Children and Well-Being

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Introduction

Children are routinely treated paternalistically. There seem to be good reasons for this. Children are ill equipped to meet their most basic needs due in part to deficiencies in practical and theoretical reasoning and in executing their wishes. As a result, children's motivations and perceptions are often not congruent with their best interests. Children are therefore quite vulnerable. Consequently, raising children involves facilitating their best interests synchronically and diachronically. In practice, this requires caregivers to (in some sense) manage a child's daily life. If apposite, this management will focus partly on a child's wellbeing. To be ably executed an account of children's wellbeing will need to be articulated.

This chapter focuses on the nature of children's wellbeing. It has five sections. Section one clarifies the focus. Section two examines some hurdles to articulating a view of children's wellbeing. Section three evaluates some accounts of children's wellbeing. Section four addresses the view that children possess features essential to them that make their lives on balance prudentially bad for them. Section five sums things up.

Preliminaries

It is important to begin by fixing ideas. Thinking about children's wellbeing involves thinking about what is prudentially good for children. An account of wellbeing's nature in children outlines what is fundamentally, non-instrumentally good for a child, and therefore tells us how well a child's life or part of a child's life is going for her. This is distinct from thinking about the causes or goods instrumental to wellbeing's production.

Thinking about prudential value is distinct from thinking about whether childhood itself is non-instrumentally good.[1] Thinking about the latter involves thinking about what value to place on a period in life. This usually takes the form of wondering whether, of the stages in life (e.g., adulthood and senescence), childhood has unique or special value. Thinking about children's wellbeing may help in

thinking about the value of childhood, but thinking about the former is a distinct preoccupation. It involves thinking of the value one's life or part of one's life has from one's own perspective.

It is anyway doubtful that childhood in itself is valuable. It is likely that the value of childhood, if it has value, is a function of the things of value possessed in it. The prudential value of a child's life is likely one such thing.

Thinking about prudential value is distinct from thinking about what makes a child's life good *tout court*. Prudential value contributes to living a good life. But other things might, too.[2] These might be the appropriate focus of those properly managing a child's life. Developing some virtues – dedication to the common weal – might contribute to the value of a child's life without making her prudentially better off. Ditto the experience of certain other, perfectionist goods, e.g., the contemplation of beauty.

Thinking about prudential value is different from thinking about the so-called "intrinsic goods of childhood", that is, "goods the value of which doesn't follow from their contribution to the goods of adult life" (Brennan 2014: 35). It is possible to establish that there are such goods without establishing that any of them are non-instrumentally *prudentially good* for a child. Fortunately, it seems that some things are non-instrumentally good for children, e.g., happiness. Theories of wellbeing seek to make sense of how and why claims such as this are true.

Hurdles

In thinking about the nature of children's wellbeing one has to be mindful of the fact that children develop during childhood. An infant shares little in common with a seven- or eight-year old and has even less in common with an eleven or twelve-year old. The nature of consciousness, agency, expression, cognition, and the comprehension and manipulation of information changes quite radically in childhood. This is on top of profound changes in children's physical features and abilities. It is, of course, important not to overstate the point. There is some uniformity amongst children and especially younger children; they are, e.g., not fully formed agents.

Nevertheless, that children typically change significantly in childhood makes developing a comprehensive and fully general view of children's wellbeing difficult. Perhaps the best strategy is to say what appears true generally about children's wellbeing, making amendments to the view as differences

between the stages of childhood are noted. This will no doubt involve taking seriously that there are some differences in the nature of wellbeing (and certainly its causes) for infants, young children, and older children.

It is also important to note that developmental (and other) facts about children make it difficult in thinking about children's wellbeing to draw on accounts of wellbeing that are adult focused. This is true whether the focus is on fully formed rational adults or deviations from that (typical) focus. Seeing this involves considering that there are distinct accounts of wellbeing for children and for adults (Skelton 2015; 2016).

In developing an account of children's well-being one is confronted by another difficulty: the individuals from whom moral philosophers often seek guidance – Aristotle, Kant, and the classical utilitarians Bentham, Mill, and Sidgwick – have little specific to say about children's wellbeing.

