciprocal influences can be hypothesized between sequences and stages; each stage can exert an influence on other stages in the same sequence, in parallel sequences or in future ones. This integrated framework can allow researchers to better disentangle the specific contribution of the different components considered in each stage to the global construct of SWB.

The dynamic structure of SWB is also taken into account by Cummins (2010), but from a different point of view. He hypothesizes the evolution of a homeostatic mechanism aimed at safeguarding the widely observed stability of SWB values within a narrow range, situated toward the positive pole of the satisfaction rating scale. This hypothesis can help clarify the psychological processes underlying individuals' adaptation and successful coping with life challenges, as well as the negative consequences of the disruption of homeostasis generated by an excessively demanding situation. Within this framework, depression can be interpreted as the long-term outcome of a chronic impairment in the homeostatic mechanism that allows for the stability of functional levels of SWB.

Two other chapters refer instead to the eudaimonic perspective. Ryff and Singer (2008) offer a synthetic overview of the historical and conceptual roots of the multidimensional construct of psychological well-being (PWB; Ryff 1989). They contextualize PWB within the eudaimonic framework, identifying a set of theoretical precursors for each of its components—purpose in life, self-acceptance, mastery, autonomy, positive relations, and personal growth. They finally provide updated findings showing the relations between PWB and biological correlates, and suggesting the positive impact of PWB on health.

Ryan et al. (2008) include in their conceptualization of eudaimonia subjectively pursued aims, as well as individual characteristics that are judged as exemplary and excellent in relation to objective and shared values. They propose a model of good life based on self-determination theory, suggesting that the pursuit of intrinsic aspirations and goals is connected at the motivational level with the three basic needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness, and at the cognitive level with reflectivity and mindfulness, defined as the ability to clearly and appropriately evaluate events and situations, and to consequently act and make choices in a meaningful and integrated way.

The authors of the last three chapters in this part propose unified frameworks, in which both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well being can be combined.

Peterson et al. (2005) propose an operalization of well-being grounded in the identification of three orientations to happiness: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. They provide empirical evidence of the relative impact of each orientation on the overall ratings of life satisfaction. In particular, their findings show that a life filled with all three orientations leads to the greatest life satisfaction in comparison to a life with low levels of all three orientations. However, engagement and meaning contribute to happiness more significantly than pleasure.

A multidimensional approach is also adopted by Sheldon and Hoon (2007), who provide empirical evidence of the independent contribution to SWB of a set of psychological and environmental determinants, the former including personality traits, need satisfaction, progress toward personal goals, and self-esteem, the latter comprising social support and a favorable cultural context. Thanks to its unique and specific contribution to SWB, each of these six determinants represents a distinct level within a unified hierarchical model.

Sirgy and Wu (2009) finally propose to expand the orientations to happiness model by adding to it the contribution of balance, defined as a state "reflecting satisfaction or fulfilment in several important domains with little or no negative affect in other domains" (Sirgy and Wu 2009, p. 185). Sirgy and Wu move from two basic assumptions: each life domain is structured around a limited set of needs, that can be related to survival, to growth, or to both; each life domain—according to the kind of needs it satisfies, and to the extent it allows for their fulfilment—is characterized by a specific salience, that makes it more or less effective in contributing to the overall well-being. Therefore, because of the satisfaction limit that can be derived from a single domain, people have to invest their resources in multiple life domains in order to satisfy the full spectrum of survival and growth needs. These considerations lead the authors to consider balance as the potentially prominent source of SWB.

1.2 Part 2: Socio-Economic and Cultural Issues

This second part of the book includes contributions specifically addressing social and cultural aspects of happiness, prominently derived from studies conducted within the sociological and economic perspectives.

