

“act-type does not by itself determine the conduct in question” [56]), so, like virtue theorists, he does not believe reference to act-type alone is adequate to identify wrong-making features of a situation. He does, of course, have room for appeal to motivation or manner in making sense of the rightness or wrongness of an act. But just how different does this make him from a virtue theorist? Appeals to motives and manner—and especially to make regular appeals to the structure of motives overall (71) and to “dispositions” to act (73)—are themselves simply components of an appeal to “character” that could be made by a virtue theorist, even if not all virtue theorists do so.

As such, I disagree with Audi when he suggests that “the ethics of conduct . . . contrasts with both rule ethics and virtue ethics” (78). Perhaps one could distinguish him from a radical virtue theorist who is not at all concerned about the principles or the moral quality of our actions. Or one could distinguish him from a Kantian ethicist concerned only with the thinnest of approaches to analyzing the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative. But overall, I would not distinguish Audi’s way of doing philosophy from either a Kantian or virtue theorist who construes her task broadly. To the contrary, I would laud Audi’s theory of conduct as providing a model for how either a virtue theorist or a Kantian theorist could and should proceed: not only with concern for act-type, or for character, but with a rich and robust concern for moral activity overall, taking into account the interrelated notions of act, motivation, manner, and character.

I thus agree with Audi when he suggests that the ethics of conduct “provides a comprehensive framework of moral appraisal that can be integrated with either kind of ethical position [i.e., either Kantian ethics or virtue ethics]” (78). Ironically, though, Audi has perhaps not so much introduced a new way of doing ethics as he has revealed to us that there isn’t really a meaningful distinction between what we previously thought were two different ways of doing ethics (Kantian ethics and virtue ethics), as long as both are done well (i.e., in a way that recognizes the subtleties and complexities demanded from each of these perspectives). In the end, there isn’t much difference between conduct ethics and a carefully articulated virtue ethics or Kantian ethics; furthermore, when each of them is handled properly, there isn’t much difference between Kantian ethics and virtue ethics.

All of this is not to suggest that Audi’s book makes no moral progress. To the contrary, his is a careful, rich, and morally meaningful account of what matters in our actions and character, one which sets the standard high for any way of doing ethics. I recommend it highly.

JEANINE M. GRENBERG  
*St. Olaf College*

Badhwar, Neera K. *Well-Being: Happiness in a Worthwhile Life*.  
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In this book, Neera Badhwar argues that high personal well-being consists in deep emotional fulfillment in an objectively worthwhile life; this, she says, requires objective personal goodness in the form of moral and epistemic virtue. To establish

these claims, Badhwar relies on commonsense judgments about cases and asks after their best explanation, slowly filling out a web of considerations that support her position. The resultant theory of well-being characterizes the welfare ideal, though it does not tell us how precisely to compare the welfare value of subideal lives. Here is an overview of the book's main arguments.

Badhwar takes "well-being" to pick out the highest prudential good as opposed to some thinner psychological concept. It is part of her concept of well-being that it is an end that is final without qualification and self-sufficient in the senses specified by Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1097a–b).

To gain a hearing for an objective account of well-being, Badhwar first undermines positive arguments for strictly subjective accounts. Just because welfare value is subject-relative does not mean that it is principally a matter of subjective mental states (56–57). And just because the scale of personal well-being can be distinguished from scales of moral, perfectionistic, and aesthetic value does not mean that these scales are entirely unrelated to one another (59).

Badhwar then argues against purely subjective theories of well-being, such as Fred Feldman's hedonism, James Griffin's desire-fulfillment view, L. W. Sumner's autonomous life-satisfactionism, Daniel Haybron's self-fulfillment theory, and Valerie Tiberius's values-based life-satisfactionism. Each of these theories has untenable implications about one or more possible cases. Cases that figure prominently in Badhwar's discussion include: the person who takes pleasure in his own unhappiness and suffering (and who fails to value functioning well); the "dominated housewife" discussed by Amartya Sen, Thomas Hill, and Andrea Westlund; a version of Nozick's experience machine case involving a very lazy person who renews his choice to reenter the machine each day; a superficial and narcissistic woman who is entirely out of touch with the abilities and perspectives of her friends and loved ones; and Rawls's infamous grass-counter.

