

Understanding What's Good for Us

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Abstract:

The ancient question of what a good life consists in is currently the focus of intense debate. There are two aspects to this debate: the first concerns how the concept of a good life is to be understood; the second concerns what kinds of life fall within the extension of this concept. In this paper, I will attend only to the first, conceptual aspect and not to the second, substantive aspect. More precisely, I will address the preliminary, underlying question of how to understand what it is in general for something to be good for someone, from which an understanding of the more particular concept of a good life may be derived.

Keywords: Good - Good for - Good life - Benefit - Interest - Welfare - Well-being - Personal value

Article:

Part I

The philosophical literature is full of accounts of what it is for something to be good for someone. Those of which I am aware fall into six groups.

First, there are proposals that offer (A) a *belief account* of goodness-for-a-person – or, as I will put it for short, goodness-for¹ – along the following lines:

(1) x is good for P = df. P believes that x is good.²

Next are proposals that offer (B) a *pro-attitude account* of goodness-for. The pro-attitudes that are most often mentioned are those of desire and pursuit, but others (such as caring for, loving, and prizing) are sometimes mentioned. I will use the term “favor” to cover all such attitudes. In this group there are two main kinds of proposal:

(2) x is good for P = df. P favors x.³

(3) x is good for P = df. x satisfies some favoring of P; i.e., P favors x and x exists, or occurs, or obtains.⁴

Next are proposals that offer (C) an *ownership account* of goodness-for. Here, too, there are two main varieties:⁵

(4) x is good for P = df. x is good and belongs to P.

(5) x is good for P = df. x's belonging to P is good.

Next are proposals that offer (D) a *benefit account* of goodness-for along the following lines:

(6) x is good for P =df. x benefits P.⁶

Next are proposals that offer (E) a *constrained pro-attitude account* of goodness-for. The constraints in question concern pro-attitudes that someone would have under “ideal” conditions. Here there are two main kinds of proposal:

(7) x is good for P = df. P would favor x , if P were ideally situated in terms of both information and rationality.⁷

(8) x is good for P = df. P would favor x , if P were ideally situated in terms of both information and rationality and were concerned solely with himself and his circumstances.⁸

Finally, there are proposals that offer (F) a *deontic account* of goodness-for. Perhaps the most fundamental deontic concept is that expressed by “ought,” but the concept that is most often invoked in recent discussions is that of a reason. Once again, there are two main kinds of proposal:

(9) x is good for P = df. P has a reason to favor x .⁹

(10) x is good for P = df. everyone has a reason to favor x for P 's sake.¹⁰

Obviously, proposals (1)–(10) are only roughly stated. There are many variations on the relevant themes, on some of which I will comment below.

Obviously, too, (1)–(10) are rival proposals only if it is the same concept that is at issue in each case. I think it's clear that there is more than one concept at stake, although just how many there are is not so clear. I will now offer some observations on each of the proposals.

Part II

I will be brief about proposals of types (A), (B), and (C).

First, concerning (A): I think it may on occasion be the case that someone who says something of the form “ x is good for P ” means merely that P believes that x is good.¹¹ (There certainly does seem to be an analogous use of “right.” The common claim that what is right for one person may not be right for another is, I believe, often to be understood as the claim that what one person believes to be right another may not.) Even if this is correct, however, I want to put it to one side. It is not *this* sense of “ x is good for P ” that I am interested in, for it is irrelevant to the question of what a good life consists in.

Next, concerning (B): it may sometimes be the case that someone who says something of the form “ x is good for P ” means merely that P has some kind of pro-attitude towards x or that x satisfies some such attitude. (It certainly seems to be the case that “ x is of value to P ” or “ P values x ” is often used to mean one or another of these things.) Even if so, though, I want once again to put the matter to one side, since it too is irrelevant to the question of what a good life consists in. (That is, it is irrelevant to the question of how to *understand the concept* of a good life. It may well be relevant to the *substantive* question of what counts as a good life. There are many philosophers who accept something along the lines of the following thesis, understood as a substantive claim:

(3*) x is good for P iff x satisfies some favoring of P .)