Aristotle maintains that children cannot fare well. He remarks that "it is natural, then, that we call neither ox nor horse nor any other of the animals happy; for none of them is capable of sharing in…[virtuous] activity. For this reason also a boy is not happy; for he is not yet capable of such acts, owing to his age; and boys who are called happy are being congratulated by reason of the hopes we have for them" (Aristotle: 1099b33-1100a3).

Aristotle's argument is as follows: Wellbeing consists in activity in accordance with intellectual and moral excellences. Children are incapable of activity in accordance with intellectual and moral excellences. Children thus cannot fare well; in describing them as faring well we are congratulating them on having what we believe are rosy prospects.

The best reply to this argument is to reject its implicit assumption: that there is only *one* way to fare well. It is possible that at least at some point during childhood children fare well in a way that is different to adults. In this case what follows from Aristotle's premisses is that children do not fare well as adults do. It does not follow that they do not fare well.

One might also attack the conclusion of Aristotle's argument. It is false to the facts. First, it is unclear when we hope that our child fares well that we are hoping to have high hopes for our child. Second, it is not the case that when we describe a child as faring poorly that this is due entirely to the fact that we

think she has poor prospects in the future. We might believe that a child's life is going poorly for her now due to an illness while believing that she has a very rosy future upon recovery.

If one desires to work out a view of children's wellbeing, one cannot gain much from Aristotle. Contemporary proponents of Aristotelian views have not, for the most part, it seems, improved in this regard.[3] Neera Badhwar, for example, argues that wellbeing consists in happiness in a worthwhile life. Her view of happiness appears not to fit children. According to her, "a happy person…[is] a person who *finds* his life both meaningful and enjoyable" (Badhwar 2014: 35; italics added). A child might find their life enjoyable. But children lack the concept of meaningfulness; therefore, they cannot find that their life falls into this category.[4] Badhwar's view of a worthwhile life comprises being reality oriented, having an understanding of oneself and general facts about the world and others, and being autonomous, thinking and living independently, and these in turn involve the possession of certain virtues or excellences of character, including fairness, open-mindedness, and honesty (Badhwar 2014: 44ff; 108). If this is what wellbeing consists in, children cannot fare well.

Kant is more helpful than Aristotle. At various points in his corpus he develops views of wellbeing applicable to children. He writes in terms of happiness; he is, however, interested in wellbeing. In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant contends that wellbeing consists in "the satisfaction of all inclinations as a sum" (Kant 2002: 4:399; also 4:405; 4:418). This suggests that wellbeing consists in the satisfaction of desire.

This is an implausible view of children's wellbeing. Its main defect is that the depth and breath of the desires that may legitimately be attributed to children are too few to capture all that matters to their wellbeing (Skelton 2015; 2016; also Lin forthcoming: 9ff.)

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant suggests that wellbeing consists in "a rational being's consciousness of the agreeableness of life uninterruptedly accompanying his whole existence"(Kant 1997: 5: 22). This appears to be a form of wellbeing hedonism: one is faring well when one feels on balance more pleasure than pain.

This is not a view of wellbeing that fits the vast majority of children; they may not qualify as fully rational beings in Kant's sense (Schapiro 1999), and it is unclear that they are capable of "consciousness" of the sort called for in it.

In most cases in which he discusses wellbeing, Kant has rational agents in mind. However, he commits himself to a view of children's wellbeing in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. At least with respect to school children, he holds that wellbeing consists in everything always going "the way you would like it to", which he treats as equivalent to the claim that wellbeing consists in "enjoyment of life, complete satisfaction with one's condition" (Kant 1996: 6: 480; see also Kant 2002 4:393; 4:369, for a similar view).

This position, too, appears to be a brand of hedonism. In thinking that children's wellbeing consists in surplus pleasure or enjoyment or felt satisfaction, Kant is joined, of course, by the classical utilitarians who hold, on one interpretation, hedonism about wellbeing, the view that all and only pleasure is non-instrumentally good for one and that all and only pain is non-instrumentally bad for one (see, e.g., Sidgwick 1907).

Might hedonism be the correct account of children's wellbeing? Some contemporary theorists who do not defend hedonism in general certainly seem to think so (e.g., Sumner 1996; Macleod 2010; for discussion, see Skelton 2015; 2016; forthcoming).

