

Well-being is Survival¹

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Introduction

The notion of human well-being is the notion of what is intrinsically beneficial to a human being. Of the three dominant types of theories of human well-being on offer today—hedonist theories, desire theories, and objective list theories—I think the best theory is one that is standardly classified as an objective list theory: The neo-Aristotelian theory that human well-being consists in flourishing as a human being.ⁱ The general thrust of the notion of flourishing is that it consists in the development, exercise, and maturation of human features. According to the flourishing account, the many things that we take to be good for human beings—e.g., health, happiness, a long life, pleasure, desire-fulfillment, knowledge, meaningful activity, intimate connections—are good for human beings in virtue of being instrumental to or constitutive of their flourishing as human beings.

What I find most attractive about the neo-Aristotelian account is that it is naturalistic: By this, I mean that it recognizes that all living things, not just human living things, can benefit, and that a theory of human well-being would be strengthened if it takes this fact into account rather than ignores it; if it fits within a wider theory of benefit to living things generally.ⁱⁱ What intrinsically benefits any living thing, according to neo-Aristotelians, is to flourish as a member of its species.ⁱⁱⁱ The claim that what intrinsically benefits a human being is to flourish as a human being is an instance of this more general theory of well-being of a living thing.

Though I think the neo-Aristotelian account of human well-being is the best on offer today, I think the account is mistaken, due to having a mistaken account of intrinsic benefit to

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living things generally. I think that what intrinsically benefits a living thing is not “to flourish as a member of its species,” but rather to survive; and not to survive “as a member of a species,” but to survive *simpliciter*. It follows from this alternative account of intrinsic benefit to a living thing that intrinsic benefit to a human being also consists exclusively in survival: The many things that we take to be good for human beings, such as the above examples, are good for human beings in virtue of being instrumental to survival.^{iv} I will call the view that benefit to a living thing consists exclusively in survival, the Survivalist account (of intrinsic benefit to a living thing).

I have two aims in this paper. The first, which I undertake in Section I, “Benefit to a Living Thing is Survival,” is to develop my Survivalist account. This will involve arguing that the prevailing neo-Aristotelian account is mistaken and will also involve developing a refined understanding of the concept of survival. The second, which I undertake in Section II, “Benefit to a Human Being is Survival,” is to show that the Survivalist account can be applied to human beings—i.e., that we can hold that intrinsic benefit to human beings, as to all living things, consists exclusively in survival—without doing violence to our common-sense beliefs about benefit to human beings. The many things we take to be good for human beings—e.g., happiness, friendship, the development of various capacities, the appreciation of art—are still good for human beings. They are so, however, and as I will argue, to the extent and because they are instrumental to survival.

I. Benefit to a Living Thing is Survival

In investigating intrinsic benefit^v to a living thing, I will start with what I take to be a reasonable and uncontroversial assumption: It intrinsically benefits a living thing to *grow* and to *sustain itself*, where these notions are understood, for now, colloquially, i.e., in their everyday,

ordinary sense. Growth refers to an increase in the size of the living thing, which can involve the growth of new parts and the further growth of existing parts. Self-sustenance (a living thing's sustaining itself) refers to the various parts and activities of a living thing's sustaining themselves and the life of the living thing.^{vi}

From this starting point—the assumption that it benefits a living thing to grow and to sustain itself—I will develop my Survivalist account in five steps. First, I will argue that we should not add the qualifier “as a member of its species” to “grow and sustain itself.” Some people, especially neo-Aristotelians, would claim that I surely, or at least must, mean that what benefits a living thing is to grow and sustain itself *as a member of its species*. I think this qualifier is mistaken because it implies that the growth and self-sustenance of a living thing must have a determinate form in terms of parts and activities (as specified in purported norms that are associated with the species of the living thing). To the contrary, I will argue that it benefits a living thing to grow and self-sustain, where it is acknowledged that these activities need not take any determinate form of the sort implied by the qualifier *as a member of its species*. We must reject any species-based account of benefit to a living thing.

Second, I will investigate the nature of growth as a benefit to a living thing. I argue that it is not the growth of particular parts *per se*—e.g., a wing, a heart—that benefits a living thing, but rather the growth of the living mass of the living thing, i.e., the growth of the living thing, considered as a whole.

Third, I will investigate the nature of self-sustenance as a benefit to a living thing. I argue that our usual way of describing and understanding self-sustenance, viz., in terms of parts and their activities that sustain themselves and the life of the living thing, is not technically accurate, because it refers to activity that is only *instrumentally* beneficial to a living thing. Self-

sustenance, I argue, is the activity that underlies this instrumentally beneficial activity: It is the activity of living mass' sustaining itself.

Fourth, I will argue that the growth of living mass is actually just a form of self-sustenance of living mass; it is a result of the more fundamental activity of self-sustenance. Benefit to a living thing, then, consists exclusively in self-sustenance.

Fifth, I will argue that self-sustenance is the technically correct and precise understanding of *survival*, i.e., of being alive, remaining alive, persisting as a living thing in the face of death. Survival might alternatively be understood in one of two ways: On the first understanding, survival refers to the bare minimal amount of *activity* that needs to go in a living thing for it to remain alive. On the second understanding, survival refers to *living* suboptimally relative to an implicitly accepted notion of *living* optimally, i.e., “merely limping along in life” as opposed to flourishing. I will argue that both understandings are problematic in a way that supports understanding survival as self-sustenance. Once we clarify and get accurate about what survival is, we will see that survival actually refers to the above italicized notions of *activity* and *living* to which these understandings refer. And this activity, this living, is self-sustenance. Benefit to a living thing, then, consists exclusively in survival.

Step 1: A critique of a species-based conception of growth and self-sustenance

According to neo-Aristotelians, a living thing's growth and self-sustenance—some neo-Aristotelians would use the term *flourishing* to encompass these—must take a certain determinate form, a form that is associated with the species to which the living thing belongs; a form in terms of having certain parts and engaging in certain activities (with detailed specifications of these parts and activities) and by implication not having other parts and not engaging in other activities. Flourishing for a rabbit, for example, involves having four legs and

eating grass; flourishing for an oak tree involves growing deep and sturdy roots. I will call these norms that specify what it is for a living thing to flourish as a member of its species—e.g., the rabbit has four legs, etc.—*species norms*. Given the centrality of the notion of species to this account of benefit to a living thing and the fact that my criticism of this account will focus on this notion, I will henceforth call this account of benefit to a living thing the *species-based* account.