To avoid the conclusion that subjects like these are leading lives high in personal well-being, a theory must make some reference to objective values. But Badhwar rejects the Moorean conception of objective values in favor of an Aristotelian conception on which they are "dependent on human needs, interests, reason, and emotions" (8). While she does not provide a systematic account of which ends are objectively worthwhile and why, she states that objective values "must be compatible with true metaphysical and empirical beliefs and theories," they must be able "to pass the test of exposure to, and careful and honest consideration of, a wide variety of perspectives and experiences," and the character traits correlative with them must be "compossible" in Hillel Steiner's sense, so that "the logical requirements of one [are not] contradicted by the logical requirements of another" (9). They will likely correspond to the areas that "play a fundamental and pervasive role in human life" such as friendship, love, work, aesthetic, economic, and physical pursuits (90). For these relationships and pursuits "play some role in the life of everyone who has the ability for them. A community of individuals who lacked these relationships or activities would not be recognizable as a human community" (90). From what Badhwar says, it is not clear whether these objective values generate reasons for action if they are neither chosen nor desired. Perhaps they do not. Perhaps they are simply activities and ends that are genuinely responsive to human needs and practical problems (in ways that we would be able to appreciate under the right conditions).

The remainder of the book builds on the idea that the successful pursuit of these sorts of objectively valuable relationships and ends is of central importance for personal well-being (cf. 10). But Badhwar's account is far from complete at this point; additional elements are filled in as she explores other possible cases and the practical prerequisites of meaningful relationships and achievements.

Importantly, her account includes a place for happiness, conceived as a psychological state involving a range of positive emotions including fulfillment and enjoyment, as well as appetitive and passive pleasures. In the context of a life organized around objectively worthwhile activities, these forms of happiness are beneficial. Importantly, a life could not be high in well-being without happiness—there is no substitute for it. Its opposites, such as pain, frustration, and depression, are always harmful, at least to some degree.

Badhwar's view is therefore importantly different from versions of the so-called Objective List Theory on which things like mathematical knowledge and successful child-rearing are directly beneficial, even for those who do not care about them. For Badhwar, "objectively good values are partly constitutive of our well-being only if we have certain pro-attitudes towards them" (50). While mathematical knowledge and child-rearing are objectively worthwhile, they are optional ends, and valuable only if enjoyed.

Following Nozick, Badhwar argues that reality-orientation is also indispensable for well-being: "To the extent that we are ignorant of important features of our circumstances, or of our actions, goals, character, or relationships, our positive feelings and self-evaluations and, thus, our well-being are rooted not in the lives we actually lead, but in a fiction" (41). Furthermore, reflection on "dominated housewife"-type cases shows that a well-off person cannot be indifferent to how much control she has in important areas of life. The housewife would be better off if she did not simply defer to her husband on all important matters, even if he happens to direct her toward enjoyable and worthwhile pursuits. This shows that the virtue of autonomy, provisionally understood as the disposition to try and understand things for oneself and act accordingly, is also an intrinsic component of well-being (87). Autonomy has several important components and corollaries.

First and foremost, autonomy requires self-direction: "For it is only in making our own judgments and . . . acting accordingly that we fully exercise our agency and, thereby, both define and express our identities as individuals" (86). To live autonomously is "to play an active role in shaping our individual selves, instead of slavishly following others, or surrendering direction of our lives to our fantasies, illusions, momentary urges, or inertia" (87). High well-being is therefore incompatible with being servile, conformist, or blindly obedient (72–74, 83–117).