Next, concerning (C): perhaps in G. E. Moore's day some people used “ x is good for P ” to mean either that x is good and belongs to P or that x 's belonging to P is good. I think no one uses the phrase in either of these ways today. In any case, we may quickly dismiss ownership accounts of goodness-for. I say this because the concept of a good life (or I should say: *that* concept of a good life that concerns me here; for the phrase “a good life” is ambiguous, just as “ x is good for P ” is ambiguous) is one according to which the life in question is good *for the person whose life it is*. It is clear that neither

(4) x is good for P = df. x is good and belongs to P
nor

(5) x is good for P = df. x 's belonging to P is good

captures this idea. Indeed, I find the latter proposal quite bizarre in this context, since there seems to be no reason to think that it is good that someone's life belongs to him (rather than to someone else?). As to the former proposal: it is wide of the mark, since someone's life (a life that of course belongs to him) may be good *simpliciter* without being good *for him* (in the sense with which I am concerned), and *vice versa*. (Since Moore acknowledged only (4) and (5) as acceptable interpretations of the phrase " x is good for P ," I can only conclude that he didn't understand what was good for him.)

Part III

My discussion of proposals of types (D), (E), and (F) cannot be so brief, since at least some proposals of each of these types are relevant to the question of how to understand that concept of a good life with which I am concerned.

I should say straight away that I take (D) a benefit account of goodness-for to be correct; what is good for someone (in the relevant sense) is what benefits him and, all else being equal, his life is good to the extent that it benefits him. But there are complications.

First, as has just been noted, the phrase "a good life" may mean a number of different things.¹² It may refer to a life that is good *simpliciter*, that is, a life that is *intrinsically good* in the impersonal sense with which Moore was concerned.¹³ As I have already pointed out, that is not what I have in mind by "a good life." The phrase may also refer to a life that is impersonally *instrumentally good*, that is (roughly), a life that is conducive to the obtaining of intrinsically good states (states that may of course be contained in the lives of others). It may refer to a life that is *morally good* (a life of virtue), or one that is *aesthetically good*, or one that is *exemplary* with respect to what is distinctively human. Again, none of these is what I have in mind, since none of them need concern what is *good for the person* whose life it is. (One indication of the difference between that sense of "a good life" that I want to pursue and those senses that I want to ignore is that we often say of someone whose life was good in one of the latter senses that he *led* a good life rather than *had* a good life, whereas the reverse is true of someone whose life was good in the former sense.)

Second, it may be advisable to switch from

(6) x is good for P = df. x benefits P

to

(6a) x is good for P = df. x is of benefit to P

or

(6b) x is good for P = df. x is to P 's benefit.

I say this because we must recognize that what is good for P may be good for him purely instrumentally (or, more generally, non-finally) or it may constitute a final good for him. The phrase " x benefits P " is, I think, most naturally understood in terms of x 's being instrumentally good for P , whereas " x is of benefit to P " and " x is to P 's benefit" seem to me more flexible, covering both what is non-finally and what is finally good for P . In any case, whatever phrase we use, we must recognize and accommodate the distinction between non-final and final personal goods. Moreover, once this distinction is recognized, we are in a position to explain how it could be that something is good for P even if it is not to P 's immediate benefit. Perhaps, for example, it would be good for P if he lost a race, or got fired from his job, and so on. Such eventualities could be non-finally good for P , inasmuch as they provide a means to his attaining a benefit-level higher than that which he would otherwise attain.

Third, just as we should distinguish between non-final and final personal goods, so too we should distinguish between relative and absolute personal goods. A reduction in suffering may be comparatively or relatively good for P , even if he continues to suffer and his suffering isn't good for him in absolute terms.

Fourth, instead of “benefit” we could, I think, equally well use the terms “interest,” “welfare,” or “well-being.” Something that is of benefit to someone is something that is in his interest or contributes to his welfare or well-being.

