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10 Does Virtue Make Us Happy? A New Theory for an Old Question

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Does virtue make us happy? More precisely, do the virtues that lead us to treat other people well (such as kindness, generosity, and justice) benefit their possessors?[1] Increasingly, research in positive psychology is telling us that many virtues do contribute substantially to the virtuous person's well-being. A large number of studies support the conclusion that virtues such as kindness and gratitude prevent undesirable life outcomes such as substance abuse and depression and promote desirable outcomes like life satisfaction and positive affect (for reviews of this literature see Kesebir and Diener, 2013; Tiberius, 2013). One might think that a well-established, empirical answer to the question that has preoccupied philosophers at least since Plato posed it in *The Republic* would make philosophers jump for joy. Though I'm sure that many philosophers have been pleased to see that some virtues promote life satisfaction and prevent depression, there has been little joyful jumping. Why is this?

There are a variety of complaints about what I will call "the default approach" in positive psychology research on the relationship between virtue and happiness.[2] According to the default line, happiness is understood as subjective well-being, which in turn is usually understood as life satisfaction, domain satisfaction (satisfaction with important areas of life such as work and family), and positive affect.[3] Virtues are often operationalized behaviorally so that evidence for virtue is taken to be virtuous actions, which in turn are often taken to be prosocial behaviors. Finally, according to the default line, we investigate whether virtue makes us happy by studying the correlations and causal relationships between subjective well-being and prosocial behaviors.

Taking the default approach, psychologists are beginning to discover that doing helpful things for other people does cause us to be happier in various respects largely by looking at the effects of prosocial behavior on subjective well-being (Thoits and Hewitt, 2001; Piliavin, 2003). In one

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study, for example, researchers assessed participants' subjective well-being by asking them to report their general happiness before getting a "windfall" ($5 or $20), which half of them were instructed to spend on themselves (the "personal spending group") and half of them were instructed to spend on others (the "prosocial spending group") by 5:00 p.m. At the end of the day, happiness was assessed again, and it turned out that those who spent the money on other people were happier than the ones who spent it on themselves (Dunn, Aknin, and Norton, 2008).

Research on the contribution of gratitude to happiness proceeds similarly. For example, a number of studies have investigated the differential effects of virtuous behaviors (such as expressing gratitude) and hedonic behaviors (such as buying things or getting drunk) on subjective well-being to discover that the virtuous behaviors are better at securing positive affect and life satisfaction (Steger, Kashdan, and Oishi, 2008). Positive psychologists often call virtuous behaviors "eudaimonic," because of the strong connection between virtue and eudaimonia in the ancient philosophical tradition. In the discussion of one of these studies, Steger, Kashdan, and Oishi say that "the principal finding from this study was that the more an individual reported engaging in eudaimonic behaviors, the greater the well-being reported as measured by meaning in life, life satisfaction, and PA [positive affect]" (p. 32). This study does not establish that gratitude *causes* happiness (as the authors are fully aware), but it does exemplify what I have called the default approach.

By calling this approach to the question of how happiness and virtue are related the default I do not mean that this is the only line of research psychologists follow. Rather, it is one prevalent way of thinking about the connection between virtue and happiness and how to investigate it that is influential in the positive psychology movement, particularly in that part of the research that makes its way into popular books (e.g., see Emmons, 2013; Layard, 2005; Lyubomirsky, 2008; Seligman, 2012).

Given this characterization of the default approach, we can see why many philosophers might take issue with the program.[4] Many philosophers, particularly Aristotelians, do not identify happiness or well-being with subjective well-being,[5] nor are they likely to think that prosocial behavior is very good evidence of virtue, which (for many) requires appropriate deliberation and acting for the right reasons (Annas, 2004; Hursthouse, 1999). For example, someone who expresses gratitude only in order to increase his or her own happiness would not count as having virtue.

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Is there any reason for psychologists to care about philosophers' dissatisfaction with the default approach? And, if there is, how could psychological research address these concerns?

On the first question, I think the answer is a qualified yes. Psychologists should care about philosophical dissatisfaction with the default approach insofar as that dissatisfaction is representative of deep human concerns that aren't peculiar to philosophers. Why might we think this is indeed the case? The explanation has to do with the fact that well-being and virtue are typically taken to be "thick concepts."[6] A thick concept is one that has descriptive meaning and prescriptive or evaluative meaning. In other words, a thick concept is (in philosophical terminology) both normative and descriptive. This is true of many virtue concepts: However you define kindness, for example, it has to have something to do with our regard for others and how we treat them, but it also (typically) serves to recommend or express admiration of the kind person. Kindness and the other virtues are supposed to be traits we have good reason to cultivate. Well-being is also a thick concept. It is supposed to be something it makes sense for us to pursue, something we should try to promote for ourselves or others.

Because "well-being" and virtue concepts typically express approbation or commendation, their use by positive psychologists to refer to measurable subjective states or particular behaviors is open to criticism from anyone who has a different view about what is worthy of approbation or commendation. In other words, the thickness of these concepts opens the door to all the controversy about what the aim of life should be. If people didn't have strong commitments about what it is for a human being to live well, positive psychologists' operationalized definitions wouldn't be problematic. But people do have strong commitments, and many of these people are not subjectivists.[7] There are certainly many people who believe that there are facts about values that are independent of our desires; some of these people think that values are determined by God, some think that values reduce to other facts about us (pleasure rather than desire, say). And then, of course, there are Aristotelians in the world who will not think of the assumption that desires are the basis for prescriptions as a default. Even psychologists do not necessarily think that what they can measure is all there is to well-being, and some are careful to distinguish their technical notion of subjective well-being from the broader notions of well-being or the human good (Kesebir and Diener, 2008).

There is some reason, then, to care about the philosophical dissatisfaction with the default approach to the question about the relationship

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between well-being and virtue. This is a question that matters deeply to people who have strongly held and various ideas about what well-being and virtue are. If the research in positive psychology is going to be helpful to people, it has to speak to people on their own terms in one way or another. Help that imposes an alien conception of the good on others isn't helpful since it may appear condescending or threatening. Further, psychologists (like most of us) do not want to engage in objectionable moralizing or patronizing meddling; it is not the point of positive psychology to impose a particular conception of well-being on an unwitting public. This brings us to the question of what could be done about the default approach. I see three options.