The first three chapters focus on theoretical models and constructs that substantially contribute to contextualize well-being research within a broad sociocultural perspective. Veenhoven (2000) proposes a 4-fold model to describe quality of life, identifying two major dimensions—chances and outcomes—and distinguishing in each of them outer (objective) and inner (subjective) qualities. The model is thus constituted of four quadrants. Outer chances refer to the livability of the environment and social context; inner chances refer to the personal abilities to cope with the environmental demands. Outer outcomes can be summarized in the concept of "utility of life", assuming that a good life is based on higher values transcending the individual; inner outcomes are represented by appreciation of life that can be operationalized as the assessment of subjective well-being. After providing examples of how this 4-fold classification can be used in different disciplines, for example to evaluate the quality of health conditions or the qualities of a social system, Veenhoven warns against the tendency to sum up factors belonging to each of the four quadrants of the model in the attempt to get an aggregated quality of life score, since they assess qualitatively different dimensions, many of them not being directly and reliably measurable (such as utility of life). He also emphasizes the importance of implementing the assessment of subjective aspects, that can be measured and compared more effectively than some of the outer indicators of quality of life.

Leung et al. (2011) focus on social capital, a construct that is gaining increasing attention in well-being research. Relying on empirical evidence obtained from a large national survey, they discuss the relationship between subjective well-being ratings and four dimensions of social capital: trust and obligations; information channels; norms and sanctions; and belongingness. Their results suggest that these dimensions can be fruitfully used as predictors of subjective well-being, and can thus represent an implementation target for social policies aimed at promoting citizens' well-being.

The need for contextualizing happiness studies within cultures is effectively highlighted by Uchida et al. (2004). They bring empirical evidence of the different evaluation of well-being among European American and East Asian participants: while among Westerners happiness is best predicted by self-esteem, and positive and negative emotions are perceived as opposite poles negatively correlated with each other, among Asians happiness is best predicted by embeddedness, and as balance between positive and negative effect. These differences can be related to the specific patterns of independent and interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama 1991), promoted in individualistic and collectivistic cultures respectively. Individualistic cultures encourage people to use subjective cues and dimensions to define themselves, their goals, and their achievements; on the contrary, individuals raised in collectivistic contexts build their selfdefinition according to interpersonal and group dimensions: goals are settled within the community; and other people's needs are crucially important in goal setting and achievement.

The last four chapters tackle the problematic issue of the relationship between happiness and indicators of national development. This issue is problematic in that it calls into play theoretical assumptions about two crucial points: the selection of the socioeconomic indicators that can best represent development; the identification of subjective well-being with the *summum bonum* to be pursued by individuals and governments. Far from being neutral and objective, these assumptions stem from values that are historically and culturally grounded.

From this problematic stance, Eckersley (2000) addresses the relationship between progress and happiness. On the basis of empirical evidence showing that growth in national wealth is not correlated with increasing values of well-being, especially in developed nations where basic needs are satisfied, he critically discusses the assumption that maximizing subjective well-being should be the ultimate goal of progress. As an alternative approach, he suggests the pursuit of a balance between individual and social dimensions of happiness, grounded in collective agency, prudence, and responsibility.

On the same vein, Duncan (2010) criticizes the view according to which governments should aim at maximizing their citizens' happiness. He emphasizes the risks entailed in the promotion of a consumerist perspective that reduces policies to products, generating in citizens a spiral of progressively rising expectations that would be impossible to fulfill. Considering that there is no clear empirical evidence of a positive relationship between governments' policy performance and citizens' political trust and participation, Duncan recommends to clearly distinguish between government actions and citizens' levels of happiness and life satisfaction. The two phenomena do not necessarily overlap, and thus cannot be jointly used to assess governments' overall performance.

The problematic consequences of equating well-being with wealth and material abundance is a concern for Schimmel (2009), who discusses the conceptualization of development endorsed by the United Nations Development Program (UNPD), and operationalized through the Human Development Index (HDI). HDI focuses of three major indicators of well-being: standard of living (GDP), health, and education. Schimmel argues that this approach evaluates poverty exclusively in terms of lack and deficiency, adopting as norm of reference the life conditions of an ideal young, affluent, healthy, and educated citizen. From this perspective, well-being is synonymous with abundance of resources. Several studies however contradict this assumption, showing very uncertain relationships between the position of a country in the HDI ranking and the level of subjective well-being reported by its citizens. This contradictory finding holds true also considering each of the three indicators separately. Schimmel concludes that objective and subjective dimensions have to be combined in any evaluation of development, outlining the problems that can derive from confounding the potential to be happy with the actual state of being happy.