I would like to present two major problems with the species-based account. The first is that a living thing can benefit in ways that violate its species norms. The second, which will emerge upon due consideration of the first problem, is that appeal to species norms does not *explain* benefit to a living thing: Actually, as I will argue, our constructions of species norms *presuppose* identifications of benefit to a living thing. They do not offer any illumination into what counts as a benefit to a living thing.

The first problem can be readily appreciated by considering indefinitely many and easily conceived examples in which a living thing, realistically or theoretically, might benefit in ways that violate its species norms.^{vii} Mrs. Muff, a rabbit, might grow a fifth leg, or a pair of wings, or develop some novel form of nourishing herself, all of which changes would violate her species norms. Whether any of these changes are realistically possible is irrelevant here. The point is that these species norm-violating changes, supposing they were to happen to Mrs. Muff, would constitute benefits to Mrs. Muff, or at least would, if suitably supplemented with further details, e.g., the wings enable Mrs. Muff to fly and find food more quickly. Benefit to a rabbit, according to the species-based account, consists in having four legs, not five, in having no wings, in eating grass, and not in developing a novel form of nourishing herself.

One might reply that counterexamples to the species-based account, especially unrealistic ones, pose at best a minor problem for the account, since it remains true that most real life cases of benefit to a living thing conform to species norms. One might furthermore reply that counterexamples can be nullified in various ways: If a living thing undergoes a beneficial change that violates its purported species norms, perhaps the species norms need to be revised (perhaps now we will say that it benefits a rabbit to nourish itself in way X), or perhaps the living thing should be reclassified under a different and perhaps new species (according to the norms of which it benefits members of this kind to nourish in way X).^{viii}

These replies, however, illustrate the second problem for the species-based account: They illustrate that our species norms are a *product of independent* observations of *benefit* to living things.^{ix} (So, *of course* most real life cases of benefit to a living thing conform to species norms, since we construct species norms so that they fit these cases.) We note, say, that Mrs. Muff has developed wings, that the wings benefit her, and that her wings violate her species norms. These observations lead us to wonder whether this beneficial change is happening to other rabbits and whether we should revise the species norms of rabbits or whether perhaps we should construct a new species. The *explanation* for what makes Mrs. Muff's wings a benefit to her is not that they conform to species norms; and species norms do not contribute to our understanding of benefit to a living thing.

Counterexamples show that the growth and self-sustenance of a living thing is not limited to any determinate form of the sort exemplified in species norms, e.g., having certain parts (legs) and not others (wings), engaging in certain activities (running) and not others (flying). They also show that there is no such theoretical state as the "highest good" (or highest point or level) that a living thing's pursuit of benefit can attain. It might be thought, mistakenly, that there is such a

state. For example, some might claim that the “highest good” of an acorn is to become a “fully developed” oak tree. Such claims, however, are just claims about what is realistically possible for acorns. The notion of the highest good for a living thing—and related notions such as the notion of a living thing’s living well, optimally, or excellently; of its having a high or the highest possible level of well-being; of its life’s going well or optimally for it—are evaluations of a living thing according to what is realistically possible for members of its species, i.e., to species norms. Setting aside what is realistic, the purportedly “fully developed” oak tree could theoretically always be further benefited, e.g., the growth of new parts, including weird parts that violate the inherently species-based notion of the “highest good” of a living thing. Our “fully developed” Mrs. Muff, to consider a second example, might develop thousands of legs, wings, and all sorts of novel forms of activity (and, notably, might several times throughout the course of her life be re-classified under different species or under no species at all).

Step 2: Growth is an intrinsic benefit to a living thing

I will argue here that (1) the growth in a living thing of particular parts—e.g., heart, wing, leg, red blood cell, etc.—is not *per se* intrinsically beneficial, but rather only instrumentally beneficial, and appreciating this will make plausible that (2) it is the growth of a living thing, considered *as a whole*, as a *holistic chunk of living mass*, that is intrinsically beneficial.

Beginning with (1), consider Mrs. Muff’s growing a particular part, e.g., a second heart. If we ask ourselves why it is that the growth of the heart is beneficial to Mrs. Muff, we will find that our answers only support the claim that the growth of the heart is *instrumentally* beneficial. The heart will enable *future* benefits to Mrs. Muff, e.g., pump more oxygen and nutrients into her blood, enable her to run faster, make her stronger, etc. These are the benefits we have in mind when we think of her heart’s being beneficial. In what sense would the growth of the heart be

intrinsically beneficial? If we reflect on this question, we will find that no answer comes to mind. There is no good reason to believe, then, that the growth of a part is intrinsically beneficial to a living thing.

One might offer the alternative view that it intrinsically benefits Mrs. Muff to grow a particular, isolated chunk of living mass, a chunk that may correspond to a particular part (heart, cell, etc.) but which fact is irrelevant to an understanding of intrinsic benefit. With the growth of Mrs. Muff's heart or the growth of a cell, one might suggest, it is the growth of the chunk of living mass that happens to correspond to a heart or a cell that intrinsically benefits her.

I think this alternative view, however, is just another formulation of the preceding view, because the notion of a particular, isolated chunk of living mass is inseparably bound up with the notion of a part. Some rhetorical questions will illustrate this: Why regard the living mass *that corresponds to her second heart* as a particular, isolated chunk of living mass the growth of which intrinsically benefits Mrs. Muff? Why not say that the left half of the heart, plus a bunch of cells adjacent to left side of the heart, together correspond to a particular, isolated chunk of living mass the growth of which is intrinsically beneficial? (Note that even in referring to the growth of *cells* one is referring to the growth of parts.) Furthermore, assuming—as advocates of this alternative view would seem to have to—that the growth of a particular, isolated, chunk of living mass begins at a certain time and ends at a certain time, why regard that time period as the relevant one? Why not say that the mass that grew in the first half of this time period corresponds to a particular, isolated chunk of living mass the growth of which intrinsically benefits Mrs. Muff, and that the mass that grew in the latter half corresponds to a different chunk the growth of which intrinsically benefits her?

I think there are no good answers to these questions and that this fact shows that it is mistaken to think that living things intrinsically benefit from the growth of purported, particular, isolated chunks of living mass. Rather, we should accept my above claim of (2), that it is the growth of a living thing, considered *as a whole*, as a *holistic chunk of living mass*, that is intrinsically beneficial.

Step 3: Self-sustenance is an intrinsic benefit to a living thing

I will argue here that (1) much of the activity we colloquially would label as “self-sustaining” is only instrumentally beneficial to a living thing, and appreciating this will make plausible that (2) self-sustenance, in the sense of being intrinsically beneficial to a living thing, is the sustaining of living mass.