Finally, there is the question whether, on the current construal of “ x is good for P ,” the fact that x is good for P is normative or non-normative. There is some attraction to the idea that x ’s being of benefit to P (or being in his interest, etc.) is a non-normative fact, but I think this idea should nonetheless be resisted. A *substantive* account of what is good for P (for example, the eudaimonistic account that x is good for P iff x contributes to P ’s happiness) will certainly cite some non-normative fact as grounds for the claim that x is good for P , but the claim itself should, I think, be regarded as a normative one. As Stephen Darwall has pointed out, it seems possible for two people coherently to disagree whether x is good for P , even though they agree completely about all the non-normative facts concerning x and P .¹⁴

Part IV

One complaint about a benefit account of goodness-for is that it is trivial or circular. To say that what is good for someone just is what is of benefit to him or in his interest is, it may be objected, to utter an empty truism, one that is reflected in the very etymology of the term “benefit.” I’m not sure what to make of this objection. On the one hand, I don’t find it particularly troubling; truisms after all have the virtue of being true. On the other hand, I would like to think that a benefit account does provide some insight into the nature of goodness-for.

Those who find a benefit account unenlightening might seek an alternative analysis of goodness-for. Certainly, there are some who embrace the idea that what is good for a person consists in what is in that person’s interest or contributes to his welfare but who also offer some further account beyond this. Sometimes they offer (E) a constrained pro-attitude account of goodness-for. Let me now turn to such accounts.

I noted above that some constrained pro-attitude accounts are of the following kind:

(7) x is good for P = df. P would favor x , if P were ideally situated in terms of both information and rationality.

I think it’s clear that such an account is unacceptable, *given* that the concept at issue is personal welfare. (I leave open whether (7) is adequate to some *other* understanding of “ x is good for P .”) The reason is simple: it could well be that some ideally situated person, P , would favor something, x , even when x has nothing to do with what is in P ’s interest. For example, x may be the welfare of someone who is a complete stranger to P .

It might seem that this problem does not affect the more restrictive kind of account captured in

(8) x is good for P = df. P would favor x , if P were ideally situated in terms of both information and rationality and were concerned solely with himself and his circumstances.

In fact, though, it seems to me that even this more restrictive kind of constrained pro-attitude account of goodness-for faces the same problem. I noted earlier that there are various ways in which a person’s life may be good. It may be good intrinsically, or morally, or aesthetically, and so on, as well as good in the welfare-related sense. This observation also applies to portions of a person’s life. Suppose now that P is ideally situated in terms of both information and rationality (whatever precisely that comes to) and is concerned only with himself and his circumstances. But suppose that his concern is with the intrinsic value, or the moral value, or the aesthetic value, rather than with the welfare-related value of his circumstances. Then his favoring x is no guarantee that x is good for him, in the welfare-related sense of “good-for.” Hence (8) appears to be false.

Of course, one could try to fix (8) by insisting that the sort of circumstances with which P is concerned have exclusively to do with his welfare, but then this account would suffer from the sort of circularity that moving

beyond a benefit account to a constrained pro-attitude account was supposed to avoid. Hence no progress will have been made.

I believe that this sort of dilemma affects “ideal observer” theories generally. Either the features that supposedly make an observer ideal are specified independently of the theoretical purpose that they are intended to serve, or they are not. If they are, it is hard to see how it can be guaranteed that they will successfully serve this purpose. If, however, the features in question are not specified independently of the theoretical purpose that they are intended to serve, then perhaps success can be guaranteed, but only at the cost of circularity.

There is a further worry for accounts along the line of (8), one that has been brought out by Connie Rosati: the features required of an observer (or, as she puts it, an “advisor”) in order for such a person to be “ideal” seem incoherent, since such a person must occupy several incompatible perspectives at once (Rosati (1995), pp. 314ff.).

I therefore find constrained pro-attitude accounts of goodness-for unpromising and will not pursue them further.

Part V

Let us now consider (F) deontic accounts of goodness-for. I distinguished two kinds of accounts of this sort, on which I will now comment in turn.

The first kind of account was this:

(9) x is good for P = df. P has a reason to favor x .