On the contrary, Jan Ott (2010) suggests that governments should more systematically rely on citizens' evaluations of happiness in order to develop adequate policy interventions. He summarizes empirical evidence on the influence of governments' technical quality and of social equality on citizens' levels of subjective well-being. On the basis of this evidence, Ott suggests that collecting information on the life conditions of citizens reporting different levels of happiness can shed light on the sources of these differences, and can thus offer governments useful hints about specific social needs and problematic issues, providing direction for the promotion of more equal levels of happiness among citizens, through a more equal distribution of resources.

1.3 Future Directions

1.3.1 Beyond Reduction, Towards Integration

While each of the chapters in this book is grounded into well-defined theories and perspectives, and focuses on specific constructs and dimensions of well-being, it is possible to identify a fil-rouge, a shared concern that crosses most of them. This concern consists in the tension toward a unified framework that encompasses the variety of well-being dimensions as exhaustively as possible. This goal is surely ambitious, and cannot be successfully pursued without ignoring some crucial aspects.

In particular, there is the necessity to gain deeper insight into the multiple psychological dimensions of well-being, avoiding simplified and reductionist perspectives. For example, empirical evidence clearly highlighted that eudaimonic and hedonic happiness are two correlated but separate constructs (Delle Fave et al. 2011a, b; Gallagher et al. 2009; Huta and Ryan 2010; Linley et al. 2009; Keyes and Annas 2009). The models proposed in this book by Peterson and his colleagues, Sheldon and Hoon, and Sirgy and Wu represent laudable and heuristically relevant attempts to address this issue.

A second aspect to be carefully considered when studying well-being is its contextualization within cultural and situational constraints. Uchida et al. effectively raise the issue of the cultural rootedness of well-being concepts. Veenhoven distinguishes between chances and results, thus pointing to the interplay between environmental opportunities and constraints, on the one hand, and individual evaluations of well-being. Eckersley, Duncan, and Schimmel unveil the cultural biases underlying widespread assumptions on well-being at the social and individual levels. Ott points to the fact that when people evaluate their level of happiness by averaging positive and negative aspects of their life, thus making the relationship between happiness and objective conditions ambiguous. Several other studies have delved into the role of well-being dimensions in dealing with unfavorable circumstances. In periods of uncertainty or change and in the adjustment to stressful events people report high levels of meaning making, even though associated with low levels of SWB (Folkman and Greer 2000; Park 2005; Shmotkin et al. 2006). In the case of traumatic events, a post-traumatic growth process can arise from the elaboration and contextualization of the event in the individual's life and representation of reality (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). People with chronic diseases or disabilities, who face disadvantages related to both their biological impairments and to the social attitudes toward them, often perceive themselves as ordinary persons coping with extraordinary circumstances (Saravanan et al. 2001) and report good levels of well-being, prominently from the eudaimonic point of view (Arnold et al. 2004; Delle Fave and Massimini 2005; Cortinovis et al. 2011).

1.3.2 Harmonizing Perspectives

Peterson et al. (2005) remark that the different approaches developed in order to study well-being have proceeded autonomously and without seeking for connections with other perspectives, thus leading to a variety of definitions of happiness, each one grounded into a well-defined framework, but no one capturing the complexity and multidimensionality of the concept. Similarly, Ryff and Singer (2008) note that clinging to highly specific and defined approaches entails the risk to overlook other important dimensions.

The clear delimitation of the field of analysis is however a necessity in science, and it is related to the need for maximizing precision and specificity in the assessment and measurement of phenomena. This need is especially compelling when the objects under examination consist in exquisitely psychological dimensions—thus requiring the use of assessment tools based on subjective self-reports—but also when researchers deal with collective phenomena, that call into play a great variety of variables and components that can be only partially taken into account in a single study.

The "constructive tensions" (Ryff and Singer 2008, p. 33) presently running across the broad and multifaceted field of well-being studies have to be interpreted as opportunities for progressively expand and deepen our knowledge and understanding, rather than as threats and sources of disorder and fragmentation. From this perspective, to unilaterally contrast universalism and relativism, objective data and self-reports, quality and quantity, hedonia and eudaimonia cannot take researchers very far in their attempts to provide an exhaustive description of happiness.