Beginning with (1), consider the following activities, all of which would generally be grouped under the notion of “self-sustaining activity”: Digestion, breathing, the circulation of blood, photosynthesis, locomotion, sensation, waste elimination, and the fight or flight response. I would classify all these as merely instrumentally beneficial to a living thing.

I’ll elaborate on a few of these examples. Considering digestion, by which I mean the process of breaking food down into smaller bits, it is beneficial to a living thing only because living things need food in order for various other activities to go on (and we may find intrinsic benefit in some of these other activities). Considering locomotion, it does not seem like an intrinsic benefit for a living thing to change location in the universe; rather, locomotion is beneficial only when and because it enables a living thing, say, to find food. Considering sensation, by which I mean a grasp of some aspect(s) of the external or internal world—through taste, touch, interoception, etc.—it is beneficial only when and because it enables future benefit, e.g., the finding of food and shelter, the avoidance of predators. Considering the fight or flight

response, it too is beneficial only when and because it enables a living thing to obtain future benefit or avoid future harm to itself, e.g., the marshaling of, say, a lion's body, for a fight with a gazelle, is beneficial only because it enables the lion to kill and eat the gazelle.

All of the above activities and the parts that enable them contribute to sustaining the living thing, but now what exactly is the *intrinsic* benefit of self-sustenance? I suggest that underlying our individuation of activities and parts in a living thing is the chunk of living mass that it is, sustaining itself across time. Self-sustenance, in the sense that is intrinsically beneficial to a living thing (which is how I will continue to understand it going forward), is a feature of the living thing as a whole, i.e., of its living mass as a whole. It refers to living mass' sustaining itself across time (this is the claim of (2)), and not to activity in a living thing that is merely instrumental to a future sustaining of living mass. Self-sustenance is a continuous, holistic process that is manifested by the living thing as a whole, from birth until death. It is not a feature of any particular *part* of a living thing, e.g., stomach, heart; nor is it a feature of the all the parts of a living thing even when considered as an interrelated whole. Such a whole still refers to merely instrumentally beneficial activity, e.g., digestion, blood circulation.

Step 4: Growth is a form of self-sustenance

The growth of living mass and the self-sustenance of living mass, I have argued, are intrinsically beneficial to a living thing. Now I want to ask: Are growth and self-sustenance two distinct forms of intrinsic benefit or are they in some way fundamentally connected? I am inclined to think that there must be some fundamental connection between the two and I suggest that the growth of living mass is a form of self-sustenance of living mass.^x Here I want to offer a two-step argument for this suggestion. First I will defend the claim that there is no sharp

distinction between the growth of living mass and the self-sustenance of living mass. Second I will defend the claim that former is a form of the latter.

Beginning with the first step, the claim that there is no sharp distinction between the self-sustenance of living mass and the growth of living mass, I submit, is plausibly inferred from the fact that there is no sharp distinction between the *sustaining* of parts in a living thing—e.g., heart, lungs, etc.—and the *growth* of parts. What we refer to as Mrs. Muff's *sustaining* her heart over time, for example, consists in the *growth* of parts, e.g., the growth of new cells that replace old cells. Whether we would say that Mrs. Muff's heart *grew* over a certain period of time or whether we would say that her heart was merely *sustained* in that period of time, is just a matter of whether the pace of growth of parts exceeded the pace of destruction of old parts; exceeded enough to result in a net increase in size of the heart that is significant enough for us to say that the heart *grew* (we would not normally say, for example, that Mrs. Muff's heart grew as a result of the growth of one cell, especially if the growth of this cell was preceded by the death of a pre-existing cell). Given that there is no sharp distinction between the sustaining of parts and the growth of parts, it is plausible to infer that there is no sharp distinction between the sustaining of living mass and the growth of living mass.

Now, moving to the second step, I think the growth of living mass is a form of self-sustenance of living mass for two related reasons. First, I think self-sustenance is the more fundamental activity in the sense that its presence is necessary for making a living thing a living thing, i.e., for making living mass, *living*, whereas this is not the case for growth. We can imagine a living thing that never grows but I submit that we cannot imagine a living thing that is not self-sustaining. We first have self-sustaining mass, which can then grow.

Second, I suggest that the growth of living mass is a *result* of the activity of self-sustenance in the mass. When self-sustaining mass grows, it grows *as a result of* its being self-sustaining. If we appreciate this, I think it becomes plausible that what intrinsically benefits the living thing is really just the activity of self-sustenance, which underlies and is responsible for the growth of itself, i.e., of self-sustaining mass. This is not to withdraw the claim that the *growth* of living mass intrinsically benefits a living thing, but rather to add the claim that growth does so in virtue of being a form of self-sustenance.

I conclude that *self-sustenance is what intrinsically benefits a living thing and is the only thing that intrinsically benefits a living thing.*

Step 5: Self-sustenance is survival

Survival is typically understood as equivalent to being alive, remaining alive, or persisting as a living thing in the face of the threat of death. I offer self-sustenance as the technically correct and a more illuminating understanding of survival. Survival is the sustaining of living mass, which is the activity that underlies the growth of living mass and as well the growth of particular parts, e.g., hearts, etc.

Let me contrast my account of survival as self-sustenance against two alternative accounts of survival that some might offer, both of which accounts I will argue are mistaken in a way that lends support to my account. First, some people would suggest understanding survival as the *bare minimal activity* that needs to go on in a living thing in order for it to be alive. Call this the Minimalist account of survival.

I think the Minimalist account is mistaken because it has an implication that exacts enormous violence on our colloquial use of the word *survival*, which use which I presume is legitimate: The implication is that almost all activity in almost all living things that we ordinarily

regard as survival (or living) activity would not count as survival activity. Suppose we take Mrs. Muff and remove all the activity that is not necessary for her to be alive: We remove all her legs, both ears, both eyes, her nose, her mouth, her tail, a bunch of her insides, and shave off all of her fur (and thus all activity that is associated with any of these parts), leaving us with a smaller, immobilized, and helpless chunk of flesh. If we remove any more activity in Mrs. Muff, she will instantly die. Call this chunk of flesh Bare Chunk Muff. The Minimalist would have to say that all the activity in Bare Chunk Muff is survival activity, but that if any more activity is added—say, the growth of a cell—that activity is not survival activity. Yet, we ordinarily would say that the growth of that additional cell counts as survival activity, just as all the other activity counts as survival activity. My account of survival offers good grounds for saying this: Underlying the growth of that additional cell, as well as all the other aforementioned activity in Bare Chunk Muff, is self-sustenance.