The first option—and one that I think some psychologists do take—is just to deny that they are studying anything normative or evaluative and to reject consistently the idea that psychological research makes prescriptive claims. Some prominent positive psychologists sometimes take this line. For example, Diener and Seligman, two of the most prominent members of the field, say this: "Because we believe that social science should be descriptive and not prescriptive, in mentioning specific possible policies we do not mean to advocate them, but rather to give examples of the policies that might follow from the findings" (Diener and Seligman, 2004, p. 4). Peterson and Seligman say something similar: "Although our classification is decidedly about such [political and personal] values, it is descriptive of what is ubiquitous, rather than prescriptive…" (Peterson and Seligman, 2004, p. 51). Positive psychologists can insist that *subjective well-being* is a purely descriptive concept, not in the least bit thick.

This is fair enough, but it dodges the problem rather than facing it head on, and I think it leaves positive psychologists in a weaker position than they need to accept. Many of the psychologists just cited want to help people, which suggests that they do have an interest in prescribing behaviors that will improve people's lives. This is certainly evidenced by the proliferation of popular books (e.g., Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2011; Gilbert, 2006; Haidt, 2006; Lyubomirsky, 2008; Seligman, 2012). Given this, a better position would be one from which psychologists could rightly claim that they are talking about well-being and virtue (or at least that what they are talking about has direct implications for well-being and virtue)—the very things with which ordinary people are deeply concerned.

The second option would be to defend this better position by accepting a subjective theoretical justification of the recommendations that positive psychology research makes. In other words, the second option is to defend prescriptive claims and thick conceptions of well-being and virtue by

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appeal to a subjective theory about the nature of prescriptions. They could then defend their focus on these psychological states and their promotion of them in popular books and other public venues by saying that everyone in fact *wants* to have these psychological states. Indeed, positive psychologists have argued that life satisfaction is valued by most people. Taking this route, positive psychology would claim something like this: "We're not saying that life satisfaction and positive affect are good or bad for you in themselves, but since you want them, you should listen to our recommendations!" I believe this view is implicit in the default approach. You do sometimes see the position made explicit, as here in Dan Gilbert's discussion of the studies that claim to show that parenting reduces positive affect but increases overall life satisfaction: "So you have to think about which kind of happiness you'll be consuming most often. Do you want to maximize the one you experience almost all the time [moment-to-moment happiness] or the one you experience rarely? [overall life satisfaction]" (Simon, 2008).

Background subjectivism is often not acknowledged for the theory that it is and is instead taken to be a kind of neutral default. It barely occurs to us to wonder about telling people how to get what they want because we naturally assume a kind of subjectivism about values according to which prescriptive recommendations are grounded in what people want or value. This is not an unreasonable assumption to make. Telling people how to achieve life satisfaction and positive affect seems safe—it seems immune from charges of preaching or meddling—because these things are *part of* most conceptions of the human good and because the subjective background theory is attractive at this cultural moment. What we should notice, however, is that it is an assumption—and one that is needed to get from description to prescription. The gap is bridged with a theory of the proper foundation for prescriptions. In short, taking this option, psychologists can make prescriptive claims and the justification for these claims comes from a sort of subjectivism about value: If we want it, then it's good. This is indeed the view of another well-known historical figure in philosophy: Thomas Hobbes, according to whom

> whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire that is it which he for his part calleth *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion *evil*.… For these words of good [and] evil … are ever used with relation to the person that useth them, there being nothing simply and absolutely so, nor any common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves, but from the person of the man.… (Hobbes, 1651/1994, pp. 28–29)

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The point here is that desire-based subjectivism is indeed a theory, not an atheoretical default. Moreover, it is a theory with problems. The idea that what makes something good for you is that you desire it is an idea that has been around long enough to earn a good deal of criticism. Most of the criticism stem from the observation that desires can be defective in a variety of ways. We can want things that we wouldn't want if we had better information (a trip to the Mall of America, e.g.), and we may want things because we've been manipulated into thinking they would be good for us (say, an Apple Watch). Desire theories are not without defenders, and the debate about these objections continues;[8] my point is just that the desire theory (the main contender in the subjectivist camp) is not *obviously* the correct view about what makes for a justified well-being prescription.

These problems for subjectivism lead us to the third option, which is to endorse an objective theory of well-being, like Aristotelianism. It shouldn't be difficult to see what the problem is with this solution. If the original worry about the default approach was that it assumes prescriptive claims about well-being and virtue that get no uptake from many people, an Aristotelian theory has this problem in spades. Not everyone is a subjectivist about well-being, but not everyone is an Aristotelian either.

To summarize, on the one hand, if positive psychologists reject prescriptive theorizing, then they need to avoid using thick concepts, and this means that they are in a weak position with respect to helping people. On the other hand, if they use thick concepts, they need some background justification for the prescriptive significance that these concepts carry. So far, the background justifications we have seen divide into subjectivism (which grounds prescriptions in desires) or Aristotelian objectivism (which grounds prescriptions in human nature). Either way, you won't have any assurance that your prescriptive claims about well-being or virtue will be appealing to your audience. Further, I think positive psychologists are unlikely to want to accept such a theory, because of underlying skepticism about the ability to defend foundational justifications for value claims (including subjectivism). And who can blame them? It's not like philosophers have solved this problem in a way that's satisfying to all or even most.

Happily, these are not our only options, though they seem to be the only options on the radar of positive psychologists and Aristotelian critics. My goal in the remainder of this paper is to articulate an alternative picture about what makes prescriptions justified that provides a framework for positive psychology and resolves some of the problems that

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Aristotelian critics have raised. I'll describe the basic approach to justifying prescriptions about well-being in the "Constructivism and Well-being" section. In the "Virtues and Values" section I will discuss some particular components of well-being and their related virtues and explain how the approach answers some of the concerns we've just surveyed. The alternative approach I describe shares features of both the views we've just discussed. In terms of its starting points, my approach is closer to subjectivism than to Aristotle, and in terms of where it ends up, it is closer to Aristotle than to Hobbes. This is as it should be: Philosophical theories that have withstood the test of time have got something right, and good alternatives are not going to abandon everything that has come before. My alternative puts the pieces together in a different way. Even if I don't convince everyone that this is the best way of thinking about prescriptive claims for all purposes, I hope to show that it is an attractive way of thinking about them for the purposes of positive psychology. At the very least, I hope to raise the issue of the underlying theoretical assumptions and put another option on the table.

Constructivism and Well-Being

For Aristotle, prescriptions are grounded in the facts about human beings as teleological organisms.[9] For Hobbes, prescriptions derive from facts about our desires, which are ultimately self-interested. Both of these approaches (at least on one standard interpretation of them) take ethics to be contiguous with science and the truths about justified prescriptions to be of the same kind as truths in science. These theories aim to tell us which natural facts (facts about the nature of our species and its normal development, facts about our desires, etc.) are the relevant ones for ethics, and then these facts provide the foundation for prescriptive claims.