The complexity of human behavior can hardly be captured through simplified paradigms, and the current state of the art in well-being studies does not allow for a unified perspective yet. Individuals and societies, like any other living system, show dynamic features clearly taken into account in the models proposed by Cummins and by Kim-Prieto et al.

Biological, psychological, and social systems tend toward progressively higher levels of complexity through the exchange of information with the environment (Khalil and Boulding 1996; Maturana and Varela 1986; Prigogine and Stengers 1984) leading to the system's transformation (Pribram 1996). In particular, the acquisition of new information is transformed into stable neural connections at the biological level; into personal skills, beliefs, meanings and purposes at the psychological level; and into codified rules, norms, and values at the social level. However, at none of these level the system configuration is stable, by virtue of the progressive and ceaseless integration of new information.

On the basis of these premises, any scientist interested in the study of wellbeing has to take into account both the specific configuration of the system under examination and its relationships with higher order and lower order systems, as well as its modifiability according to progressive increases in complexity (Delle Fave 2007). By the way, ceaseless change represents a core concept endorsed by a variety of worldviews across history and cultures. Just to mention few examples, Heraclitus conceptualized reality as an uninterrupted flux of change. The Hindu and Buddhist traditions focused on the concept of Maya as illusoriness of the phenomenal reality. In much more recent times, the studies conducted by Heisenberg, Einstein, and De Broglie in the domain of physics determined that our observations dynamically contribute to shape reality, in that have an effect on the behavior of elementary physical entities. Evidence emerging from different disciplines supports the dynamic and ever-changing nature of reality, that too often we tend to ignore, due our preoccupation to achieve fixed and definitive descriptions of individuals and societies.

From this perspective, a peculiar relevance assumes the concept of balance, repeatedly echoed by the contributors to this volume. Sirgy and Wu directly include it in their model of well-being. Ryff and Singer call for higher attention to the concept of balance in the conceptualization of well-being by referring to Aristotle's invitation to seek "the intermediate", avoiding any excess or deficiency in behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations, even as concerns the "positive" or "good" ones. Ryan et al. refer to the feelings of inner peace, inner harmony, and connectedness with the environment and a "greater whole" transcending the self as one of the outcomes of the eudaimonic life. Eckersley claims for a definition of well-being grounded into the "balance between personal happiness and social bonds, obligations, and responsibility" (p. 286).Veenhoven refers to the definition of quality of life as "harmony between self-interest and transcendent utility" (p. 32). Uchida et al. provide evidence of the non-contradictory coexistence of positive and negative emotions in evaluations of well-being among East Asian participants, suggesting the relevance of emotional balance rather than of maximization of positive affect. These findings are consistent with the focus on another kind of balance, namely social harmony, as a prominent goal of collectivistic societies, that influence self construals, daily behaviors, and social policies.

Other studies suggest the relevance of balance in well-being research, be it evaluated across life domains (Cummins and Nistico 2002; WHOQOL Group 2004; Wu 2009), as a psychological state (Delle Fave et al. 2011a; Lu 2001; Jason et al. 2001; Muñoz Sastre 1998), as a social dimension (Ho and Chan 2009; Leung et al. 2002; Ferriss 2002).

A historical and interdisciplinary overview of harmony as a concept related to quality of life (Delle Fave 2013) has recently highlighted that, beyond philosophical and conceptual differences, in all cultural traditions harmony has been directly or indirectly related to well-being, and it represents an indicator of a good quality of life, at both the individual and social levels.

An harmonization effort should be also made by researchers involved in the definition and operationalization of well-being components, due to its multiplicity of dimensions and levels of analysis. The patterns of interaction between these multiple levels can be widely different according to cultural features, values, worldviews, and meanings. The impact of policies and social provisions can differentially affect individuals and groups according to the structure and access to resources, as well as to basic social values. In the broad and still unexplored planet of well-being there is a wide range of issues, topics, and dimensions still waiting to be investigated, and maybe even to be discovered.