The second way people might understand survival is as living *suboptimally*, i.e., “merely limping along in life,” as opposed to living *optimally*, i.e., what some might call *flourishing*. Call this the Suboptimal account of survival. If Mrs. Muff loses an eye, an ear, a leg, and acquires several wounds all over her body from a predator’s attack, but can still in some sense limp along in life, according to Suboptimal-ists, she is *surviving* but certainly not living *optimally*, i.e., not flourishing.

The problem with the Suboptimal account of survival is that it presupposes that there is such a thing as *optimal* living for a living thing, relative to which the further from this optimum a living thing is, the more it is to be regarded as “merely” surviving, as opposed to living optimally, i.e., flourishing. There is, however, no optimum. Theoretically, Mrs. Muff can attain and continue infinitely to improve on a wildly transcendental state, a state that can have, and be

infinitely improved on in any one of an infinite number of determinate forms, e.g., a million legs, a million wings, a million parts we have not yet imagined, etc. Given that there is no optimum, labeling living things as failing to live optimally, i.e., as “merely” surviving, lacks sense.^{xi} (Would Mrs. Muff be “merely” surviving if she had merely a thousand legs as opposed to a million?) Survival, I suggest, is more plausibly understood as the activity of *living* in the Sub-optimalist’s notions of *living* sub-optimally and *living* optimally. And that activity of living is the activity of self-sustenance.

I hope to have shown that self-sustenance is the technically correct understanding of *survival* and that consideration of the two alternative accounts of survival lends further support to understanding survival as self-sustenance. What intrinsically benefits a living thing, then, is to survive and only to survive. Now let us see how plausible this account of intrinsic benefit is when applied to human living things.

II. Benefit to a Human Being is Survival

In investigating human well-being^{xii}, it is crucial to distinguish between inquiry into what *intrinsically benefits* a human being and inquiry into what *the good life overall* is for a human being. In the philosophical literature on well-being, the notion of *well-being* is usually and more officially understood in the first sense, viz., the *intrinsic benefit* sense, which is how I have been understanding well-being thus far, but it is also often understood in the second sense, viz., the *good life* sense, and the two senses are sometimes, and unfortunately, conflated.

An inquiry into well-being in the *good life* sense is an inquiry into an overarching and practically useful conception of what a good life overall is for a human being. One might, for example, hold that the good life overall for a human being is a long, healthy, and happy life, full of activity that she finds meaningful and deep emotional connections with others. People

implicitly appeal to this notion of well-being in the good life sense when they talk of a human being's *level* of well-being. Many hold that a human being—at a certain moment in time or relative to a certain chunk of her lifetime, including perhaps all of it—has some *level* of well-being, which might be high, or average, or poor; and according to some even negative. A person who has fully achieved the good life for a human being would be said to have a high level of well-being; a person who is far from having achieved it would be said to have a lower level of well-being.

We can readily appreciate the difference between these two senses of well-being by noting that one might not yet have achieved the good life for a human being yet still one can intrinsically benefit. One can still eat breakfast, socialize with friends, enjoy art, etc., and presumably there is intrinsic benefit associated with these activities; one can then inquire into what intrinsic benefit consists in (pleasure? desire-fulfillment? Etc.). The question “What is intrinsic benefit to a human being?” and “What is the good life for a human being?”, then, are different.

My chief aim in this Section is to defend and elaborate on the view that intrinsic benefit to a human being consists exclusively in survival. Anything else that we might correctly take to benefit a human being—e.g., eating a meal, gaining knowledge, making love, appreciating a piece of artwork, experiencing pleasure, fulfilling a desire, developing and exercising a virtue—is beneficial only instrumentally, relative to the one intrinsic benefit of survival. I defend and elaborate on this view in the first subsection, “Intrinsic Benefit to a Human Being is Survival.”

In the second subsection, “Human Well-being,” I will defend the following three claims about how we should understand inquiry into well-being in the *good life* sense^{xiii}: 1. It may not be so important to develop a theory of well-being, because for the most part we can already

pursue our self-interest successfully without one.^{xiv} 2. To the extent that it *is* of practical use to theorize about well-being, inquiry into well-being should be understood as inquiry into larger scale *instrumental* benefits that help guide living, not inquiry into intrinsic benefit. 3. The notion of a *level* of well-being is figurative rather than literal; the only well-being that exists literally is intrinsic benefit, which is survival.

Intrinsic Benefit to a Human Being is Survival

The claim that intrinsic benefit to a human being consists solely in survival may initially sound implausible. It seems completely prudentially rational to make trade-offs between survival and other goods, e.g., to pursue pleasure and desire-fulfillment at some sacrifice to one's health and longevity; even to commit suicide in order to avoid the chronic and acute pain of a terminal illness; which means that survival cannot be the only intrinsic benefit. Furthermore, one might claim that survival is not even *an* intrinsic benefit: We care about surviving only because we care about pursuing other goods that require our continued survival, e.g., pleasure, desire-fulfillment, friendship, etc. Survival seems only instrumentally beneficial.

Surely, then, it is more plausible to look for candidates for intrinsic benefit in the three mainstream philosophical theories of well-being—e.g., hedonist, desire theories, and objective list theories, which uphold various so-called objective goods, such as friendship, love, and *flourishing* (as opposed to merely surviving)—and in theories of well-being that are found in psychology, e.g., positive psychology's focus on states of mental flow and positive affect, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (according to which survival is only the bottom level of a multi-level conceptualization of benefit to a human being).

I will argue, contrary to prevailing views of benefit to a human being, that (1) survival would still be at least *an* intrinsic benefit, (2) it is plausible to understand all other proffered

intrinsic benefits as only instrumentally beneficial to survival, and (3) the issue of whether it is ever prudentially rational to sacrifice some health and/or longevity for the sake of other goods is different from the issue of what intrinsic benefit consists in. Regarding the third point, whatever one's view of how health, longevity, pleasure, and any other goods are to be balanced against each other in prudentially rational deliberation, my agenda is only to claim that to the extent any of these goods are beneficial to a living thing, they are so in virtue of promoting the intrinsic benefit of survival.

Survival would still be an intrinsic benefit

Supposing for the sake of argument that there is something(s) other than survival that is intrinsically beneficial to a human being, e.g., pleasure, etc., my first reply is that survival would still be *an* intrinsic benefit to a human being, i.e., one among at least one other. Survival would not suddenly become merely an instrumental benefit.