Before going on, it is important to report that Kant's contemporary admirers have not discussed his views on children's wellbeing. In the most sustained discussion of Kant on children, Tamar Schapiro does not touch on the topic in her argument that childhood is a "normative predicament" (Schapiro 1999: 730). She outlines some obligations that adults have to children, but none of them relates to children's wellbeing (1999: 734ff.). This might be because her focus is on the acquisition in children of a will. But it is strange nonetheless. The issue is no doubt quite complicated for Kantians: it is unclear that all children are worthy of happiness as one must be, for Kant, to legitimately possess it, since they are underdeveloped and so lack the characteristics making them worthy of happiness (Kant 2002: 4:393; cf. Kant 1996: 6:481).

Let us turn now to the question of hedonism's plausibility as a conception of children's wellbeing. Hedonism's popularity is rising (for defenses, see Crisp 2006; Hewitt 2010; Bramble 2016). It has a number of attractions. Pleasure seems to matter to wellbeing, especially when the conception of it is broad enough to capture all of the affective states mattering to it. Hedonism can explain a great deal about what seemingly matters to children's wellbeing, e.g., play, friendship, sport, and so on. It injects system into our thinking about prudential value; pleasure may be used to explain, justify, and reconcile conflicts between putative prudential values (Sidgwick 1907). Hedonism applies to the broad range of subjects to whom

welfare judgments are applied, e.g., animals, neonates, children, and adults. For some, this generality is an attractive feature in a theory of wellbeing (Sumner 1996). Finally, it captures the popular idea that only that which affects one's experience positively is capable of making one better off (i.e., an experience requirement).[5]

Hedonism has been attacked on grounds that things other than what affects one's experience matter to wellbeing (Nozick 1974; Sumner 1996; Badhwar 2014). The main worry is that one might have a large surplus of pleasure because one believes that one has loving friends, esteem from one's co-workers, and a loving family when in fact (unbeknownst to one) one's beliefs are false and one's friends, family and co-workers have no such attitudes. Hedonism has to claim that one's life is going quite well. But many hold that the fact that one's beliefs are false and one does not possess certain of the goods in question makes a non-instrumental difference to how well one's life is going. The intuition is that one's life would be better were the beliefs in question true and one possessed the goods. Many infer from this that more than pleasure that matters to wellbeing. Real friendships, esteem, familial love, and so on, matter, too.

Some have tried to impugn intuitions suggesting that things other than pleasure matter to wellbeing on the grounds that they are no more than the product of the need to solve the so-called "the paradox of happiness" (namely, that happiness is acquired best when pursued indirectly by means of such goods as the ones listed above rather than directly) and thus not contrary to hedonism. Some have tried to impugn them using an evolutionary debunking argument: the anti-hedonist beliefs have their source in mechanisms that do not preserve truth (e.g., reproductive advantage), and so are unjustified (e.g., Hewitt 2010).

Not everyone is convinced. Some wonder whether the intuitions that support hedonism are themselves subject to debunking arguments (Skelton 2015). Some take a dim view of system; hedonism is not clearly better than its rivals, for comparing pleasures is difficult. Others might see little attraction in generality or find it attractive only if the view that is general is compelling (for discussion, see Skelton 2015). Some reject the experience requirement (Hooker 2015).

A detailed discussion of the merits of hedonism is not possible here. A plausible way to assess it is to present rivals. This is the burden of the next section. In the meantime, it is worth noting that one's

departure from hedonism will likely depend on one's faith in the intuitions conflicting with it and one's tolerance for some (greater) philosophical disorder.

Children's Well-being

The literature on the nature of children's wellbeing is in its infancy. [6] In what exists, it is agreed that children's wellbeing comprises an objective component.[7] How well a child's life is going for her depends on more than what resonates with her. It is hard to know exactly what accounts for this. One reason is that a child's point of view is too immature to furnish an inventory of subjective attitudes robust enough to support a fully subjective theory of children's wellbeing.

The main contenders in the literature are objective-list views (Brennan 2014; Brighouse and Swift 2014; Wendler 2010) and hybrid views (Kraut 2007; Skelton 2015, forthcoming).

Samantha Brennan argues that children's wellbeing consists in the possession of the goods of unstructured imaginative play, relationships with other children and with adults, opportunities to meaningfully contribute to household and community, time spent outdoors and in the natural world, physical affection, physical activity and sport, bodily pleasure, music and art, emotional wellbeing, physical wellbeing and health (2014: 42).

Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift maintain there are five interests satisfaction of which are non-instrumentally good for children: physical interests, or having one's physical needs met: "health care, nutrition, shelter" and the like (2014: 64); cognitive interests, comprising an interest in acquiring reflective capacities sufficient for autonomy; emotional interests, including an interest in regulating one's emotions and in connecting emotionally with others; moral interests, including an interest in understanding and adapting one's behavior to "the basic demands of morality" (2014: 64); and an interest in enjoying childhood, including possessing the goods of "innocence of sexuality" and "being carefree" (2014: 65).

David Wendler contends that there are four interests satisfaction of which are non-instrumentally good for children (2010: 136): biological interests, e.g., "food and water, appropriate ambient temperature, and sufficient sleep" (2010: 130); experiential interests, e.g., feeling contented and avoiding suffering; interests in meaningful relationships, including with people, with animals and with projects, and so on, and personal interests, including "preferences, desires, hopes, dreams, projects, and goals" (2010: 131).

Such views face a shared difficulty.[8] Each view claims that something can be good for a child even if he or she is indifferent to or has an aversion to it. It is, for example, the case that on these views the prudential value of a child's life is improved if she has a valuable relationship with someone or something even if it fails to make her happy or pleased or fails to resonate with her more broadly. For some, it is hard to accept that something might make one better off despite that fact that it fails to resonate with one.

Those moved by this worry (and in addition some of the worries plaguing hedonism) might find hybrid theories of children's wellbeing more promising. Children's wellbeing on such views consists in the having of some subjective attitude/experience in the possession of items like those found on the above objective lists.

Richard Kraut defends what he calls developmentalism: what is non-instrumentally good for a child is to take pleasure in the development or exercise or maturation of her "cognitive, affective, sensory, and social powers (no less than physical powers)" (Kraut 2007: 137). This is a hybrid view of wellbeing: to fare well a child must experience pleasure or enjoyment in the exercise or development of various powers (Kraut 2007: 130).

It is not clear that Kraut overcomes the worry targeting objective-list views. He rejects views stating that the development of a power in the absence of pleasure is good for one (Kraut 2007: 128). Presumably he has the above worry in mind. But it is not clear that by adding that one must take pleasure in the development of a power for it to be good for one he avoids the worry. This follows from the fact that it seems that pleasure, as Kraut conceives it, is a sensation to which one may be indifferent. It is possible for one to feel the sensation of pleasure and for that pleasure not to resonate with one. If it is not good for one to exercise a capacity to which one is indifferent, it is not clear that by adding a conception of pleasure to which one may be indifferent one is made prudentially better off.

If Kraut holds that when one possesses pleasure in the development or exercise of one's physical, emotional, sensory or cognitive capacities or powers, one fares well, and one may be indifferent to both, it is possible for the pleasurable development of one's powers to be good for a child even though she is indifferent to it. In this sense, Kraut's view is similar to an objective-list view.

A hybrid view that may avoid this problem states that children's wellbeing consists in satisfaction or happiness in intellectual activity, valuable relationships, and play (of various sorts) (Skelton 2015). This

view might be better at avoiding the worry expressed above, for, on this view, finding one's conditions satisfying involves some kind of (even if implicit) positive endorsement of the conditions of one's life or part of it.

It might be implausible that very small children find the conditions of their life satisfying in this sense (Lin forthcoming; cf. Skelton 2015, forthcoming). If so, another attitude may be needed. The variety of pleasure in Kraut's view may be more appropriate. Perhaps this aspect of Kraut's view makes sense for very young children. The right view, then, might be that in the early stages of life pleasure in intellectual activity, play, and so on, is what wellbeing consists in and that once a child's perspective and judgemental capacities develop satisfaction or happiness in intellectual activity, valuable relationships, and so on, is what wellbeing consists in. Such a view would not avoid the worry articulated above at the very early stages of life, but perhaps very early on in life this is less of an issue, for children may not at this point have a perspective or judgmental capacities of any robust kind.