A different way of thinking about ethics is that it is a tool (or set of tools) for solving practical problems—such as how to get along with each other over the long term—that aims not at arriving at the independent or external truth about what has value and what we ought to do, but at finding solutions that help to solve the practical problems we confront. This way of thinking about ethics is sometimes called *constructivism*, because it takes the ethical project to be one of constructing a system of norms to live by, rather than a process of discovery of those norms in our nature or our individual psychologies.[10] James Lenman provides a helpful definition of constructivism for our purposes:

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> Constructivist views understand correct normative views of the relevant kind (political, ethical, normative) as those which are the upshot of some procedure or criterion, where (a) that procedure or criterion is one followable or applicable by human beings where (b) that procedure or criterion is itself characterized in normative terms invoking ideals of e.g., rationality or reasonableness and (c) applying the procedure or criterion is taken as determining or constitutive of that correctness rather than as tracking a correctness conceived as prior and independent to it and (d) where the rationale for our taking an interest in whatever the procedure or criterion in question delivers is conceived of as speaking to distinctively practical as opposed to theoretical concerns (Lenman and Shemmer, 2012, p. 216).[11]

An important thing to notice is that constructivism doesn't mean "making it up."[12] Constructivists hold that normative claims are justified by a rational procedure guided by the ordinary norms (including many epistemic norms) that guide all of our best thinking. So, on this view, reasonable normative claims (ought statements, prescriptions, and the like) are constructed rather than discovered, but they are constructed by way of a process that is intended to *improve* the judgments of those whose practical concerns are being addressed.

If we think of normative theories as tools for solving practical problems, and we adopt the constructivist approach, the task is not to prove which values are the right ones from an objective point of view, but rather it is to figure out what it is reasonable to think, how it is reasonable to proceed, given our practical concerns.[13] The place to start, then, is with our practical concerns: What is the concern we have when we ask whether virtues are part of happiness? One central problem (though I would not insist that it's the only one) is the problem of how to help each other (and ourselves) live better lives. We (most of us) are sympathetic creatures with deep and abiding connections to each other; we have a natural desire to help other people, particularly people with whom we share a community. Further, our interest in helping others is shaped by our understanding that, typically, human beings must fit into a community in order to thrive. When we aim to help people, we are partly attuned to their role in the group. For example, we educate children in part for their own good, but also so that they can be contributing members of society.

I suggest, then, that an important practical problem for us—the one that moves us to ask "Does virtue make us happy?"—is the problem of how to increase people's well-being (how to make them happier or better off) in a way that respects the fact that individual people belong to communities. We want to know how to make a person's life go better for him or her while acknowledging that things go better in the long run for

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people when they play well with others. We are interested in this question not only as helpers of other people, but as people living our own lives: We want to know how to improve our own lives, and we acknowledge that how well our own lives go is likely to be bound up with how we treat other people. Concerns about the treatment of other people motivate thinking about virtues, since many virtues are precisely those qualities that help us get along better with each other. I would argue that this interest in helping interdependent creatures is a primary source of interest in the question about well-being and virtue that has driven a lot of the theorizing about well-being.

If our practical concern is how to help people, and more specifically how to make people happier *and* more virtuous, we need an answer that will speak to people's actual conceptions of what a good human life is. This is for the reason that we can't move people to do things, to change their behavior or their character, without giving them reasons that they can grasp and act on. Our prescriptions for changing behavior will have to be tied into something that appeals to people's own conceptions of well-being (something that they take to be the grounds for prescriptions that they have reason to follow). This is true for moral and political reasons: As much as possible (and especially in our private helping behavior), we want to avoid coercion and paternalism. But it is also true for reasons that have to do with the nature of a good life: On almost any theory, living a life that you fail to see as worthwhile isn't going to be the best life you could live.

Our constructivist approach to well-being prescriptions, then, begins with a conception of a person as a goal-directed, sympathetic, and socially dependent creature, and with a commitment to give weight to what people care about and the norms they already accept (i.e., their values).[14] Constructivism as I'm employing it here is a theory about what justifies prescriptions (in philosophical terminology, it is a theory of normative reasons), and different theories of well-being could be paired with constructivism to yield prescriptive recommendations. However, I think that some theories of well-being fit better with the constructivist approach than others, and in order to see how constructivism might help us, we need to get specific about well-being. Therefore, in order to make some progress, I'll proceed to explain a particular view about well-being that I think fits well with the constructivist approach and with much of the research in positive psychology.[15] I'll call this combination of views "value fulfillment constructivism". (I have elsewhere called this view about well-being "the value fulfillment theory of well-being. Value fulfillment constructivism is just the combination of

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value fulfillment about well-being and constructivism about the authority of prescriptions).[16]

I said that constructivism recommends that we take seriously people's values. This will sound like subjectivism, and it is closer to subjectivism than to Aristotle, but there are a few important differences. First, values are not the same thing as desires (as we'll see in a moment), and second, the process of improvement is a crucial component of the constructivist approach. Prescriptive recommendations are not grounded in desires, but in improved values. I think that these initial ingredients into the process of construction make sense, given our practical concerns. They have something else in their favor, too, which is that they are a likely target of overlapping consensus among different philosophical theories of well-being. If you were to ask the Aristotelians, the hedonists, and the preference satisfactionists to sort people into those who are living really well and those who aren't, and then to look for something that's true of all the people who are living well, I think you would find that the fulfillment of emotionally entrenched values (or pursuit of goals or personal projects) over time is one such thing. Hedonists will insist that the point of pursuing goals is the pleasure we get from it, and Aristotelians will insist that it is only the pursuit of certain objectively valuable goals that makes a difference to our well-being, but there will be agreement that all the people who are doing really well are fulfilling values or pursuing goals over time in a way that is emotionally engaged. (Of course, this may not be the only thing that such theories have in common, but notice how it suits the purpose of giving people reasons. We choose what to focus on with an eye to our practical concerns.)