I argued earlier that survival is intrinsically beneficial to a living thing. Assuming this argument was successful, survival would still be intrinsically beneficial to a living thing even if we stipulate that it suddenly developed the capacity to achieve some new form of intrinsic benefit. Let's suppose that pleasure is intrinsically beneficial to anything that can experience it and that Daffy, a daffodil, at some point in her life develops the capacity for pleasure and pain.^{xv} In this case, now there are two things that are intrinsically beneficial to Daffy: survival and experiencing pleasure. It would be implausible to suppose that survival drops out as an intrinsic benefit to Daffy and instead suddenly becomes merely instrumentally beneficial to her. It would be implausible to suppose that intrinsic benefit to Daffy, before her development of a pleasure capacity, consisted solely in survival; that suddenly when Daffy developed a pleasure capacity,

intrinsic benefit became pleasure and only pleasure; and that, supposing Daffy later on loses the pleasure capacity, survival again becomes intrinsically beneficial.

Just as it would be implausible to claim of Daffy, during a period(s) of time in which she can experience pleasure, that intrinsic benefit to her consists only in pleasure and that survival is merely instrumentally beneficial, so it would be implausible to claim the same of Coco, a human being. Yet this is exactly what the hedonist implausibly claims. And what goes for pleasure goes for the addition of any other capacity that is stipulated to ground a new form of intrinsic benefit, e.g., desire, rationality, more sophisticated affect, virtue, friendship, the appreciation of art, etc. Survival would still be intrinsically beneficial to a human being even if one or more of these other goods are also intrinsically beneficial.

Understanding all other benefits as instrumental

Just as photosynthesis, digestion, hibernation, blood circulation, and many other activities and effects on living things are only instrumentally beneficial—to their survival—so I suggest, pleasure, desire-fulfillment and engagement with various objective goods are also only instrumentally beneficial to survival. Just as it would be implausible to claim that photosynthesis, digestion, etc., are intrinsically beneficial (and even more implausible to claim that survival is only instrumentally beneficial to these aforementioned activities!), so I suggest that it is implausible to claim that pleasure, etc., are intrinsically beneficial and as well (as per the first move above) to claim that survival is only instrumentally beneficial to these goods.

Resistance to my suggestion that pleasure, etc., are only instrumentally beneficial, I suspect, stems from two premises that many people implicitly accept. The first is that intrinsic benefit is constituted at least in part by a state of consciousness. This premise is implied by the sorts of goods that are offered by various theories of intrinsic benefit: They tend to refer to

aspects of our *consciousness*, e.g., positive affect, participating in friendship, acquiring knowledge, appreciating art, exercising rationality and virtues, pursuing desires.

The second premise is that intrinsic benefit consists in what we desire for its own sake. This premise is implied by the methodology that philosophers tend to employ when they inquire into what is intrinsically beneficial. They reflect on what most human beings care about deeply and care about for their own sake, i.e., as ultimate desire or ends.

These two premises lead people to think that intrinsic benefit must pertain at least in part to our *consciousness*; and that our survival process, i.e., the sustaining of living mass, being a *non-conscious* phenomenon, is only instrumentally beneficial to intrinsically beneficial states of consciousness.

These premises, in my view correctly, are challenged by neo-Aristotelian thought about benefit to human beings. Benefit, according to neo-Aristotelians, applies to all living things and not all living things are conscious; and benefit applies to them holistically as living things, not just to one aspect of some living things, viz., the capacity for consciousness. It is more plausible, then, to understand consciousness as relating to benefit to a living thing in the same way any other capacity, e.g., photosynthesis, digestion, relates to benefit to a living thing.

I suggest that the relationship between consciousness and survival is the reverse of the one that is implied by mainstream theories of well-being. I suggest that it is *consciousness that is instrumentally beneficial to survival* (which is intrinsically beneficial), *not the other way around*. Like photosynthesis and digestion, consciousness—and all capabilities that come with it, e.g., pleasure, friendship, rationality, desire—can be a feature of living things, i.e., of survival processes, and are beneficial to the extent and only to the extent they further the survival process.

Let me offer additional support for the claim that objective items and desire-fulfillment are only instrumentally beneficial, by drawing on a corollary of the survivalist account of intrinsic benefit, a corollary that I think many people would find plausible even if they are not yet persuaded of the survivalist account. The corollary is that intrinsic benefit to a living thing occurs wholly *in* a living thing. Alternatively formulated, the locus of intrinsic benefit is *in* the living thing. If a living thing has benefited, then that benefit happened in the living thing; something that happens outside a living thing has no intrinsically beneficial or harmful effect on a living thing. Let's consider this corollary first vis-à-vis objective items.

Many goods that philosophers would call objective items can be ruled out as candidates for intrinsic benefit on grounds that they refer to phenomena that are *external* to a living thing, e.g., appreciating art, enjoying a lover or a friend, pursuing a career, and acquiring knowledge all refer to phenomena in the external world, viz., the art, the lover, the friend, the world in which one pursues one's career, the world to which one's knowledge corresponds. During participation in an objective item, e.g., romantic love, there may be *effects in* a living thing that may be intrinsically beneficial. Intrinsic benefit may occur in Coco when she interacts with her lover or when she thinks of him. Various effects occur *in* her—e.g., cognitive, emotional, and sensory goings-on; activities of the liver, the heart, the pancreas, etc. Intrinsic benefit to her is located *within these effects*. The existence of her lover in the external world, by contrast, does not intrinsically benefit her. External phenomena may *produce* or *contribute* to producing intrinsic benefit in Coco, but they are not part of the intrinsic benefit itself.

Desire-fulfillment, even the fulfillment of desires that refer only to one's organism, e.g., Coco's desiring that her heart function well, are also ruled out as candidates for intrinsic benefit, on grounds that the *fulfillment* of a desire *per se* is something separate from any *effects in* the

organism that might occur in association with the fulfillment; desire-fulfillment is external to the organism. Let us suppose that Coco is intrinsically benefited from her heart's functioning well, i.e., that, within whatever one takes "Coco's heart's functioning well" to consist in, there is intrinsic benefit going on. The locus of intrinsic benefit would be in the *effects in* the living thing that is Coco; *not* in the fact that her desire that her heart function well was fulfilled. As with participation in objective items, in any given instance of fulfilling a desire, there may be *effects in* a living thing that may be intrinsically beneficial, but the fulfillment of the desire *per se* is not intrinsically beneficial. If Coco desires to spend time with her lover and fulfills that desire, any intrinsic benefit associated with this fulfillment consists in effects *in* Coco that were produced by her interaction with her lover.