But genuine self-direction also requires being reality oriented and minimally informed. And so at a deeper level of analysis, we can say that autonomy itself consists in being intellectually and emotionally disposed to track truth or understanding in important areas of one's own life and to act accordingly (86). But what is required for beings like us, living in the actual world, to know ourselves and the world so that we might be self-directing?

For one thing, Badhwar says, it requires self-respect: "in order to direct our lives by our own judgments well, we need to be able to trust our ability to do so,

and this requires a basic self-regard" (87). For related reasons, it requires being independent-minded and self-possessed (90–91). It also presupposes some evaluative knowledge: to be appropriately sensitive to the facts, one must be sensitive to what information is *important* and which ends are *worthwhile* (89). This point is reinforced by the thought that anyone who is genuinely reality oriented will presumably be so both with respect to questions of fact and questions of value. These requirements, in turn, point toward autonomy's connections with other virtues. Autonomy consists in part in being reality oriented, and if one is reality oriented under favorable epistemic conditions, one will be "realistic" and thereby possess the practical understanding that is partially constitutive of certain epistemic and moral virtues (23, 117). Such virtues include honesty, courage, modesty, justice and fairness, open-mindedness, practical wisdom, and a sense of responsibility (108).

In the book's middle chapters, Badhwar attempts to square the moral psychology implicit in her theory of well-being with the current scientific picture of the human mind. She makes several important points.

Being autonomous does not require the ability to philosophically demonstrate the value of autonomy. For some people, the attempt to question or justify the value of autonomy would lead only to "sophistry or confusion and a subversion of . . . good common sense" (115).

If positive illusions were beneficial, as some psychologists hold, we might question Badhwar's case for reality-orientation and self-knowledge. But the prudential value of positive illusions has been overstated. Badhwar concedes that there are cases where *some* happiness based on illusion is better for a person than utter misery based on truth. But generally speaking, self-deception is likely to lead to unhappiness. There are no empirical grounds for thinking that positive illusions lead to greater happiness as opposed to an illusion of greater happiness. And importantly, the evidence that realistic individuals tend to be *worse* off is surprisingly weak (130). The rational policy is realistic optimism: one should make a realistic appraisal of one's abilities and past efforts, but look toward the future with hope—if such hope might activate or develop capacities that already exist, thereby leading to good results.

Badhwar next presents and defends a neo-Aristotelian conception of virtue. At the most general level, virtue involves the integration of emotional and intellectual (especially deliberative) dispositions, so that one is disposed to respond appropriately to situations in thought, feeling, and action. Virtue is "highly conducive to happiness, since a common source of unhappiness is conflict between our emotions and our evaluations" (152). Partly for this reason, it is a—if not *the*—"primary element in well-being" (207).

Many recent allegations to the effect that virtue is impossible or incompatible with flourishing involve mistaken assumptions, Badhwar says. It is a mistake to conceive of virtue as a purely intellectual disposition; recent psychological research shows that emotions are key for rational decision making (146–48). Another mistake involves conceptualizing the virtues of kindness or benevolence in ways that threaten an agent's self-regard and violate the compossibility requirement (153–56). A third mistake is the traditional Aristotelian *strong unity thesis*, which states that to have one virtue, a person must have *all* the others to the highest degree. What is true is that each virtue implicates and is strengthened by sev-

eral others. A fourth mistake in thinking about virtue is *globalism*, the thesis that a person has the virtue of kindness only if he or she is cross-situationally kind. While global virtue is a worthy ideal, real-life virtue is often compartmentalized and domain-specific, much like expertise. This is partly because of situational and innate factors that interfere with practical deliberation and motivation. Such factors include unconscious racist, authoritarian, and conformist impulses, as well as susceptibility to statistical errors and the framing effect (157–65).