Hybrid views seem more plausible than objective-list views (for discussion see Skelton 2016; Hooker 2015). They have the capacity to explain why it appears good for a child to have some of the things on the above objective lists. The version of the view defended in Skelton 2015 may be the more plausible of the two; it appears well placed to explain the value of the development of the powers Kraut mentions: developing these powers typically conduces to finding satisfaction in meaningful relationships, various forms of play, and intellectual activity. It is unclear why emotional or physical development would matter if they did not conduce to satisfaction in such items (or those like them). Moreover, Kraut is interested not just in pleasurable development, but healthy pleasurable development (Kraut 2007: 202, 135). The items on the list in Skelton 2015 provide a plausible account of healthy development (Skelton forthcoming).

A full defense of a hybrid view is not possible here (see Skelton 2015; 2016). Its proponents have to face up to an important worry: hybrid views say that to fare well a child needs to experience some subjective attitude in the possession of one of the items of the sort on the objective-list views discussed above (e.g., intellectual activity). If this is what wellbeing consists in, the hybrid theorist has to admit that when one experiences happiness in the absence of the items (unalloyed joy in the warmth of the sun on one's face) or when one has one of the items (play) without satisfaction, one is not made prudentially better off. For some, this is hard to believe. Surely, it is good for a child to have a very robust, stimulating

relationship with her teacher even if she takes no happiness in it. It might not be as prudentially good for her as it would be were she to find happiness in it, but it is hard to think that it has no prudential value at all.

In reply, the proponent of this view might grant that the hybrid view provides an account of highest wellbeing, but that the parts of the hybrid might contribute some, small amount of prudential good to one's life. The difficulty with this concession is that it then becomes harder to see the difference between this view and objective-list views. Objective-list views do not have to hold that all items on the list have the same prudential value.

It may in the end be the case that objective-list views are the most promising ones for children. All seem to agree that children's wellbeing has an objective component and most thinking about it think an objective-list view is the right view of children's well-being. Perhaps in the case of children worries about resonation are not compelling. The main dispute seems to be over what belongs on the objective list. It is very hard to establish this definitively. Fortunately, this may not matter much for practice, as there is likely significant overlap in what the various views recommend as objects of pursuit. The narrowest of the lists, hedonism, tends to recommend in practice the very same things that the objective and hybrid theory lists recommend, e.g., valuable relationships, intellectual activity, play, etc.

Rather than adjudicate this dispute, the next section examines a worry for all views so far discussed. All suggest that when a child has a surplus of what they hold wellbeing consists in a child is faring well, that on balance her life is going well for her. This is open to doubt.

Pity the Children?

Sarah Hannan (forthcoming) challenges this claim. She argues that children's lives are on balance bad for them. She argues as follows.

First, some think there are certain prudential goods that are uniquely and/or exclusively good for children or to which they have privileged access. The possession of these makes children's lives go well. These comprise sexual innocence, an ability to enter easily into loving and trusting relationships, and carefreeness.[9]

Hannan argues that these items are not good for children, for when combined with ignorance, they have very bad outcomes. Sexual innocence construed as lack of information about sexual matters can leave children vulnerable to "sexual exploitation, sexual violence, and…unrequited sexual desire" (Hannan forthcoming: 5). It is better for children to have information about sexual matters to avoid these things or to note the dangers of (especially) sexual interference. Carefreeness leads to bad outcomes for children in the cases where they lack awareness of the consequences of certain of their actions. Things are likely to go poorly for a child if she is carefree about her studies without understanding of the costs of being so. Similarly, being able to easily enter into loving and trusting relationships might leave children vulnerable, since, unlike most adults, "children are simply predisposed to this sort of affection, irrespective of whether it's warranted or not" (Hannan forthcoming: 7).

Second, she argues that children's lives are characterized by four non-instrumental evils. Children lack the capacity to reason well instrumentally; it is difficult if not impossible for them to set and find the most efficient means to their ends. Children lack an established practical identity, that is, they lack a stable inventory of values determining what to do. Children's lives are almost entirely dominated by others and frequently interfered with, often without explanation or justification. Finally, children are extremely vulnerable; they cannot or find it difficult to meet their basic needs; this vulnerability is profound and asymmetric (Hannan forthcoming: 9ff).

Third, though certain things are non-instrumentally good for children, including play and exercises of imagination (Hannan forthcoming: 7-8), the above evils outweigh the goods; for the evils are more severe than the goods are good (Hannan forthcoming: 3, 9, 12).