Understanding trade-offs between different goods in life

One might offer the following argument for the view that pleasure, etc. are intrinsically beneficial: It is plausible to suppose that it can be prudentially rational to pursue certain goods—e.g., pleasure, desire-fulfillment—even at some sacrifice to one's health and longevity. It seems true, for example, that it might be prudentially rational for Coco to enjoy alcohol and rich foods, even if she will not be as healthy during her lifetime as otherwise and even if she will not live as long as she would otherwise. It seems true that it might be prudentially rational for Coco to pursue her passion, say, of climbing Mount Everest or of pursuing some other dangerous activity, even if there is a significant chance of death. It even seems true that it might be prudentially rational for Coco, in light of her being terminally ill, suffering chronic and acute pain, and rapidly deteriorating mentally and physically, to commit suicide. If it can be prudentially rational for a person to pursue some good at some or even total sacrifice to her health and/or longevity, then it follows that survival is not the only intrinsic benefit and that there is at least one other good that

is intrinsically beneficial, a good(s) that is rightly weighed against survival in prudential deliberation.

There are two problems with the above argument. First, the argument mistakenly equates survival with health and mistakenly contrasts this (mistaken) understanding of survival against pleasure. Rather, both health and pleasure—and any other good—have the same relation to survival: They are instrumentally beneficial to survival. Being healthy (according to whatever norms of health one cares to supply here), like experiencing pleasure, can often promote survival. Sacrificing some health for pleasure, then, is not equivalent to sacrificing some survival for pleasure. Rather, sacrificing some health for pleasure, or some pleasure for health, or making any tradeoff between any two goods, may yield intrinsically beneficial and/or intrinsically harmful effects on a human being. The survivalist account of intrinsic benefit takes a position on what constitutes an intrinsic benefit and what constitutes an intrinsic harm, viz., promotion of survival and reduction of survival, respectively.

Second, the argument mistakenly takes the survivalist account of intrinsic benefit to be or imply an account of what the survival process for a human being should look like if she is acting prudentially rationally, which would involve an account of how to weigh various goods or benefits against each other. However, the issue of what the survival process for a human being should look like—e.g., should a human being pursue friends or not? If so, in what way and what kind of friends? And how important are friends in relation to other goods, such as health and work? Etc.—is another issue entirely; and I take it that this issue is one of the ones that philosophers inquire into when they inquire into human well-being (in the second sense, the sense of what is a good life overall for a human being). The survivalist account of intrinsic benefit is exactly and only an account of intrinsic benefit, i.e., of what constitutes an intrinsic

benefit to a living thing. It is not an account of how to make tradeoffs between goods, it is not an account of how to assess whether a human being is prudentially rational or irrational in her pursuit of survival, and it is not an account of well-being. (I take it that all three such accounts are highly related and perhaps, at least two or more are, equivalent.)^{xvi}

An inquiry into what the survival process for a human being should look like would take into account facts about human nature; especially pertinent here are facts about what human beings are psychologically capable of doing. If, for example, human beings, given their nature, cannot pursue health at the sacrifice of all pleasure in life, then assessments of whether someone is being prudentially rational or irrational must take this fact into account. It might be prudentially rational to sacrifice some health for the sake of pleasure and even to end one's life in order to avoid the unwanted symptoms of a terminal illness. This does not mean that pleasure or the avoidance of pain constitute an intrinsic benefit; rather, it means that we are only able to pursue what intrinsically benefits us—viz., survival—in certain ways and under certain conditions—e.g., we can survive only if we are able to experience certain pleasures and avoid certain pains—and that assessments of prudential rationality and irrationality must take this fact into account.

The fact that objective items, desire-fulfillment, and pleasure are only instrumentally beneficial to survival does not at all negate their importance as goods to think about and pursue in life (as far as prudence is concerned). These goods are crucial to our survival.

Human Well-being

I will defend here the following three claims about how we should understand inquiry into well-being: (1) It may not be so important to develop a theory of well-being, because for the most part we can already pursue our self-interest successfully without one. (2) To the extent that

it *is* of practical use to theorize about well-being, inquiry into well-being should be understood as inquiry into larger scale *instrumental* benefits that help guide living, not inquiry into intrinsic benefit. (3) The notion of a *level* of well-being is figurative rather than literal; the only well-being that exists literally is intrinsic benefit, which is survival.

Theorizing about well-being may not be so important

How important is it that we have a theory of well-being, i.e., an overarching and practically useful conception of what a good life overall is for a human being? There seems to be truth both in the view that it is important and in the view that it is not.

The former view might be traced back to Aristotle, who claimed that knowledge of the human good enables a human being better to aim at it.^{xvii} The chief purpose of a theory of human well-being, on this view, is to guide an individual human being's pursuit of her self-interest.^{xviii} This view is also found in contemporary literature. Roger Crisp suggests that "people do use the notion of well-being in practical thinking. For example, if I am given the opportunity to achieve something significant, which will involve considerable discomfort over several years, I may consider whether, from the point of view of my own well-being, the project is worth pursuing." (Crisp, 2016) And: "Consider a case in which you are offered a job which is highly paid but many miles away from your friends and family." (Ibid.) Crisp suggests that a theory of well-being would be useful, perhaps necessary, in order to decide whether to accept the job. Thomas Hurka suggests that a theory of well-being is necessary so that one does not pursue a short-term benefit that makes one's life as a whole worse. (Hurka 2006, p. 371)

On the other hand, T. M. Scanlon has defended a skeptical position about the project of and motivation for inquiry into well-being. According to Scanlon, we do not need a theory of well-being in order successfully to pursue our self-interest; we get along fine with a vague,

rough, and intuitive idea of well-being. There are things that we know are good for us: Scanlon articulates the claims of hedonism, desire-fulfillment, and objective theories, viz., positive affect, achieving one's well selected aims, as well as other goods, e.g., valuable personal relationships, excellence in art and science. This knowledge is enough for us to pursue what is good for us, to decide between alternative courses of action, and in general to pursue our self-interest successfully. We do not need a theory of well-being that unifies these goods into a comprehensive life plan. It is doubtful, furthermore, according to Scanlon, whether such a theory could be developed: Since so much of what one's successful pursuit of self-interest looks like depends on what aims one has chosen, any such theory is likely to be unavoidably abstract and indeterminate, and thus useless. (Scanlon 1998, pp. 124-133)

There seems to be truth in Scanlon's view that most of the time people do not need to appeal to a theory of well-being in order to act in their self-interest; and that theories of well-being do tend to be abstract and indeterminate such as to throw into doubt how useful they are as guides to self-interested action. There also seems to be truth in the views that that there *are* useful theories, both in philosophy and psychology, of what is a good life overall for a human being, theories the learning and application of which do benefit people's lives; and that many people *do* benefit from reflecting on their lives as wholes and trying to shape them into a unified whole.^{xix} The truth about how important well-being inquiry is probably spread across these contrasting sets of views.