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Chapter 2
Objective Explanations of Individual Well-Being

Jukka Varelius

Abstract Empirical research on questions pertaining to individual well-being is informed by the researchers' philosophical conception of the nature of well-being and, consequently, the adequacy of such research is partly determined by the plausibility of this conception. Philosophical theories of human well-being divide into subjective and objective. Subjective theories make our well-being dependent on our attitudes of favour and disfavour. Objective theories deny this dependency. This article discusses objective theories of individual well-being from the point of view of their explanatory power and argues that these theories are unable to provide an acceptable account of the prudential goodness of what they consider to be good for human beings. The article concludes by discussing some implications of its main argument to empirical research on questions pertaining to individual well-being.

Keywords Subjectivism • Objectivism • Happiness • Well-being • Prudential value • Explanation

Empirical research on questions pertaining to individual well-being is informed by the researchers' conception of the nature of well-being and, consequently, the adequacy of such research is partly determined by the plausibility of this conception. Questions pertaining to the nature of well-being are philosophical in character. In philosophy, these questions concerning individual well-being are seen as questions pertaining to the value that a life has for the person who is living it, to prudential value that is. However valuable a person's life may be in other terms, it has prudential value only if it is also good for the person who is living it.

In philosophical literature, theories of prudential value, or human well-being, are usually divided into subjective and objective (see, e.g., Arneson 1999; Bernstein 1998; Parfit 1984; Scanlon 1993; Sumner 1996; Thomson 1987). Subjective theories see our well-being as determined by our attitudes of favour and disfavour. Objective theories deny this kind of determination. On a subjective theory of well-being, it is easy

J. Varelius (✉)
Department of Behavioural Sciences and Philosophy, University of Turku, 20014 Turku, Finland
e-mail: varelius@hotmail.com

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to understand why attaining some purported prudential good makes a person better off: either that thing gives the agent pleasure or satisfies a desire she has (or both). Accepting the common subjectivist point of departure that the attitudes that should be taken to be relevant in determining what is prudentially good for a person should be sufficiently informed, the subjectivist can be taken to have a plausible sounding explanation for the prudential goodness of her prudential goods. But dissociating prudential goodness from the attitudes of the agent whose well-being is being assessed gives rise to the question: why would some purported prudential good be good for an (informed) agent? In this article I will argue that the objective theories of well-being cannot provide an acceptable explanation of the prudential goodness of what they claim to be good for human beings. I conclude by discussing some implications of my argument to empirical research on questions pertaining to individual well-being.

2.1 Subjective and Objective Theories of Well-Being and Happiness

As was said above, subjective theories of prudential value see our well-being as determined by our attitudes of favour and disfavour. Thus, when our task is to determine whether some particular thing or activity is good for an agent or not, the subjective theories of well-being advise us to consult the agent whose well-being is being assessed, to pay attention to her own preferences and attitudes of favour and disfavour. Objective theories, in their turn, maintain that an agent's well-being is not determined by her own desires and attitudes of favour and disfavour. Instead of concentrating on these kinds of subjective states, objective theories usually make well-being dependent on such objective issues as whether a thing or an activity satisfies human needs, realises the human nature, etc. Often objective theories provide a list of things and activities that they consider to be good for a person and, accordingly, these theories are called objective list theories of well-being. Usually the lists of objective prudential goods include such entries as moral goodness, rational activity, the development of one's abilities, having children and being a good parent, knowledge, and the awareness of true beauty (see, e.g., Parfit 1984, p. 493 ff.), and these objective theories maintain that a life is good for the person who is living it only when it contains these particular elements. Importantly, an objective theory of well-being denies that there is a necessary connection between what an agent desires or has a pro-attitude towards and what is good for her, and maintains that something can be directly and immediately good for a person although that person does not regard it favourably. In addition to this desire or pro-attitude independence requirement, a theory of well-being must satisfy at least one of two further kinds of requirements in order to qualify as an objective theory of well-being.[1] On an objective theory of well-being, what is considered as prudentially good must either

[1] Otherwise we could determine the objective good of a particular agent on the basis of the irrational opinions of any other individual. It is thus clear that there must be something more to an objective theory of well-being than mere independence of the desires of the agent whose well-being is being assessed.