I haven't quite completed the description of the constructivist approach to well-being and virtue. We have some initial starting points that will ground judgments about well-being, but (as we saw in Lenman's definition) we also need norms of improvement, that is, we need some articulation of the procedure by which these initial judgments may be justified. There is a theoretical rationale for such norms in the constructivist approach: Our normative judgments could not give rise to legitimate demands if they were not subject to standards of correctness or justification. The authority of the prescriptions that derive from a normative theory must be backed up by some rational process. However, we can see the need for norms of improvement even without thinking about the requirements of normative theory. If we were to stop with people's goals and values and say, simply, that what is good for people is achieving whatever goals they happen to have at the moment, we would have some wildly counterintuitive results and a poor

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solution to our practical ~~interest in helping~~ people. Just as people sometimes have uninformed or manipulated desires, so too they can have defective goals or values. Think of the person who values being the best at everything; this value isn't realizable over time for normal human beings, and it wouldn't benefit the person to help him or her try to achieve it. Some people have goals and values that are bad for them in the long term, and one important way to help other people is to help them identify goals and values that can be realized over time.

In articulating the norms for improving our judgments about which values and goals are good for people, we should try to avoid making substantive theoretical assumptions. For example, we don't want to say that the only values that count as contributing to well-being are those that are objectively good according to Aristotle. Rather, in keeping with the constructivist spirit, the norms should be procedural norms that do not assume facts about objective values. When we think about cases in which it seems obvious that people have dysfunctional values, there is already a suggestions as to what sort of procedural norms would make sense here. Consider addicts, misers, workaholics, or people who value nothing but money, power, and fame. The problem in many of these cases has to do with the mutual achievability of a set of values over time, given certain facts about what human beings are like. Norms of improvement, then, should include attention to what I will call the *viability* of a person's values and to the *sustainability* of that viable pattern. Viability has to do with suitability or fit and synchronic realizability. Viable values can be achieved, fulfilled, or lived up to (which term makes most sense depends on the value in question) because they are suited to the person's interests, emotional state, and talents and to the environment that the person is in. Sustainability has to do with fit and realizability over time. I'll say more about how these criteria are applied in the next section.

When we assess how a person's life is going and we aim to help the person, we should focus on that individual's values and whether these values can be fulfilled together over time given what we know about likely changes in the person and his or her circumstances. Viability and sustainability in a set of values are not the only norms we have, though they are of special importance in the context of the question "Does virtue make us happy?" Other norms that constrain our judgments about well-being include epistemic norms that have broader application.We ought to make judgments about well-being and virtue with an open mind, humility about what we know about others' experience, attention to the results of our best science, and sound instrumental reasoning. We can summarize these additional

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norms as a requirement of epistemic reasonableness. The norms of improvement for judgments about people's well-being, then, are as follows:

- Viability (are the values suitable and realizable?)
- Sustainability (are the values suitable and realizable over time?)
- Epistemic reasonableness (do the values withstand reflection in accordance with other epistemic standards and virtues?)

The application of these norms will require sensitive interpretation and the balancing of competing interests. For example, in many cases it is very general values (like the value of friendship) that are stable across time, and to remain viable these values have to be realized in different ways as a person's circumstances change. This will not be a simple process, but it will make us attentive to the right kinds of considerations.

At this point one might wonder what this particular set of norms has to recommend it. There are many procedures we could use to improve our judgments about people's well-being, one might argue, so why choose viability, sustainability, and reasonableness over other things like impartiality, adherence to God's will, or weight to particular values such as pleasure?[17] First, assuming particular values (like pleasure) would beg the question against conceptions of well-being that do not privilege these values, which is something we were trying to avoid. Second, these norms are widely shared among researchers who are investigating questions about the relationship between well-being and virtue and people to whom this research might be addressed. The norms of open-mindedness, epistemic humility[18] and instrumental rationality are a kind of lowest common denominator among scientists, philosophers and citizens with an interest in research and reasoned debate,[19] and the norms of value viability and sustainability speak to an interest in advancing or being exposed to prescriptions that are not alien to what will motivate people to change. Granted, one reason these norms of improvement are unlikely to be question begging and likely to be held in common is that they are imprecise and open to interpretation. Some will see this as a problem, but I think it is an advantage because it makes difficult what should be difficult: elucidating the norms we take to govern our choices and inferring what follows from them. On the constructivist approach, this is just where the hard work is, and we should not expect it to be otherwise given the complexity of human values.

The above will not have removed all doubt about the constructivist procedure I've described, and it's worth saying a few more things to address the doubters. First, my ambitions in recommending the constructivist

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approach are fairly modest. I am not arguing that these norms are the right ones for any ethical problem we might want to solve nor that constructivism is the right approach for all ethical problems. Second, while I take constructivism to be an approach to defending prescriptive claims that essentially ignores the metaphysics of value and focuses entirely on the epistemology of reasonable judgment, it is open to doubters to accept the approach I've outlined as an epistemology that complements their metaphysical theories. (Whether or not the norms in question complement or conflict with substantive theories of well-being can be judged by how much the results of the constructivist approach line up with recommendations for those theories.) Finally, it is worth clarifying that value fulfillment constructivism is not subjectivism, at least not the simple kind of subjectivism discussed previously (in case that confusion is one source of ~~rejection of~~ the constructivist approach). The approach I am defending is not that what is good for a person is whatever he or she happens to value, nor does it reduce the good for a person to what the person would value if he or she were informed. Rather, the view defended here is that "we"—the community of people who are concerned to help improve others' lives and attentive to the relationship between well-being and virtue—make more justified judgments and recommendations about people's lives when we pay attention to the viability and stability of their values and we follow norms of epistemic reasonability. While value fulfillment constructivism does take subjective values as its starting points (and therefore has something in common with the kind of subjectivism discussed above), it leaves open the possibility that what is good for a person is not something the person would value if he or she were informed: A person's values could be so dysfunctional that the person cannot get from where he or she is to somewhere better by his or her powers of reflection alone. Such cases will be exceptional—things have to go quite wrong for a person to be in this state—and constructivism does still aim to ground prescriptions that people take themselves to have reasons to follow. But value fulfillment constructivism leaves more room for a critical perspective on what other people think is good for them than most subjective theories. We now have the basic outline of a constructivist approach to well-being prescriptions. We should think of well-being, for our practical purposes, as the fulfillment of a reasonable and viable set of values that can be sustained over time. In the next section, I'll turn to some specific values that are a pervasive part of most human lives and talk about the relationship of these values to virtue. What we'll see is that values and virtues are intertwined in important ways. I'll discuss two examples and, in each case, return to

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one of the problems for the default approach of research into the relationship between well-being and virtue in order to show how taking a constructivist approach to prescription might be helpful.