The final part of the book seeks to show that other-regarding moral virtue is necessary—but not sufficient—for high well-being. While autonomy does not strictly entail such moral virtue, an autonomous person would not be cruel, ruthless, or mean, except in very unusual situations, because such a person would recognize and be motivated by the relevant facts (e.g., that so-and-so is innocent and deserves to be treated well). Furthermore, if one is autonomous, reality oriented, well-informed, and self-respecting, one will see that others are equally centers of experience and sources of valid claims (just like oneself). Additionally, seeing oneself as an end requires seeing oneself “not only as an ‘I,’ but also as one person among (at least some) others” (186).

The necessity of other-regarding moral virtue is supported from other directions, too. Well-being requires caring relationships and meaningful achievements, and other-regarding virtues like justice, integrity, and kindness are “part of the very structure of genuine, close friendships and of some important achievements” (195). Happiness also requires an emotional sense of personal worth that flows naturally from the cultivation of moral virtue (188). And as Hobbes suggested, treating others badly invites retaliation, making one’s welfare insecure. This all supports Badhwar’s earlier claim that a life high in personal well-being “entails a life that exhibits virtuous dispositions at least in some spheres, and is motivated by the central moral principles and commitments in most other spheres” (4).

It should be noted, however, that the most virtuous are not necessarily the most eudaimon, because extreme virtue can prompt risky acts of heroism that lead to the loss of necessary external goods. Furthermore, a particular act of injustice might, in extraordinary circumstances, be necessary for preserving the chief sources of one’s happiness (226). But neither of these points should distract us from the general truth that the more virtuous are more eudaimon than the less virtuous in a wide variety of circumstances, including the circumstances that most of us are likely to encounter.

These points require us to reject the Stoic thesis that virtue is sufficient for happiness. But the Stoic ideal is deeply unattractive. It misconstrues the importance (for well-being) of happiness in the emotional-affective sense. It ignores the importance of external goods, which are beneficial so long as one is able to use them virtuously and happily (202). Spelled out in one way, it involves contradictory attitudes, namely, that (a) certain practices deserve to be favored and chosen because they are conducive to given ends, but (b) it does not matter whether these same ends are actually achieved. Spelled out in another way, it “makes a mystery of virtue—what it is, where it comes from, how it is related to the excellence of practices, and why we should care about it” (216).

There is much to admire in this book. Badhwar has refined several important arguments against subjectivist accounts of well-being. She has challenged

the subjectivist to explain precisely what is objectionable about tying well-being to her non-Moorean form of objective value. Badhwar's discussion of autonomy is subtle and original. She persuasively argues that self-direction requires reality-orientation, and she explains why wishful thinking, conformity, and the betrayal of one's ideals are likely to undermine one's well-being. She makes a forceful case for the viability of a neo-Aristotelian conception of virtue. While she is critical of certain trends in empirically oriented moral psychology, when the evidence mounts up against a cherished eudaimonist doctrine, she is happy to acknowledge this and make appropriate revisions. Her critique of Stoic eudaimonism—which is developed in much greater detail than described here—is absolutely devastating.

A minor problem is Badhwar's reply to Doris's claim that "character" is merely an "association of situation-specific local traits" (173). Her reply appeals to contentious conceptual truths about understanding and virtue, and it seems to presuppose that Aristotelian virtue is actual—something Doris would dispute. However, other responses are available to Badhwar, here.

Another problem concerns Badhwar's claim that virtue is partially *constitutive* of well-being. She establishes that certain moral and epistemic virtues, such as reality-orientation and sensitivity to others, "do not occupy their own special rarefied realm" but are instead part of the structure of the relationships and achievements that are essential for good lives (195). She shows that these virtues require—either conceptually, or as a matter of psychological necessity—several others. But is this enough to establish the more general claim that virtue is constitutive of well-being, given that many other virtues appear to be merely conducive to it? And does it really vindicate the traditional eudaimonist thesis that virtue is the primary element in well-being? Perhaps it would be safer to say that certain virtues are partially constitutive of certain key welfare goods and that other virtues are practically necessary for acquiring these virtues and/or these goods. Even this is an impressive conclusion.