(1) be regarded as good intersubjectively or (2) be good in a (stronger) realist sense.[2] Thus, if in addition to fulfilling the desire independence condition, a theory of well-being satisfies either the requirement of intersubjectivity or the requirement of realism (or both), then the theory qualifies as an objective theory of well-being.[3]

In addition to prudential value and well-being, in everyday common language as well as in philosophical literature there are several notions available for evaluating how well a life is going for the person who is living it, including happiness, welfare, contentment, satisfaction, flourishing, etc. None of these concepts have commonly accepted precise meanings and, partly as a consequence of this, the exact relationships between them remain unclear. However, since the notion of happiness is of central importance for the readers of this journal, I will now briefly discuss the relationship between the notions of prudential value and happiness. Most importantly, the notion of happiness concerns a person's own subjective experience and assessment of how well or badly she is faring.[4] The nature of the relationship between prudential value or well-being and happiness depends on whether or not we accept that only things that enter an agent's experience can have an effect on her well-being. If we accept this experience requirement, then it is reasonable to accept that happiness is quite the same as prudential value, for then only things that enter an agent's experience can have an effect on her well-being. And it seems to me plausible that things that have an effect on how well a life is going for the person who is living it, i.e., on that person's well-being, will influence the person's happiness as understood in the present sense.[5] I do think that the experience requirement should be accepted and thus that well-being is quite the same as happiness in the present sense, but I am not able to explicate my arguments to this effect here.[6] So, those who accept the experience requirement may

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[2] Here I thus understand 'realism' in the traditional way which maintains that something has real existence only if it exists independently of peoples' mental states. It may be that there is no stronger sense of objectivity than intersubjectivity in the evaluative sphere. Whether this is the case is a question I will not now go into.

[3] It has been pointed out that not all objective theories are list theories, nor are all list theories necessarily objective theories. I will not now go into such questions as whether a list with only one entry is really a list or whether desire theories can sometimes properly be called list theories.

[4] Although the precise meanings given to this concept differ from each other significantly, they seem to have this reference to the agent's subjective experiences and evaluations in common.

[5] It is perhaps useful to point out that the reference to the subject's own experience and evaluation in the above definition of happiness does not imply that what enhances a person's happiness is necessarily determined by her attitudes and desires in the sense that subjective theories of well-being see prudential value as being determined. If objectivism about happiness is accepted, then what promotes a person's happiness is not determined by her desires and attitudes of favour and disfavour, but her own experience of how well she is faring would, of course, be subjective in the sense used in this definition of happiness. For an objective conception of happiness see, e.g., Kraut (1979).

[6] I think that it would be counter-intuitive to maintain that things that do not enter an agent's experience could have an effect on that agent's well-being. However, it has been suggested to me that, e.g., a person's losing a substantial amount of money may have an effect on her well-being even if she is unaware of this loss and that a posthumous dishonour may have an effect on how well the dishonoured person's life went in prudential terms. I leave discussion on these points for another occasion.

assume that what I say below is directly relevant from the point of view of happiness, whereas those who reject the experience requirement must assume that I will be talking about well-being only.[7]

2.2 Explaining Prudential Goodness

When talking about prudential value, some philosophers simply put forward a list of things and activities they consider to be good for a person, irrespective of whether that person has any pro-attitude towards these things or not (see, e.g., Finnis 1980, 1983). This kind of account of individual well-being does fulfil the condition of desire independence, but it does not satisfy the requirement of intersubjectivity nor the requirement of realism, at least when the latter kind of requirements are interpreted as demanding that a theory must make the prudential goodness of its prudential goods objectively intelligible. According to this kind of interpretation of the requirements of intersubjectivity and realism—which I find plausible—an objective theory of well-being must provide an objective—in the sense understandable by all normal agents—explanation of what it is that makes its prudential goods prudentially good and how this something produces individual well-being.[8] Since the kind of accounts of well-being that simply put forward a list of what their proponents consider to be prudentially good things and activities do not satisfy this kind of requirement of intersubjectivity or realism, they do not qualify as full-blown objective theories of prudential value.