At first glance, this proposal seems quite implausible. Consider something that is commonly thought to be good *simpliciter* – good impersonally but not good for P in particular: the happiness of some innocent person, Q , who is a complete stranger to P .¹⁵ It is plausible to hold that, since Q 's happiness is good *simpliciter*, everyone has a reason to favor it.¹⁶ (By this I mean that everyone is such that there is a reason for him to favor it. I am not drawing any sharp distinction between there *being* a reason and someone's *having* a reason.) If everyone has a reason to favor it, then so does P . But, *ex hypothesi*, Q 's happiness is not good for P . Hence (9) would appear to be false.

In face of this problem, someone might propose retreating to

(9a) x is good for P = df. P alone has a reason to favor x .¹⁷

But this seems too restrictive. Consider P 's happiness. This is something that seems to be good for P and also something that P has a reason to favor. But others may have a reason to favor it, too, just as they have a reason to favor Q 's happiness. Hence (9a) would also appear to be false.

In face of this problem, someone might instead propose

(9b) x is good for P = df. P has an agent-relative reason to favor x .

There are, of course, different accounts of what constitutes an agent-relative, as opposed to an agent-neutral, reason. Regardless of which account we adopt, however, there still seems to be a problem. Suppose that Q is not a stranger to P but is rather P 's son. It is plausible to hold that P then has not just whatever reason others have to favor Q 's happiness but an additional, agent-relative reason to do so. Yet it seems odd to say that Q 's happiness is good for P , especially if P is jealous of Q and distressed by the fact that Q is happy. Hence (9b) would appear to be false, too.

In saying that (9), (9a), and (9b) appear to be unacceptable as accounts of goodness-for, I don't wish to deny that they may be acceptable as accounts of something else – for example, of what it is for something to be “good

from *P*'s perspective." But if any of them is acceptable as such an account, then the conclusion it seems that we must draw is that goodness-from-a-perspective, whatever it is, is something different from goodness-for – or, at least, the sort of goodness-for that is relevant to the question of what a good life consists in.

Perhaps you will have noticed that I have said, not that (9), (9a), and (9b) *are* false, but only that they would *appear* to be false. There is a reason for my being so coy. Consider again the case in which *Q* is an innocent person who is a complete stranger to *P*. I said that it is plausible to maintain that everyone has a reason to favor *Q*'s happiness. But what *kind* of reason is at issue? The answer, I believe, is that it is a *moral* or *ethical* kind of reason.¹⁸ This is not to say that *Q*'s happiness is morally good (in the sense that it is a moral virtue), but only that it is a (non-moral) good that there is a moral reason to favor. Whether or not you agree that the reason in question is a moral one, I think you will (or anyway should) agree that it is of a kind quite different from those non-moral reasons that are, for example, epistemic, or aesthetic, or prudential. Once the distinction is drawn between prudential and other reasons, though, it is natural to qualify (9) as follows:

(9*) *x* is good for *P* = df. *P* has a prudential reason to favor *x*.

With this qualification, the case of the innocent stranger, *Q*, no longer poses a problem. *P* may have a non-prudential reason (I would say: a moral reason) to favor *Q*'s happiness, but, unless *Q*'s happiness is somehow in *P*'s own interest, he has no prudential reason to favor it.

I think that (9*) is probably acceptable.¹⁹ (A similar modification to (9a) would not be acceptable, because two people may have an interest in the same thing; as just noted, *P* as well as *Q* may have an interest in *Q*'s happiness. Whether a similar modification to (9b) would be acceptable depends, I think, on just how the concept of an agent-relative reason is to be understood. I won't pursue the matter here.) It may be, however, that such acceptability is once again purchased at the cost of circularity. I'm not sure whether an account of what it is for a reason to be a prudential reason in particular can be given that makes no appeal to what is in a person's interest.