But the most serious problem with the book concerns Badhwar's claim that well-being is the "highest prudential good" (11). Here, her idea seems to be that her own account of well-being is fit to play a certain conceptual role, namely the role of something that is (a) "desirable only for itself," (b) the ultimate end in the sense that it "provides the ultimate explanation and justification for all our particular goals, actions, and desires" (30–31); and (c) such that "with it we lack nothing" because it provides "all that [one's] heart could desire," that is, it is a good whose achievement makes for "a life so desirable that nothing added to it can make it better" (31).

If we tie the well-being concept to this role, Badhwar's idea that servile and immoral lives are lacking in well-being becomes more plausible (for surely these lives are not beyond improvement). But there are reasons to doubt that it is useful or reasonable to tie the term "well-being" and its cognates to this conceptual role.

Consider claim (b), which suggests that well-being is *the master practical value*. This amounts to saying that all the ends anyone ever has reason to pursue are ultimately explained and justified in terms of their connection with that person's well-being. Tokens of moral, perfectionistic, and aesthetic goodness are reason-providing only if they figure as constitutive elements of well-being or means to

it. Otherwise, they do not provide the agent with reasons for action at all. But this seems questionable. A person in a very unjust society might have strong (though not necessarily overriding) reasons to be moral, even when being moral involves monumental sacrifices in external goods and happiness.

Similarly, claim (c) suggests that a life ideally high in well-being cannot be improved by adding purely moral, perfectionistic, or aesthetic value to it. If this were true, the well-being concept would enable us to make “all-in” evaluations of lives; the life that is maximally high in well-being would be maximally choice-worthy, overall. But consider two lives that are equally high in well-being. Surely the second life might yet contain more perfectionistic value and be preferable on this basis. Badhwar herself, in discussing Wittgenstein’s life, distinguishes between lives of well-being and “lives of great worth” (78). This suggests that there are other scales of evaluation that are not incorporated into the well-being scale and that also may affect how choice-worthy a life is, overall. It seems useful to distinguish these scales.

For these reasons, the conceptual constraints traditionally imposed on well-being by Aristotelians may need to be relaxed. Indeed, most contemporary theorists seem to connect the term “well-being” not with the *summum bonum*, and not with happiness in a thin psychological sense, but with the everyday concepts of benefit and harm. They aim to analyze this somewhat thinner concept of welfare, not well-being in the sense of the *summum bonum*. As one might expect, Badhwar’s theory is somewhat less plausible as an analysis of the conventional welfare concept. For example, it is not clear that *some* servile and immoral lives are lacking in well-being (in the conventional sense), as opposed to lacking in other values.

Badhwar might respond that *something* like her concept of well-being as the highest prudential good is alive and well in the popular imagination, and so it ought to be taken seriously by welfare theorists. She says it is what people have in mind when they wish to live “happily ever after”; it is suggested by “religious conceptions of eternal bliss in the hereafter” (31). It is also glimpsed by us in those “moments in which we feel complete, as though life’s promise has been fulfilled and all our desires satisfied” and in “moments in which we feel simultaneously that if we died then, we’d have nothing left to regret—and also, with utter clarity, that life is supremely worth living for its own sake.” She continues: “When we project this sense of completeness over our entire lives, we have the emotional equivalent of a good that is an ultimate, encompassing end for all our choices” (31).

The concept of well-being operative in such aspirations may be distinct from both Aristotle’s *summum bonum* and the more mundane welfare concept favored by other theorists. It may not face the problems described above (e.g., lives that instantiate it might be improvable on other value scales). But why should our concept of well-being—or any particular account of it—vindicate these aspirations? For not everyone has had such peak experiences, and those who have often describe them as fleeting. Perhaps such experiences are just “noise” and do not have interesting or regular nonemotional correlates. In short, perhaps this welfare concept represents an impossible ideal.

JASON RAIBLEY

*California State University—Long Beach*