Inquiry into well-being falls under inquiry into instrumental benefit

Whatever the level of importance of inquiry into well-being, such inquiry, I want to argue here, is part of a broader *inquiry into instrumental benefit*, by which I mean and which I will elaborate on momentarily, inquiry into goods whose pursuit is fundamental to our pursuit of

what *is* intrinsically beneficial to us (survival). I have two motivations for locating inquiry into well-being in this broader inquiry. (1) I want to clarify that inquiry into well-being is different from inquiry into what *intrinsically* benefits human beings. (2) Articulating this project of inquiry into instrumental benefit creates space for us to inquire into what instrumentally benefits human beings, *for* action-guiding purposes, and *without* the pressure to come to a comprehensive, overarching conception of what a good life overall is for a human being. Henceforth, when I refer to benefit, I will mean instrumental benefit. (Any benefit is beneficial only instrumentally to the one intrinsic benefit of survival.) I will elaborate what I mean by inquiry into benefit and then elaborate on how inquiry into well-being is part of inquiry into benefit.

Inquiry into benefit encompasses *all* thinking about what benefits any human being for the purpose of pursuing self-interest in the real world.^{xx} It includes an individual's inquiring into what benefits herself as well as inquiry into what benefits human beings generally, where "human beings generally" can refer to most or even all human beings, as well as to significant portions of human beings, including significant portions of certain kinds of human beings, where kind is broadly construed, e.g., male, female, infant, child, adult, introvert, extrovert. Henceforth, when I refer to inquiry into what benefit *us*, the *us* is a variable that can refer to an individual or human beings generally. Inquiry into benefit presupposes and is relative to assumptions about what we are like, including facts about what we desire and are capable of desiring, and what our environmental conditions are like.

We already can and do figure out things that benefit us, without appealing to a theory of well-being, i.e., prior to constructing anything that would be called a theory of well-being. I will call these things, *goods* or *benefits*. Here's a non-exhaustive list of goods: food, air, water,

health, sleep, shelter, freedom, medicine, surgery, money, education, work, knowledge, achievement, a sense of purpose, positive affect, desire-fulfillment, social connection, love, sex, romance, art, vacations, travel, rest, relaxation, reflection, psychotherapy, personal growth, developing one's mind, developing virtues. One could add "survival" to this list, but since survival is special in its being the sole intrinsic benefit relative to which any other benefit is instrumental, I will understand a good or benefit to refer to anything that benefits a human being—including but not limited to all the above items—except survival.^{xxi}

What then is inquiry into well-being? Based on the understanding of well-being as a conception of what a good life overall is for a human being, the difference between claims about well-being and claims about benefit (but not well-being) is a difference in *scope*, not in fundamental kind. Inquiry into well-being is inquiry into benefits that are *larger in scope* than at least most of the benefits in the above list. These larger scope benefits are more abstract and are purported to cover our lives more comprehensively than are benefits that we would not put under a theory of well-being. It might be claimed, for examples, that Maslow's hierarchy of needs, research in positive psychology on happiness, the Greek conception of the virtuous life, and the mainstream academic theories of hedonism, desire-fulfillment, and various objective lists, are positions on well-being. By contrast, claims that are smaller in scope—e.g., food is good for human beings, water is good for human beings, etc.—do not qualify as claims about well-being. Identifications and elucidations of larger scope benefits will tend to be products of reflection on what benefits seem more fundamental than others (and on what relevant senses of fundamentality there might be), and tend to organize and elaborate on these benefits in a way that purportedly yields a useful guide for the pursuit of self-interest in a larger rather than smaller time periods and as regards more rather than fewer aspects of our lives.

The notion of a level of well-being is figurative

In the philosophical literature on well-being, there is often talk of a person's "level of well-being," which, it is claimed, may increase, decrease, and even be negative. People ordinarily make judgments of how well their lives are going for them, i.e., whether their lives are going well, averagely, or poorly. These judgments might be made of how well their lives are going at a particular time, how well chunks of their lives have gone for them, and how well their whole lives have gone for them so far (or perhaps a judgment one makes on one's deathbed). Sometimes the notion of an *amount* of well-being is used instead of the notion of a *level* of well-being; e.g., it is asked how *much* well-being one has at a particular time or with regard to a chunk of time.

Those who advocate talk of a level of well-being might address the following four issues that pertain to the notion. One issue is whether one's level of well-being is subjective or objective. Is a person's life going well for them just in case they believe it to be so^{xxii}, even, say, if they are destitute, have no friends, are riddled with diseases, and are constantly plagued with depression and anxiety? Or are there standards for assessing their level of well-being that are independent of their belief about how well their lives are going for them, e.g., such as standards for health, economic security (e.g., Amartya Sen's capabilities approach)?

A second issue is whether a person has only a *relative* level of well-being, a level that depends on a comparison to other people, or whether there is such a thing as a person's *absolute* level of well-being, a level that does not depend on a comparison to others.

A third issue is whether appeal to the notion has any practical value. One source of skepticism about its practical value may be found in Scanlon's skepticism about the practical value of the notion of and inquiry into well-being itself, i.e., the notion of an inquiry into a

comprehensive, overarching conception of what a good life is for a human being. If the notion of well-being is so indeterminate as to be otiose, then so is the notion of a level of well-being.

A fourth issue is whether the notion has any clear, single meaning. It seems that the notion of *well-being*, in a sense required for the notion of a *level* of well-being, is something of “a ‘mongrel concept’,” as Ned Block . . . called the concept of consciousness: the ordinary notion is something of a mess. We use the term to denote different things in different contexts, and often have no clear notion of what we are referring to.” (Haybron 2011)^{xxiii}

The one claim that I do want to make about the notion of a level of well-being may have implications on one or more of the preceding issues: I suggest that well-being is not a literal property of a living thing. It’s not as though Mrs. Muff has a tank inside her that stores her “well-being,” as a car has a tank that stores gas; and that Mrs. Muff’s “level of well-being” rises and falls, as the level of gas in a car rises and falls. The notion of a level of well-being, rather, is a figure of speech.