Drawing a distinction between prudential reasons and those non-prudential reasons that I call moral reasons helps us draw a distinction between two kinds of value. According to (9*), prudential reasons are conceptually tied to goodness-for-a-person. Moral reasons, it is plausible (but controversial)²⁰ to say, are conceptually tied to the sort of impersonal value that Moore called "intrinsic value." Such impersonal value is sometimes said to concern, not what is good-for-persons, but rather what is good-for-the-world.²¹

Drawing a distinction between prudential reasons and moral reasons also helps us dispose of a dilemma posed by Donald Regan. Regan says (Regan (2006), pp. 211–12):

[A]ny understanding of 'good for' which distinguishes it clearly from 'good, occurring in the life of' also undercuts the possibility that one individual's 'good for' should make a claim on any other individual... In effect, the problem is 'What does the "for" in "good for" mean?' If 'for' means 'occurring in the life of', this gives us an *empirical* relativization to the agent, but the normativity involved is still the universal normativity of 'good'. We need some other understanding of the 'for' to give us a concept of 'good for' that is distinct from 'good, occurring in the life of' and independent of 'good'. The relativization signalled by the 'for' must be a relativization of the *normativity*. But that is precisely the move that undercuts the possibility of [one person's] 'good for' making a claim on [another].

Consider *Q* again. I have said that it is plausible to hold that *Q*'s happiness is not only good for *Q* but also such that *P* has a reason to favor it. This is perfectly consistent, once the distinction between prudential and moral reasons is drawn. To say that *Q*'s happiness is good for *Q* is to say that *Q* has a prudential reason to favor it (and that *P* doesn't, unless *Q*'s happiness also happens to be good for *P*). To say that *P* has a moral reason to favor

Q 's happiness is to say (at least in some contexts)²² that Q 's happiness is (not just good for Q but) good *simpliciter*, i.e., impersonally good, or good-for-the-world, or intrinsically good in Moore's sense.

Let us now consider the second kind of deontic account of goodness-for expressed in

(10) x is good for P = df. everyone has a reason to favor x for P 's sake.

One complication here is this: exactly what is it to favor something *for someone's sake*? I don't wish to deny that we do sometimes say things like "I am pleased for your sake"; I only wish to say that it's not clear (to me) just what such expressions are supposed to mean.

A second complication is this: precisely what kind of reason is supposed to be at issue? I think it's clear that it cannot be a prudential one. Whatever is involved in P 's favoring Q 's happiness for Q 's sake in particular (as opposed to just favoring it, period), if Q is a complete stranger to P , it is likely that P has no prudential reason to favor Q 's happiness for Q 's sake. Perhaps the reason should be taken to be a moral one; for, as I have already acknowledged, it is plausible to say that P has a moral reason to favor Q 's happiness, even if Q is a complete stranger to him, and it may seem reasonable to specify that P has in particular a moral reason to favor Q 's happiness for Q 's sake. But, although this may often be the case, I don't think that it holds generally. Consider the case in which Q is a villain. It's plausible to say that Q 's happiness is not good *simpliciter*, i.e., not intrinsically good in the sense with which Moore was concerned. If so, P would appear to have no moral reason to favor Q 's happiness (whether for Q 's sake or not). Still, it seems quite clear that Q 's happiness is (or may well be) good for Q .²³

The remarks just made of course presuppose that the concept at issue is that of personal welfare. Darwall, one of the proponents of this kind of analysis, explicitly states that this is indeed his concern.²⁴ Hence my remarks are relevant to what he has to say. Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, another proponent of this kind of analysis, explicitly denies that he is concerned solely with the concept of personal welfare; the topic that he addresses is that of something's being of "personal value" to someone and, citing his daughter's first poem and his father's tombstone as examples of things that are of personal value to him, he notes that such objects need not contribute to anyone's welfare (Rønnow-Rasmussen (2007), pp. 405–6, 422). However, here I would make two points. First, insofar as Rønnow-Rasmussen does say that a person's welfare is *one* of the things that are good for him, my remarks remain relevant to his proposal, too: given that Q 's happiness is good for Q but P has neither a prudential reason (since Q is a complete stranger) nor a moral reason (since Q is a villain) to favor Q 's happiness for Q 's sake, what *kind* of non-prudential, non-moral reason is P supposed nonetheless to have to favor Q 's happiness for Q 's sake – and why is he supposed to have it? Second, even with respect to non-welfare-related personal goods such as one's daughter's first poem, what kind of reason, again, are others supposed to have to favor them for one's sake – and, again, why are they supposed to have it?