Virtues and Values

Friendship and Kindness

Included in most people's values and goals are relationships with other people: friends, romantic partners, and family. We want to have friends in our lives, and we are also concerned to *be* good friends, partners, sons or daughters, parents or grandparents, and so on. Being a good friend means caring for another person for his or her own sake, taking your friend's needs and interests into account in what you do, and this in turn requires virtues like attentiveness, compassion, kindness, and generosity. To fulfill the value of friendship, then, or to succeed in terms of this goal, requires cultivating and maintaining these virtues. Notice that in the case of romantic relationships and parenthood and other intimate relationships, it doesn't seem right to say that the virtues are a mere means to the goal. We don't naturally define such relationships independently of the attitudes we have toward our friends and then think of caring, compassion, and concern as a means to this end. Someone who thinks "My goal is to have a significant, committed romantic relationship, so I had better start caring about someone for his or her own sake" seems to get things the wrong way around. Rather, being a caring, compassionate person is part of what is valued about these relationships for most people. To bring home the point, consider how you might think about your relationships with other people when you are reflecting on how well your life is going. Most of us, I suspect, will not just count the number of people who appear on our Facebook page or our favorites in our cell phone contacts. Instead, we'll ask ourselves about the quality of relationships we have with particular other people and we'll think about how we have been with respect to them. We get a sense of pride and satisfaction from the recognition that we have done a good job as a friend, spouse, parent, or child, and this is because part of the goal is to stand in a certain kind of relation to other people (not just to have those people serve our interests).

On the constructivist approach, success in terms of values such as friendship is good for us insofar as the value of friendship and its attendant virtues are likely to survive a process of reflection guided by norms of viability, sustainability, and reasonableness. Is this the likely outcome?

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It is for the vast majority of people.[20] Friendship (and other intimate relationships) seem especially likely to survive this process of reflection for at least two sorts of reasons. First, intimate relationships contribute to other ubiquitous valued goals such as health and subjective happiness. Friendship also contributes to more idiosyncratic values insofar as many goals that people have are enhanced when they are pursued with other people: Think of team sports, choirs, book clubs, running groups, church socials, and so on. Second, one of the main sources of conflict for the pursuit of goals is the disapproval of other people like parents, spouses, and friends, but such other people are highly unlikely to disapprove of taking personal relationships as a goal (though some of these people may disapprove of relationships with particular other people). This is not to say that one ought never to pursue a goal that one's parents disapprove of; rather, the point is just that valuing friendship and family relationships is highly likely to be a stable value over time because it is socially supported in a way that matters to us.

In short, close personal relationships are, for almost everyone, values that contribute to well-being; moreover, they are values that include as an integral part virtues such as kindness and compassion. The constructivist approach does not assume that friendship is an objective value that any human being must achieve to count as living well, nor does it assume that friendship is only valuable insofar as we want it or insofar as it produces pleasure. Rather, it tells us that it makes sense to pay particular attention to friendship when we aim to help people, because it is something we value and it is something that is part of a viable and sustainable set of values that would withstand reasonable reflection.

Prescription Revisited

I now want to turn to one of the problems I discussed in the introduction in order to see how the constructivist approach helps. One of the worries that positive psychologists have about making assumptions about values is the specter of preachy moralizing; *prescribing* courses of action or ways of life goes beyond the purview of science and risks imposing the scientist's private values on others.

On the constructivist approach, however, prescriptions that might follow from psychological research would be ultimately grounded in the things people already take to give them reasons for living their lives in certain ways. Moreover, it does this without the false sense of security provided by the retreat to the Hobbes-inspired form of subjectivism that defines what is good as what is desired. Virtues can be recommended or

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prescribed, on this view, by appeal to the goals that these virtues serve and constitute. To put the point another way, the constructivist justification opens a new door for psychologists' prescriptions that bases these recommendations on human values such as friendship (and others such as knowledge, autonomy, and citizenship). Recommendations grounded in the value of pleasure or life satisfaction are also given a legitimate basis, since pleasure and life satisfaction are part of a viable and sustainable set of values.

Notice, too, that the constructivist approach also allows for the possibility that virtues are an intrinsic part of living well, not merely a means to subjective happiness. This is another source of objection to the default approach from the Aristotelian perspective: On their view virtues are not instrumental to happiness, rather, virtuous activity—independent of its tendency to cause pleasure—is part of the very nature of happiness (Hursthouse, 1999). Whether or not virtues are constitutive of well-being or instrumental to well-being, according to the constructivist approach, depends on what is the best way of understanding the values that lend themselves to successful mutual pursuit over time. Consider Aristotle's distinction between the three different types of friendship: friendships of pleasure, of utility, and of virtue (Irwin, 1999, chapter 8). Is one of these ways of conceptualizing what is of value about friendship more likely to be part of a viable, achievable set of values over time? Conceiving of friendship in a way that emphasizes your own contribution to the maintenance of the relationship (say, the role of your own kindness, patience, and perspective taking) would seem to be preferable for making friendships endure.

Now you might think that the only constraint on the best way to understand people's values is what people actually, in fact, do value. People value friendships for the sake of pleasure, utility, or virtue, and it doesn't matter which way of thinking about friendship is ideal or more likely to sustain value fulfillment over time. But this gives people either too much credit or too little. It gives them too much credit if it assumes that people have articulate descriptions of their values in advance of any reflection on the matter. It gives them too little credit if it assumes that people are not capable of recognizing, upon reflection, that some values and ways of valuing are better than others. When we help others by tying our help to their goals and values, we often try to help articulate these values in a way that makes sense, given their circumstances (including their culture and group membership) and other values. Sometimes it is a matter of helping people to see what their values really are by discovering what they care most about;

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sometimes it is a matter of helping people to see that certain ways of understanding values such as marriage or parenthood are better than others in terms of other values they already endorse.

Of course, there's no guarantee on the constructivist approach that people will value the virtues either for their own sake or because they are an integral part of another value such as friendship. One point of the constructivist approach is to tie our help to what reasons people already take themselves to have, and this means that our prescriptions will be constrained by their individual psychology (as well as by the norms of viability, sustainability, and reasonableness). My point here is just that the approach can accommodate the fact that for many people with normal views about friendship, virtues have more than instrumental worth.

Life Satisfaction and Reflective Wisdom

As positive psychologists have pointed out, people do value life satisfaction, domain satisfaction, and positive affect (Diener, 2000). Subjective well-being (defined in terms of these three things) is something people want. Moreover, applying our constructivist procedure to the case, we can see that subjective well-being is likely to be a part of a viable and sustainable set of values. This is because of the mutual relationships between subjective well-being and other core values such as intimate relationships and satisfying work.[21] Subjective well-being might seem to be a very simple value that has little intrinsic connection to virtues. However, if we examine the value of life satisfaction more closely, we will see that there is reason to think even life satisfaction involves virtue.