The only well-being that exists literally is intrinsic benefit, which is survival.

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ⁱ This theory influences much of ethical thought in the neo-Aristotelian tradition. See for examples Hurka 1993; Hursthouse 1999; Foot 2001; Annas 2006, pp. 515-536. Richard Kraut (2007) develops this theory at length. Ayn Rand also arguably accepts something like the aforementioned theory: She held that benefit to a living thing consists in survival—and in this respect the view I develop in this paper aligns with hers—but she, like Foot and Hursthouse, also seemed to understand survival as survival *as a member of one’s kind* (a view from which I depart in this paper). See Rand 1961, pp. 16-27.

ⁱⁱ See Kraut 2007, pp. 145-158, for an elaboration of this naturalistic aspect of the neo-Aristotelian account.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kraut, for example, writes “what is good for the member of some . . . biological species is to flourish as a member of that species.” (2007, p. 131, fn1)

^{iv} Thus, I think that the relationship between survival and other goods—e.g., happiness, desire fulfillment, friendship, knowledge, etc.—is the opposite of the dominant view that survival is only instrumentally beneficial to the attainment of other goods.

^v Henceforth and unless otherwise noted, when I refer to benefit to a living thing, I will mean intrinsic benefit to a living thing, as opposed to instrumental benefit.

^{vi} Self-sustenance more or less captures what is colloquially understood as a living thing’s *surviving*. I want to reserve the term *survival*, however, to refer to my notion of self-sustenance, *after* it has been fully developed in my

investigation. I will offer my developed notion of self-sustenance—according to which, as I will argue, growth is a form of self-sustenance—as the technically correct understanding of survival.

^{vii} This point has been alluded to by Copp and Sobel (2004, p. 539).

^{viii} One might also suggest that perhaps there is no species under which the living thing can be classified at this time (perhaps there is process of evolution going on in many members of a certain species that will eventually yield a new species; we will wait and see), but this suggestion poses a problem for the species-based account: If Mrs. Muff has no species, then no species norms are applicable to her, which means benefit to her cannot be explained by appeal to species norms.

^{ix} An objection that might be raised and further developed against this claim is that (a) it is not possible to identify benefits to a living thing independently of species norms because (b) it is not possible to describe an individual living thing without appealing to such norms. (b) has been elaborated by Michael Thompson (1995); a later version of this essay constitutes Part One of Thompson 2008. (b) has also been endorsed by Philippa Foot (2001, pp. 28-29) and Gavin Lawrence (2005, pp. 139-140). I do not have space here to develop or address this objection at length, but I can offer a simple response to it: The fact that we can straightforwardly grasp the counterexamples suggests that the objection fails.

^x It also resonates with me to say that growth is a *byproduct* of self-sustenance. I am not sure which term, *form* or *byproduct*, is better, but going forward I will stick with *form*.

^{xi} If one wants to use *survival* to refer to living that is suboptimal relative to a conception of the *realistically* achievable optimum for a certain living thing, then one is no longer engaged in a theoretical investigation of the nature of intrinsic benefit to a living thing, but rather simply in an investigation of what benefits are realistically possible for some particular living thing in the world.

^{xii} Henceforth and unless otherwise noted, I will refer to human well-being as just well-being.

^{xiii} Henceforth, I will use *intrinsic benefit* to refer to well-being in the first sense and *well-being* to refer to well-being in the second sense.

^{xiv} I am influenced here by T.M. Scanlon's discussion of well-being in Chapter 3 of Scanlon 1998.

^{xv} Any story could be supplied here about how the capacity comes about, e.g., magical lightning strike, a drug, mutation.

^{xvi} It is a task for an account of well-being (in the sense of a life's going well overall)—not an account of intrinsic benefit—to prescribe what the pursuit of survival should look like for human beings. Judgments of prudential rationality presumably appeal at least implicitly to assumptions about well-being (in the sense of a life's going well overall).

The prescriptions “Survive” or “Maximize your survival” or “Survive as well as you can” are not informative (and the latter two are meaningless), and thus not good accounts of any of the above three types, for at least four reasons. One is that there are an indefinite number of ways to promote survival at any given time, including ways not yet even imagined. A second is that what counts as a better or worse way to promote survival at any given time depends on our intuitions and on what implications a promotion has on our future survival. A third is that what counts as a better or worse conception of the duration we assign to “our future survival” also depends on our intuitions. A fourth is that we do not innately know how to survive, e.g., which mushrooms are poisonous, whether there is a cure for a certain disease; rather we must discover how to survive. It's the job of an account of well-being to offer guidance, e.g., say by including as a good the development and use of reason.

^{xvii} Setting aside the interpretive issue of whether by the human good, Aristotle meant the self-interest of a human being or the ultimate end of a human being (which conceptually differ), I am simply adopting the former interpretation for present purposes.

^{xviii} Other purposes include: To guide a benefactor—which could be an individual human being or a government—in promoting another person's self-interest, to compare the well-being of two or more people (to assess who has a higher level of well-being), to compare the levels of well-being within one person at different times of her life, and to assess the overall amount of well-being in part of or the whole of a person's life. My focus will be on the chief purpose. I draw these purposes from Scanlon 1998, pp. 108-109.

^{xix} The Aristotelian notion of organizing our lives into a coherent whole is expressed in neo-Aristotelian literature. See, for examples, Annas 2006, p. 520 and Lawrence 2004, pp. 297-299.

^{xx} The qualifier “for the purpose of pursuing self-interest in the real world” serves to rule out the otiose exercise of coming up with things that would benefit human beings with unrealistic psychologies and capabilities and in unrealistic situations, e.g., it would benefit Coco to develop a thousand legs and a thousand arms, etc.

^{xxi} Note that the word *survival* is often understood to refer to physical health and the maintenance of one's parts, overall structure, and overall functionality, an understanding that differs from the technically correct notion of

survival as the sustaining of living mass. Understood in this colloquial way, survival would be an instrumental benefit (to the intrinsic benefit of survival, understood technically correctly) that could be added to the preceding list.

^{xxii} I assume that all the people in my discussion are autonomous.

^{xxiii} Haybron was discussing the notion of happiness, which he distinguishes from well-being; I am applying his suggestion to the notion of well-being.