Part VI

How, finally, is the concept of a good life to be understood?

I have claimed that, with respect to the sort of goodness-for that concerns me here, each of the following is, or is probably, acceptable:

(6) x is good for P = df. x benefits P

(6a) x is good for P = df. x is of benefit to P

(6b) x is good for P = df. x is to P 's benefit

(9*) x is good for P = df. P has a prudential reason to favor x .

If so, then the concept of a good life – that is, *that* concept of P 's having a good life that concerns me here – is easily accounted for. As indicated earlier, P 's life is a good one iff it is good for him. And so I think we may (probably) say that P 's life is a good one iff it benefits him, or is of benefit to him, or is to his benefit, or he has

a prudential reason to favor it. I should add that, as usually conceived, a good life is one that is, more particularly, *absolutely, finally* good for the person whose life it is.²⁵

The question naturally arises: what is the relation between one's life being good, on the one hand, and parts or portions or elements of that life (such as moments, intervals, or "domains" of one's life such as one's marriage or one's career) being good, on the other? I won't try to answer this important question. Perhaps one's life should be regarded as an organic unity, so that its value bears no significant relation to the values of its parts. Or perhaps there is some principled way of aggregating the values of its parts in order to determine its value as a whole. I venture to say that this issue cannot be resolved unless and until the substantive question of what counts as a good life is settled, and I have already said that that is a matter that I will not tackle here.

As an addendum, let me offer an observation about the bearers of personal and impersonal value. I take it that the sort of thing that can most plausibly be said to be (absolutely, finally) good for *P*, in the sense that it can be in *P*'s interest, is, in every instance, a *state*.²⁶ It is such things as *P*'s being happy, *P*'s flourishing, or, indeed, *P*'s entire life that can most plausibly be held to be (absolutely, finally) good for him in the relevant, welfare-related sense. Perhaps certain objects, such as *P*'s father's tombstone, can be good for him in some other sense (although I think it more idiomatic to say that such objects may "be of value to *P*" or "hold value for *P*"), but, as Rønnow-Rasmussen rightly says, they don't seem to be the sort of thing that can be in *P*'s interest. Consider now the bearers of the sort of impersonal value that Moore calls "intrinsic value" and which others have called "value-for-the-world." Once again, it seems to me that the only sort of thing that can have *such* value is a state, for only states can contribute to the world's "welfare," just as only states can contribute to a person's individual welfare. Perhaps certain objects, such as a rare stamp or Napoleon's hat,²⁷ can have a kind of impersonal value, but once again, if so, they don't seem to be the sort of thing that can contribute to the value of the world. It seems to me, therefore, that the debate between pluralists and monists about the bearers of value can at least in large measure be resolved by attending to precisely what kind of value is under discussion.

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Footnotes

¹We sometimes talk of what is good for things other than persons – for example, of what is good, not for Alfred, but for his lawn mower or his apple tree (cf. Thomson (1997), p. 276). I will not be concerned with any such goodness-for here.

²Cf. Hurka (1987), p. 73.

³Cf. Thomson (1992), p. 97.

⁴Cf. Hurka (1987), p. 72.

⁵Cf. Moore (1903), pp. 98–99 ((1993), p. 150).

⁶Cf. Griffin (1986), p. 37; Thomson (1992), p. 97, and (1997), p. 296; Sumner (1996), p. 20; Darwall (2002), p. 1; Feldman (2004), pp. 9–10; Dancy (2007).

⁷Cf. Thomson (2001), pp. 52–53; Smith (2003), p. 591.

⁸Cf. Sidgwick (1907), p. 112; Railton (1986), p. 16; Darwall (2002), p. 31.

⁹Cf. Sidgwick (1907), p. 381; Hurka (1987), p. 71, and (2003), p. 611; Skorupski (2008).

¹⁰Cf. Darwall (2002), p. 8; Rønnow-Rasmussen (2007).

¹¹I will not be concerned with the distinction between what words mean and what people mean by the use of words. For simplicity, I will assume (too liberally) that any use of words is correct, so that words always mean what people mean by them.