What do we value when we value life satisfaction? We might, of course, just value having a good feeling about our lives overall when we think about it—a feeling that could just as well be drug-induced or the result of adaptation as it could be the product of reflecting on a life that is actually going well. But I suspect that most people want (at least in addition to this pure feeling) to be in a position to assess their lives and conclude from the assessment that their lives are going well, and then to feel good *because* they judge that the way things are going warrants feeling good. Ed Diener, a renowned expert on life satisfaction research, agrees with this assessment: "People throughout the world, not just in the USA, believe that happiness is an important and valuable goal.… However, people want not just to be happy, they want to be happy for the right reasons—for things they value."[22]

This is an idea that we find in David Hume, who pinned a lot on the value of what he called a "satisfactory review" of one's own conduct. Hume

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relies on our desire for a satisfactory self-survey in his argument against the sensible knave—the character who thinks "[t]hat *honesty is the best policy*, may be a good general rule, but is liable to many exceptions; and he, it may perhaps be thought, conducts himself with most wisdom, who observes the general rule, and takes advantage of all the exceptions" (Hume, 1751, pp. 282–283). Hume argues that someone who seriously believes this, with no hesitation, is in a way lost to moral argument. What's more, Hume thinks he misses out on an important part of human happiness:

> Inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct; these are circumstances, very requisite to happiness, and will be cherished and cultivated by every honest man, who feels the importance of them. (Hume, 1751, p. 283)

In this context, Hume is concerned about the virtue of justice in particular; he is responding to the challenge faced by Socrates (from Glaucon) and Hobbes (from the Foole) and every other philosopher who has tried to argue that virtue is in a person's own best interest. But Hume's observation about human psychology is actually quite broad. Hume is not one to make fundamental distinctions between different virtues or sources of self-approbation; virtues, he says, are whatever qualities are useful or agreeable to the self or others (Hume, 1739/1978, pp. 587–591), and we get inner peace of mind and a satisfactory review of our conduct just as much from achieving our personal goals as we do from acknowledging that we have acted justly. Hume's important insight about human beings could be put this way: We value living up to our own standards.

Further, living up to our own standards is something that life satisfaction measures most likely track. Consider what goes through your mind when you are asked questions like these:

- So far I have gotten the important things I want in life. (From Ed Diener's Satisfaction With Life Scale; Diener et al., 1985)
- The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time? (From Cantril's ladder; Cantril, 1965)

To answer these questions, I find myself thinking about what matters to me in life and how my life is going with respect to those values and goals. If this is how people often think about life satisfaction, it would also help explain the high correlation between life satisfaction and domain satisfaction (satisfaction with important areas of life such as work or family) (Schimmack and Oishi, 2005). The two are highly correlated because we

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rely on important domains to make assessments of life satisfaction; domains such as family, career, and health form the standards by which we assess how well things are going in our lives overall.

There are other measures (besides life satisfaction measures) that even more directly track the reflective, standards-based kind of life satisfaction that I have in mind here. Alan Waterman, for example, uses the PEAQ (Personally Expressive Activities Questionnaire)—to assess feelings of personal expressiveness that seem closely related to Hume's sense of satisfaction. Questions in the scale include the following:

- When I engage in this activity I feel that this is what I was meant to do.
- I feel more complete or fulfilled when engaging in this activity than I do when engaged in most other activities. (Waterman, 1993)

Waterman's emphasis is on values that are especially related to a person's sense of self, but the point is that the state of mind that the questionnaire is aimed to track is not merely a good feeling, but a good feeling grounded in living up to certain standards (in this case, the standards imposed by one's self-conception). The economist Paul Dolan measures worthwhileness (or rewardingness) in addition to life satisfaction by asking questions such as this one:

- Overall, how worthwhile are the things that you do in your life? (Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012)

Asking people about whether their activities are worthwhile, or whether they find their lives rewarding, also encourages people to think about what matters and how they are doing with respect to these values.

There are, then, a variety of constructs in psychological research that include the goal of reviewing one's life, according to some standards, with satisfaction. For some, such as life satisfaction, there is direct evidence that we value the construct; for others constructs, the fact that psychologists study them as obvious components of human well-being is some indirect evidence that these are things people care about. What other kind of evidence might there be that we care about standards-based satisfaction or what we might call "reflective life satisfaction"? I would not claim that the value of reflective life satisfaction is universal, but in Western culture, at least among those with sufficient freedom from the struggle to fill basic needs, it does seem that there are pressures to care about living up to our standards. We live in a culture that pushes the value of goods that do not necessarily make us happy (bigger houses, smaller noses, fancier phones), and many of us are overworked and distracted by the demands of

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contemporary life. Taking time to reflect on what matters and trying to live a life that makes these values more central may be a good counter to these cultural forces. That we value being able to survey our lives and feel satisfied by the way in which we have lived up to our sense of what matters may also explain the common wisdom that we don't regret not spending more time at the office.[23] The point of this common wisdom seems to be not that work isn't important, but that there are other important things that are too often sacrificed for the sake of work or making money.

Life satisfaction in the sense I've been discussing is no ordinary value. It is a kind of superordinate value: We value living a life that upholds our other, first-order values. This makes a good case for thinking that this kind of standards-based satisfaction would also be part of a viable and sustainable set of values. Indeed, reflection on how to live a life in which we succeed by our own standards seems to presuppose the value of life satisfaction in Hume's sense of a "satisfactory review."

The next point I want to make is that the ability to achieve this value—the value of a satisfying review of life in the "living up to your standards" sense—depends on having a certain kind of wisdom.[24] To be able to reflect on your life, apply your standards, and take satisfaction in how things are going, you need to have standards and these standards have to be relatively stable. One way of putting this is that you need to have a rough conception of a good life for you—an idea of what sort of success makes for a good life—and this idea needs to fit your circumstances so that you can actually attain the values or reach the standards that comprise it. Further, you need to be able to make choices and conduct yourself in ways that achieve your conception of a good life. The ability to formulate such an idea and to make choices that tend to realize it in a way that supports a satisfactory review is at least a significant part of practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is ordinarily taken to include knowledge or understanding of the right goals (or "ends") in human life and the reasoning abilities that allow the wise person to apply this knowledge to come to a decision about what to do; it requires sensitivity to which considerations in a particular context are relevant for our choices and actions and allows us to sort out conflicts between different values. Similarly, the kind of wisdom required for a satisfactory review of life includes understanding what is important, attending to the relative value of various things that matter, and having the ability to reason and choose in a way that allows us to realize our conception of the good. Given this job description, it's clear that this kind of wisdom also requires reflection. To be sure, we shouldn't constantly be thinking about what matters to us and why, and we need not have philosophically sophisticated theories or

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fully articulated views about what matters, but without any explicit reflection on this question we won't have standards to form the basis for a satisfying review. The value of a satisfactory review of life requires a reflective form of wisdom, one that has us (at least once in a while) think about and appreciate what matters.