2.2.1 Are Prudential Goods Self-Evident?

What the proponents of these kind of list accounts of human well-being would present as a reply to this criticism is, I think, that what they consider to be prudentially good things and activities are self-evidently good for individual

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[7] In the history of philosophy such prominent figures as Aristotle and J.S. Mill have equated, or at least have usually been interpreted as equating, happiness and well-being with each other. A modern equation of happiness with well-being is found, e.g., in Den Uyl and Machan (1983).

[8] Usually objective list theories of well-being provide a list of things which they consider to be prudentially good for all persons. There could however be objective theories which provided different lists for different individuals. The latter kind of theories qualify as objective theories of well-being if what they claim to be good for a particular individual is objectively recognisable as such. I thus presuppose that there are no objective or real values that are recognisable for one person only. An objective list theorist committed to the existence of these kind of prudential values could only come up with one objective list theory of well-being that is applicable to one person only.

human beings and thus no explanations of the sort I here require are needed. Finnis (1980, Chap. 3, see also 1983, Chap. 2), e.g., maintains that knowledge is good for one irrespective of desires and whether it is pleasurable to have it or not. Finnis (1980, p. 72) writes:

> It is obvious that a man who is well-informed, etc., simply *is* better off (other things being equal) than a man who is muddled, deluded, and ignorant, that the state of the one is better than the state of the other, not simply in this particular case or that, but in all cases, as such, universally and *whether I like it or not.* Knowledge is better than ignorance.[9] (emphasis in original)

The problem with this kind of conception is that it is not at all obvious that knowledge is good prudentially. There is a plausible criticism of the view that knowledge has intrinsic prudential value. Would I, the proponents of this criticism ask, be better off if I knew exactly how many grains of sand lie on my local beach (other things being equal) (see, e.g., Nozick 1989, p. 116; Goldsworthy 1992, p. 12)? That is, there is much knowledge that seems clearly to be worthless. Finnis (1980, p. 62) accepts that not all knowledge is of equal value. But why not? If knowledge is prudentially valuable, period, why should one item of knowledge be of more value than another (in this sense)? If the value of knowledge were instrumental or had something to do with the desire for it or the pleasures it could give, it would be understandable that some items of knowledge could be held to be more valuable than others. But with an intrinsic value[10] of knowledge, this nonequality claim is hard to accept. Thus, someone who holds that knowledge has intrinsic prudential value is committed to the view that all knowledge is of equal value. And this view is implausible. It therefore seems that there is no sufficient

[9] However, at the end of his discussion on knowledge and its prudential value he presents an argument, according to which it would be self-refuting to deny that knowledge is in itself necessarily good for us. If it is self-evident that some proposition is true, then it is not necessary to provide an argument to show it to be true. Thus, the fact that Finnis provides an argument for his claim that knowledge is a prudential good suggests that he does not after all believe this claim to be self-evidently true. I do not consider this to be a problem, for I think it is not self-evident that knowledge has intrinsic prudential value. But for a view which holds there to be self-evidently prudentially valuable things, this kind of lack of self-evidence is a problem. Finnis' argument proceeds as follows: "… one who makes such an assertion (that knowledge is not a prudential good), intending it as a serious contribution to rational discussion, is implicitly committed to the proposition that he believes his assertion is worth making, and worth making *qua* true; he thus is committed to the proposition that he believes that truth is a good worth pursuing or knowing. But the sense of his original assertion was precisely that truth is not a good worth pursuing or knowing. Thus he is implicitly committed to formally contradictory beliefs." (Finnis 1980, pp. 74–75) The argument Finnis presents here is implausible. One who makes the kind of assertion Finnis talks about does not logically commit herself to the proposition that all knowledge is intrinsically good, but only to the instrumental goodness of this particular assertion. See also Goldsworthy (1992, pp. 13–14).

[10] By the intrinsic value of an entity I understand the value that that entity has independently of its value as an instrument in attaining some other value or its consequences.

reason to hold that to have knowledge is, as such, of prudential value. Knowledge is of course not the only thing that could be said to be obviously prudentially valuable irrespective of whether it satisfies desires or brings pleasure. In addition to knowledge, Finnis' list of the 'basic forms of human good'—which seems representative of its kind—contains the following entries: life, play, aesthetic experience, sociability (friendship), practical reasonableness, and 'religion' (Finnis 1980, Chap. 4). Rather than examining all these things, I will merely state that it is equally implausible to hold that any, or all, of them are self-evidently intrinsically prudentially valuable as such as it is to hold that knowledge as such is intrinsically prudentially valuable.