Ergo, fourth, children's lives are on balance not good for them; childhood is, on balance, a "bad state for children to inhabit" (Hannan forthcoming: 12).

A defender of the idea that there are unique or exclusive prudential goods for children has two replies. First, she might doubt that Hannan's argument establishes that these things aren't non-instrumental "goods for children" at all. Even in cases where they are part of a state of affairs that is not all things considered good for a child, they might still possess some prudential value.[10] Happiness taken in carefreeness might be good for a child even if is part of a state of affairs that is on balance bad for her. The pleasure involved in a bout of heavy drinking might be good for one despite the wickedly painful hangover.

Second, she might argue that although there are cases in which certain goods that Hannan discusses are (non-instrumentally) bad for a child, it does not follow that such items are (non-instrumentally) bad in every case. There may be cases in which being sexually innocent or being carefree is part of a state of affairs that is all things considered good and that part of the goodness lies in the sexual innocence. It might be non-instrumentally good for a child but only when part of certain wholes.

As noted, Brighouse and Swift accept the goods of sexual innocence and of carefreeness as part of the welfare interest in having an enjoyable childhood. They note that the way in which welfare interests are to be satisfied is "sensitive to context" (2014: 64). They may argue that sexual innocence and carefreeness are non-instrumentally good only when they are part of a state of affairs that is on balance enjoyable and safe for a child.

This is not the best reply to Hannan. It is better to grant that the items she attacks are not non-instrumentally good for children. One might think this hard to establish in any case. One might grant Hannan's conclusion about goods she considers, but deny that this shows that children's lives are on balance bad for them, for there are other prudential goods.

Indeed, it is noteworthy that only one of the views of children's wellbeing noted above accepts that the goods Hannan attacks are non-instrumentally good for children. And on this view it seems that they might well be dispensable if they turn out not to be part of the "freedom, support, and environmental conditions [that children need] to enjoy their *childhood*" (Brighouse and Swift: 2014: 64).[11] It is possible to argue that one of the above views is right; provided that a child has a surplus of the goods it accepts her life is going well.

This will not do as a reply to Hannan. It appears not to matter to her which inventory of prudential good one furnishes. Her view is that the prudential evils that she enumerates "outweigh whatever goods children might enjoy" (Hannan forthcoming: 12; cf. 15). Hannan's claim is that if one accepts her theory of children's illfare, and her claim that the non-instrumental evils are more severe than any prudential goods children possess are good, then, even if one defends goods other than the ones she casts aside, children's lives are on balance bad for them.

There are replies to this version of Hannan's claim. One might argue that hers is a rather odd list of non-instrumental evils. A typical list comprises suffering, pain, loneliness, neglect, abuse (physical and

emotional), dysfunctional relationships, deprivation, and things like that. The typical list does not include the evils Hannan enumerates. When one takes pity on the Syrian children whose lives have been marred by prolonged civil war, and one thinks of what makes their lives on balance bad (if they are), one thinks of the pain, the suffering, the unhappiness, the fact that they have no or very poor or emotionally and physically damaging relationships, that they have only trivial or no intellectual activities, that they have no or severely formed kinds of play, and so on. One does not think in addition that they are poorly off because they are rubbish instrumental reasoners or lack a practical identity or are dominated by their parents or that they are vulnerable. The presence of these do aggravate the situation but more in the way that a poorly functioning government or lack of social programs aggravates the situation. They are impediments to wellbeing or causes of illbeing.

Perhaps this involves a lack of imagination about the badness of these bads.[12] I think not. Imagine the following. A child is playing a game in the warm sun with a close friend. His loving parents look on, periodically murmuring words of encouragement and support. All the while they are keenly attuned to his security needs. The child is carefree. He and his friend are playing a game they have concocted and have worked hard to finesse. They are happily immersed in it. They periodically break to express their excitement at the prospect of a visit from the Easter Bunny, punctuating it with conjectures respecting how he manages his deliveries. This child is (seemingly) on balance faring well. Now suppose that the child's life is full of activity of this sort. He is performing well at school, diligently working each week at homework, he shares jokes and trading cards with friends, he has strong connections with the members of his family, he has solid time for play, structured and unstructured, and so on.