"Reflective wisdom" as I've called it, then, is necessary for a satisfying review of life of a kind that we surely value. This provides another example of the way in which the constructivist approach can be fruitfully applied. As in the case of friendship, the constructivist approach allows us to advocate the virtue of reflective wisdom without making assumptions about objective values and without imposing our own values and priorities on people who may not share them. It is not patronizing interference or obnoxious meddling to recommend that people develop certain habits of reflection if what you are telling them is the prerequisites for achieving something they already appropriately value. Further, as in the case of friendship, the message you would be giving is not "x is a means to y," but rather a message of what it means to achieve a satisfactory review of your life. To speak to the intuitions of the Aristotelians, virtues are not (always) simple tools for acquiring independently identified ends; they are integral to some of the things we care most deeply about.

Wisdom, Reasons, and Conflict

I'd now like to return to a different problem with the standard approach that I hoped to resolve. For many philosophers, another source of dissatisfaction with the default approach in positive psychology is that while it may produce prosocial behavior, virtue is not just any disposition to do nice things for others. Rather, virtue requires thinking about a situation in the right way, deciding among often conflicting values, and acting for the right reasons (Irwin, 1999; Annas, 2004). When we see the kind of wisdom required by the value of a satisfactory review of life, we can see that there is room for a virtue that has these features. There may be some values that are served by simple disposition to behave in certain ways. Perhaps the value of succeeding in challenging sporting endeavors requires toughness and perseverance that make no demands on our reasoning capacities. But this is not so for the value of a satisfactory review of life; our reflective capacities are central to the virtue of wisdom.

Wisdom also helps with another problem for the standard approach. Kristján Kristjánsson argues that it is a shortfall of the research in positive psychology that it does not address the pressing problem of having to make decisions among competing values or to weigh the considerations

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stemming from different virtues (Kristjánsson, 2010). If virtues are unreflective dispositions, then we just have a list of things we could do to increase our happiness, but no sense of which is most important or what to do if they conflict. The addition of reflective wisdom to the virtues it makes sense for people to develop helps because reflective wisdom includes at least some synthesizing of different values into a conception of a good life over time. This helps not only with conflicts among values, but also with conflicts among the virtues that are tied to our values. For example, a person who has a reflective view about the relative importance of friendship and career will be better prepared to decide between actions recommended by kindness and diligence.[25]

This emphasis on the need for reflective capacities may cause some concern about the overintellectualization of virtue and the values needed for well-being. I do not think this is a real problem. First, the point is that reflective capacities are good for those who value reflective life satisfaction, not that everyone *must* have this value or develop this virtue in order to achieve well-being. It may be that a satisfactory survey of one's life is less important for those who have just a few values that fit together neatly and easily, or for those who do not live in communities that exert pressures that distract from what matters to them. As I've said, there are no values that are rationally required, and no one is defective because he or she does not value what the rest of us do. Second, the kind of reflective capacities required in order to be able to review your life with satisfaction are not the highly intellectualized capacities of academics. The relevant reflective capacities—understanding your own capabilities, interests, and limitations, the ability to stand back from momentary concerns to take a long-term view of your life, the capacity to learn from experience, the ability to put yourself in other people's shoes, particularly those of other people you care about—are not ones that academics have any greater claim to than the average person.

More needs to be said about the above concern when it comes to children, because children develop into adults who will have reflective capacities. Were we to set out to help children by attending to what they value at the moment, we (and the children) would be in some trouble: Many children would wind up eating candy, avoiding vaccines, and not going to school. This is not what the constructivist approach recommends, however. In assessing what is good for others, we should think about what sets of values are viable in the moment *and* sustainable over time. Children who are allowed to eat only candy, and to avoid vaccines and education, are less

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likely to become adults capable of achieving lives that are successful by the standards of what matters to them over time.

Applying the constructivist theory to children and to other creatures who are different from the paradigm case of adult friends that has been my focus will raise many questions. When it comes to justifying prescriptions about well-being, my suggestion is that the basic approach to answering such questions should have us focus on what matters to the being we are trying to help and on what norms of improvement should be used to develop these starting points into a worthy conception of the good for that being.

Conclusion

We began with the question "Does virtue make us happy?" According to what I've called the default approach of research in positive psychology, there's a good bit of evidence that prosocial attitudes and behaviors cause us to feel good. This is at best a partial answer to the question, because it construes virtue and happiness in a rather narrow way. Yet answering the question in a way that would be more satisfying to those with more robust conceptions of well-being seems to involve psychologists in a prescriptive project that has no clear justification. I have argued that there is a justification for the prescriptions that flow from positive psychology. If we focus on one important reason for our interest in well-being—our desire to help improve the lives of goal-directed, sympathetic, and socially dependent creatures—it makes the most sense to think of well-being as living in accordance with a viable and sustainable set of values. With this focus in mind, we can see that virtues can be recommended to people as more than mere tools for acquiring good feelings, but without imposing alien values and ideals. For most people, virtues are part and parcel of the values we can pursue successfully throughout our lives.

What does all this mean for what I have called the default approach of research on the question of how virtue and well-being are related? I don't think there's anything wrong with the default approach as long as we recognize that it shows us one piece of a much larger picture. People do value subjective well-being, and if behaving in ways that also make us nicer to be around produces more of these good feelings, then let's find that out and take it to heart. But ~~approach of~~ value fulfillment constructivism suggests that a much broader array of research is relevant to the relationship between well-being and virtue. What we need is a map of human values, how they are variously instantiated (in individuals and in cultures), which virtues

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they encompass or employ, how these virtues are translated into goals and subgoals, and what patterns of these are the most mutually sustainable. Moreover, looking at this map through the constructivist lens, we can see how to arrive at justified prescriptive claims.