2.2.2 Backgrounding Self-Evidence

Those objectivists who are not content with simply stating that some things are (self-evidently) prudentially valuable usually have a background story the purpose of which is to make the reader sufficiently perceptive—or what is considered as such—for the issues discussed, and the claims to self-evidence are then expressed against a background story of this kind.[11] Instead of going into the different kinds of background stories found in discussions on different kinds of value,[12] I will consider simply one, that of Foot (1995). I have chosen to discuss Foot's view here because it appears to be a novel kind of defence of the objective account. However, I will argue that ultimately it succumbs to a problem that, to my knowledge at least, haunts all present accounts of this kind. For this reason, it is also representative of many other objective views.

Foot accepts that moral judgements are practical and action-guiding, but argues that subjectivists are mistaken when they infer from this claim the corollary that moral judgements cannot be purely factual and objective. Foot's argument proceeds, roughly, as follows. Acting morally is part of practical rationality. This can be shown by considering the nature of moral virtues. It is in the concept of a moral virtue that in so far as someone possesses it his actions are good, i.e., he acts well. What distinguishes the morally virtuous persons from others is that for the virtuous, certain considerations count as reasons

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[11] It could be maintained that to hold that we are able to see the self-evidence of something only after we have been given reasons and arguments for it is nonsensical. For if seeing or understanding something is impossible without these reasons and arguments, then this something is not self-evident. I will now ignore this problem.

[12] Some of them are found in discussions on moral value without explicit claims concerning whether they are purported to apply to other kinds of value as well or not. However, it seems that many of these background stories could *mutatis mutandis* be used in discussions on prudential value, if they are not purported to apply to the case of prudential value to begin with.

for action and as reasons with a certain weight. These considerations have to do with human excellences and human defects. Human defects and excellences are determined by what human beings are and by what they do. What determines our nature and doings are the facts of human life—e.g., that we are social animals that depend on each other—which are such that it is rational for us to be moral (Foot 1995, p. 3 ff.).

However, as Foot herself acknowledges, accepting a view like hers does not necessarily persuade one to reject the subjectivist points of departure, for it is possible to require that the fact that an agent has a reason for action is itself dependent on his desires and attitudes. Foot considers the following example. A person throws away his supply of cigarettes. He does so because he wants to give up smoking, and he wants to give up smoking because he wants a healthy old age. The series goes on—A for the sake of B—but, it is assumed, it cannot go on forever. And must it not, Foot imagines her critic asking, end with something that the agent ‘simply wants’, i.e., with some conative element in his psychological state (Foot 1995, pp. 12–13)?

Obviously, Foot’s answer to this question is ‘No’. In her view, we must ask what gives the agent this goal. Does he find himself trembling at the thought of cancer at 50? Is he in a state of anxiety at the thought of how much he smokes? Perhaps, Foot replies, but nothing of this kind has to be part of the story. She continues by posing the following questions: Why could it not simply be that the agent recognises that there is a reason for him, as for anyone else, to look after his future so far as the circumstances allow? Why should not this be where the series of questions ‘why?’ comes to an end? Why should we not take the recognition of a reason for acting as bringing the series to a close? Recognition of a reason, Foot says, gives the rational person a goal, and this recognition is based on facts and concepts, not on some prior attitude, feeling, or goal. The only fact about the individual’s state of mind that is required for the explanatory force of the proposition about the requirement of rationality is, Foot concludes, that he does not ‘for some bizarre reason’ deny its truth (Foot 1995, pp. 12–13).

2.2.3 Problems with Backgrounding

The problem with this kind of argument for objectivism is that it simply begs the central question. Instead of providing good reasons to believe that evaluative judgements could be purely factual, it simply states that they are. All arguments of the form in which the objectivist or realist describes some evaluatively salient situation in purely factual or descriptive terms and then asks—rhetorically—whether that description determines some particular kind of evaluative judgement concerning that situation or not are, I think, doomed to failure for the following reason. Either the description does not determine the evaluative judgement the objectivist