¹²Cf. Sumner (1996), pp. 20ff.; Feldman (2004), pp. 8–9.

¹³The term "good simpliciter," though common, is not particularly apt, since it may suggest what Thomson (2001), p. 19, calls "just plain, pure good[ness]." This is not what I mean by "good simpliciter." All that I mean is that sort of impersonal goodness, i.e., a sort of goodness that is not a kind of goodness-for, that preoccupied

Moore. (Even this remark may need to be qualified. See n. 21 below and the passage to which it is appended.) Note, further, that it is controversial whether the sort of impersonal goodness that preoccupied Moore must in every case supervene on and only on its bearers' intrinsic properties. I will nonetheless continue to use the term "intrinsic goodness" and related terms, as Moore does, to refer to the sort of value in question. In so doing, I do not intend to be taking a stand on the supervenience thesis in question.

¹⁴Darwall (2002), p. 11. Of course, this argument is hardly conclusive, since someone who is inclined to accept a naturalistic account of goodness-for might either dispute the claim that, under the circumstances, the disagreement about whether x is good for P is in fact coherent or hold that it is coherent but insist that the disagreement concerns only those non-normative facts other than the fact that x is good for P. I won't pursue this question here.

¹⁵In saying that Q's happiness is impersonally good, I do not of course mean to deny that it might also be (personally) good for Q, but only that it is (personally) good for P. My denying that Q's happiness is good for P may seem to commit me to a position on the sort of substantive questions that, in my opening paragraph, I said I would leave aside. However, I don't want to insist that the denial is correct, but only that it is plausible. I take it that the analysis of a concept should be compatible with all plausible accounts of what falls within the extension of that concept.

¹⁶Cf. Ewing (1948), p. 152.

¹⁷Cf. Hurka (1987), p. 71.

¹⁸Cf. Lemos (1994), pp. 12–13; Sumner (1996), pp. 24–25.

¹⁹More cautiously: I think that (9*) is probably acceptable, if we should be buck-passers about goodness-for. I'm not sure that we should be. There is some attraction to saying that P has a prudential reason to favor x because x is good for him. Such a priority of goodness-for over prudential reasons would vitiate (9*). Even so, it might still be true that, necessarily, x is good for P iff P has a prudential reason to favor x.

²⁰There may be moral reasons to favor something, x, even if x is not intrinsically good, or at least reasons to favor x that are independent of the fact that x is intrinsically good. Cf. Ross (1930)/(2002), p. 27, on prima facie duties that do not fall under the general duty to promote intrinsic value. Another issue here is the "wrong kind of reason" problem. Cf. Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (2004).

²¹Cf. Sidgwick (1907), pp. 382, 420; Feldman (2004), pp. 135–36. Cf. also Sumner (1996), pp. 24–25, on the distinction between what he calls "ethical" and "prudential" value. Finally, cf. n. 13 above.

²²Cf. n. 20 above.

²³This question is addressed in Rønnow-Rasmussen (2007), pp. 431ff. At one point (p. 433), Rønnow-Rasmussen entertains the idea that the reason in question may not be a moral one, but he makes no suggestion regarding what kind of non-moral reason may be at stake.

²⁴Darwall (2002), *passim*. Darwall's particular version of the analysis is this (p. 8): "[W]hat it is for something to be good for someone just is for it to be something one should desire for him for his sake, that is, insofar as one cares for him." It's hard to know just what "insofar as" should be taken to mean here. It cannot be equivalent to the "if" of the material conditional, since then the failure to care for P would suffice for everything's being good for P. Perhaps what is intended is the "if" of the strict conditional.

²⁵If a good life is taken to be one that is absolutely good, rather than merely relatively good, for the person whose life it is, then we must of course understand the pertinent notion of benefit in absolute, non-comparative terms (that is, in terms of a contribution to positive welfare) and not in merely relative, comparative terms (that is, in terms of an improvement in welfare).

²⁶I am here using "state" broadly, to cover occurrences of all sorts, even those that might best be construed as events or processes.

²⁷Cf. Rønnow-Rasmussen (2007), pp. 414, 415.

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