Many of the pieces of this map are ones that psychology can help us find. For example, psychological research can tell us a lot about how the pursuit of some goals facilitates or hinders the pursuit of others. In effect, this is what research in the default approach does: Insofar as being kind to other people increases life satisfaction, for example, life satisfaction and kindness are two values that go together. Psychological research can also help us learn how to overcome psychological obstacles to succeeding in terms of our values. For example, it can help us learn how to compensate for biases that make us worse friends and worse at being fair to others in our jobs. Some of the pieces are ones that philosophers are good at locating. Philosophy can help us understand just what it is that we value for its own sake and what things we value as mere means to these ultimate ends. For example, philosophers can help to illuminate whether it makes sense to say that we value friendship for the sake of pleasure, or whether we value it for itself, and, further, what is included in friendship as something we value (e.g., does friendship include caring for others, or is caring instrumental to having friends?). Philosophers can also be helpful in understanding how our values should be pursued or promoted, all things considered, given the various norms (including moral norms) that govern our choices. Finally, some pieces are most easily found in history and literature where there are examples that show us how people put various values together to create a successful life and what happens when we sacrifice some values for the sake of others. George Eliot's novel *Silas Marner*, for example, is a compelling portrayal of what a life without loving human relationships looks like. It will take an academic village to create a more complete picture of the relationship between virtue and well-being.

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Notes

1. I'll continue to put the question in its less precise, more colloquial form for the sake of brevity. I will not say much about the question of which qualities count as virtues, except to say that my own way of thinking about that question is that we would do well to follow David Hume (1739/1978, pp. 587–591), who thought that virtues are qualities that are useful or agreeable to the self or others. On this view, the question "Does virtue makes us happy?" is most sensibly about the qualities that are useful and agreeable *to others*.

2. The default approach is assumed in the above-cited review article (Kesebir and Diener, 2013), in research on happiness interventions, and in the character strengths movement spearheaded by Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson (Sin and Lyubomirsky, 2009; Seligman et al., 2005).

3. Sometimes other subjective attitudes toward life, such as a sense of meaning or feelings of worthwhileness, are also considered (see, e.g., White and Dolan, 2009; Seligman et al., 2005).

4. For published versions of the criticism see Nussbaum (2008) and Keyes and Annas (2009). The critique is often implicit, however, and may partly explain why philosophers have not taken positive psychology more seriously than they have. Not all of the philosophers who attack subjective well-being are Aristotelian (see, e.g., Haybron, 2011), and not all who are dissatisfied with subjective well-being are philosophers (for a collection that presents various alternatives see Waterman, 2013). I focus on the Aristotelian critique here to make the contrast as sharp as possible.

5. There are terminological wars about the terms "happiness" and "well-being" that I'd like to avoid, if possible. For the purposes of this paper we can take both terms to refer to the good for a person.

6. Bernard Williams (1985) first coined the phrase. He defines thick concepts as those that are both action-guiding and world-guided. I should clarify that I am not claiming that these concepts are *necessarily* thick, nor do I mean to assume any particular metaethical view about the irreducibility of thick concepts. My point is simply that usually when these words are used they are taken to express facts as well as some approbation or commendation. For more on the metaethical debates about thick concepts see Kirchin (2013).

7. This claim is confirmed by ongoing research about how people conceive of happiness and well-being conducted by Markus Kneer at the University of Pittsburgh. Preliminary data were presented at the Happiness and Well-being: Integrating Research Across the Disciplines Development Workshop in Costa Rica, June 2016.

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8. There is a huge literature here both in ethics and metaethics. For a start, see Heathwood (2005), Rosati (1995), and Sumner (1996).

9. I think many Aristotelians have roughly this view (Badhwar, 2014; Bloomfield, 2014), but there are other ways of interpreting Aristotle (Kraut, 2006). See also LeBar (2008) for a constructivist interpretation of Aristotle that interprets constructivism somewhat differently from the way it is normally understood.

10. The first philosophers to call their approaches to ethical theory "constructivism" were influenced by Kant. See Rawls (1980) and Korsgaard (2003). For a sampling of the current literature on constructivism see Lenman and Shemmer (2012).

11. Sharon Street (2010) defines constructivism as the view that what makes a claim normative is that it is entailed by the practical point of view of a deliberating agent. The two definitions are not necessarily at odds, since we can take the parts of Lenman's definition to define a practical point of view. They key part of Lenman's definition, to my mind is that it makes the theory normative all the way down. As Lenman and Shemmer (2012, p. 3) put it in the introduction to their volume on constructivism "it is distinctive of constructivism that the raw materials on which constructivism goes to work are *already* normative. This might be thought the clearest way to distinguish constructivism from more reductionist versions of response-dependent realism."

12. Nor does it mean that our culture creates norms; constructivism in philosophy is therefore different from social construction.

13. Practical concerns certainly include desires, but this does not make constructivism into a desire theory because the normative or prescriptive force comes not only from the desire to solve the practical problem but also from the reasonable procedure used to come to our best conclusion about how to solve it.

14. I mean "values" in the broadest sense that includes goals, subgoals, personal projects, and principles.

15. For a different approach to developing a theory of well-being that makes sense of research in positive psychology see Bishop (2015).

16. See Tiberius (2014). See also Raibley (2010), who defends a similar approach.

17. Thanks to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong for pressing me on this objection to constructivism.

18. By "epistemic humility" I mean roughly a tendency to acknowledge your own epistemic limitations. See Nadelhoffer and Wright (this volume) for an illuminating discussion of *moral* humility.

19. Fowers (2008) makes this point very nicely, though in service of a different conclusion.

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20. When we want to talk about people in general, we have to rely on generalizations about what most people are like; hence in this section many of my claims are expressed in terms of what is good for "most people." Since the constructivist approach defended here takes seriously the suitability of values to particular individuals, there may be some people who are so different from the rest of us that friendship is not actually good for them. This possibility distinguishes this form of constructivism from certain objective theories.

21. There is abundant evidence for a strong relationship between close personal relationships and subjective well-being (see, e.g., Diener and Seligman, 2002; Bishop, 2015).

22. From the "Discoveries" page of Diener's website: http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/discoveries.html. Last accessed August 5, 2015.

23. In her popular book, *The Top 5 Regrets of the Dying*, Bronnie Ware (2012) reports that people regret working too hard, not staying in touch with friends, not being true to themselves, not expressing their feelings, and not letting themselves be happier.

24. This section revisits arguments developed in Tiberius (2008).

25. Value fulfillment constructivism could also help us to identify which traits are virtues, though a full explanation of how this would work would be too long a story for this paper. In a nutshell, assuming that virtues are traits that are crucial for well-being, the constructivist approach focused on values would pick out virtues by attending to which traits are themselves part of a viable and sustainable set of values and which traits are deemed necessary for other pervasive human values such as friendship and community.

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