It is hard not to admit that his life is going well on balance for him. True, he cannot reason as well as a typical adult. He cannot secure and prepare his lunch or his dinner. He cannot make money. He has fewer values from which to draw (though not none). He will be told when to go to school, when to return home, what sorts of things to eat, when to bathe and how aggressively to scrub, what to read and for how long, and so on.

True, this might change our attitude to some extent about the prudential value of the child's life, but surely not enough to drive us to the belief that the child's life is on balance bad for him. Hannan's evils certainly function as obstacles to wellbeing (and/or causes of illbeing). But again they appear more like a

poor functioning government or poorly provisioned social programs or discovering there is no toilet paper when you've just finished on the loo. To the extent that they are neutralized they seem unable to outweigh a robust inventory of the goods suggested above.[13]

Hannan has a reply: children who fare well "aren't robustly secure because matters could easily have gone badly for them, and there's nothing they could do to affect the outcome" (Hannan forthcoming: 14; also 6). Hannan's claim is that contingency of this sort is non-instrumentally bad for children. But this is hard to see. It is certainly a threat to wellbeing, and so reason we have to be more concerned about them, but it is not obviously bad for children in itself and not bad enough to outweigh a solid inventory of non-instrumental goods. In any case, Hannan makes no attempt argue for the claim. It is open to reasonable doubt.

Hannan makes too little of the fact that children change a lot during childhood. Her view makes good sense for the beginning stages of life, especially infancy. It would not be entirely unreasonable to think that infant's lives go quite poorly. They cry a lot, get diaper rash and seem always to be in peril; they are highly dependent and vulnerable. They cannot reason instrumentally at all and have no values of any kind.

However, as children age they become more proficient and more effective at setting and meeting their goals, they adopt a more robust inventory of values, they gain freedom and independence and some discretion over what to do, and are less and less vulnerable. It is hard to believe given this improvement that it is always the case that children's lives are bad for them even on the assumption that the non-instrumental evils that Hannan discussed are seriously bad for children. These things might be bad but it is hard to maintain that as children age the bads always outweigh the goods children possess or experience even on the assumption that they are more severe than the goods are beneficial.

One of Hannan's central claims is the strong but undefended one that the evils that she presents outweigh whatever goods children are capable of. It is not clear why we ought to accept this. It is not clear why the evils that Hannan discusses are any worse than the evils listed above, including unhappiness, poor or warped relationships, and so on, and it is not clear when one has a robust inventory of prudential goods that these goods cannot outweigh the evils (especially as children age and the evils become less acute).

Suppose that Hannan's challenge can be deflected. This does not help us decide which view of children's wellbeing is the correct one. This will have to be determined elsewhere, by reference to a more general discussion not focused exclusively on children. Such a discussion will need to reference a view of illfare and face up to Hannan's challenge.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been children's wellbeing. Section one distinguished this focus from others with which it might be confused. Section two outlined some hurdles to articulating a position on children's wellbeing. Section three discussed and evaluated various theories of children's wellbeing. Section four investigated the claim that children possess characteristics essential to them that are non-instrumentally bad for them, and that these outweigh the goods that they might possess. A full discussion of the merits of the views of children's welfare discussed will have to wait for another occasion.[14]

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1 For what looks like this suggestion, see Gheaus 2015.

2 David Wendler (2010: 136, 220-1), e.g., argues that children possess in addition to welfare interests, an interest in a good life story or good life narrative. Both active and passive contributions to valuable human achievements make a child's life better by making the life story more compelling without making a child prudentially better off.

3 Kraut 2007, which is discussed in the next section, is a notable exception.

4 This may not be true of adolescents.

5 For other putative attractions, see Bradley 2009.

6 A recent (perhaps the only) textbook on wellbeing (Fletcher 2016) fails even to note it.

7 This is true even if hedonism is one of the views, for it is an objective list view with one non-instrumental good on the list.

8 Hedonism seems to face this worry, too.

9 For the kind of view Hannan attacks, see Brighouse and Swift 2014. .

10 Hannan seems to admit this possibility in discussing her list of evils (9).

11 Italics in original.

12 Though even Hannan expresses some skepticism about the claim that lacking a practical identity is non-instrumentally bad for children (forthcoming: 10).

13 I assume that the views discussed above will in their own way endorse my conclusion about the boy's life.

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