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ON THE NOTION OF WELL-BEING**

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Some say that everything that can be good or valuable is good or valuable in one of two ways: for the world (or “simpliciter”) or for us. This is how T.M. Scanlon puts it when he writes: “the good’ is... notion of how it would be best for the world to go, or of what would be best for particular people” (Scanlon, 1998, s. 79). When we say that something is good for us, we want to emphasize the existence of a beneficiary of this good and a specific relationship between that beneficiary and her good. Establishing the nature of

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this relationship will be the basic task of this paper. Among the things that may be good for us might be our lives, acquiring knowledge, or satisfying our desires. For our cat, dry food and petting between the ears may be good. What is good for us may be good for the world, but is not necessarily so. Cheating at a game may be good for us but bad for the world because it is contrary to justice (obviously, it will be also bad for our opponents). When we talk about the good simpliciter, we want to express the idea that some things are good or bad regardless of whether there is any beneficiary. Truth, knowledge, beauty or justice can be treated as values even when nobody cares about them and nobody even thinks about them. What is good for the world may be good for us but is not necessarily so. We say that the world sometimes needs our sacrifice, and yet it would not be a sacrifice if it was not something bad for us. We slip through the meanings and grasp this distinction intuitively – sometimes it seems reasonable and sometimes unnecessary.¹

What we call good for us is our well-being. The etymology of the word in both Polish and English is similar: it is about someone's "good condition", that is, being well. When our well-being is high, we say that "we are doing well" or that "we are having a successful life." In other words, when we achieve a lot of what is good for us, we have a good life. We understand that various things affect our well-being. Some are important because of something else that is higher in importance, others are the things that are crucial for their own sake. When we ask what our well-being consists in, we want to determine what is, and what is not, good in itself. Ultimately everything we do for ourselves, we undertake in order to achieve what is good in itself for us. The value we seek for ourselves is described by English-speaking analytic philosophers as prudential value (Crisp, 2016).² My well-being is therefore what it is prudent for me to pursue for its own sake.

We understand that well-being is of great importance. It is worth seeking and promoting. To what kind of creatures does the concept of well-being apply? We say that things are good for people, for our pets and for other sentient animals. Can we also say that something is good for a plant

¹ For discussion of the distinction between "good for" and "good simpliciter" in Polish philosophical literature see Galewicz (2016), Rutkowski (2015, 2016a, 2016b).

² For a different understanding of the connection between well-being and prudential value see Taylor (2013). Taylor argues that though these two notions are related, it is better to keep them separate.

or perhaps a planet? That may seem to be the case, for we talk of rain being good for a tree, and of lowering the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as being good for our planet. But at least in the second example we seem to have in mind the beings who live on the planet and whose lives can be affected by, e.g., climate changes. It is hard to imagine what it would mean to say that something is good for the Moon. When talking of the well-being of a certain entity we may want to convey an old Aristotelian idea that this entity can flourish, reach a state which is optimal to it, or in some basic sense fulfil an intrinsic capacity to live. We may also embrace Aristotle's thought of a special function that human beings (and perhaps a few other mammals though in limited way) possess, namely the capacity to reason and to be rational. If so, in an important way the well-being of a human being can be very different from that of other living things, not only substantially but also formally. We may part company with Aristotle and go beyond a natural explanation of our choices and behaviour. We are the creatures that are able to move beyond natural forces and lead our lives according to our will. The concept of human well-being should reflect that possibility.

What in turn is good for the world or good simpliciter? This seems to be something more than, or different from, the sum of the well-being of all other beings. When we say therefore that we need to sacrifice our own good for the good of the world, we mean that there is something good which is not limited to the well-being of individuals. We may believe, for example, that there are values, like truth or justice, that it would be proper to promote or aim at even if they would not add to anyone's well-being. Sometimes in the literature good simpliciter is treated as a moral value (for example, by G.E. Moore) but it does not seem necessary to think of it in this way. For now we may assume that the "good simpliciter" is the kind of good that is distinct from "good for" a being. It will be easier to define the concept of "good for" and then understand what, in contrast, "good simpliciter" might be.

When philosophers try to define the concept of well-being they usually tend to concentrate on substantial theories that tell us what kind of things are good for us – fulfilment of desires, pleasure or a list of virtues – aiming at which is supposed to make our life go well for us. They choose between these options and suggest which one seems to be most promising. In this paper, I am interested in something different.³ I would like to reach the core

³ For a similar assertion see Campbell (2015).

of an idea of good for us as opposed to good that is not connected to any beneficiary and to find formal criteria to define what contributes to our well-being. To do this, I will first look at the philosophical discussion that has influenced thinking about well-being today. That discussion will, I claim, show how we should *not* think about what is good for us. Then I will present a positive account of the concept of well-being.

The history of the concept of well-being

The distinction between what is good for the world and good for us has its history in analytical philosophy. As we shall see in this part, philosophers, as it happens, did not always understand their predecessors and therefore initiated discussions that did not precisely match the arguments of their adversaries. We will look briefly at their considerations to look for features that will allow us to understand better the concept of well-being. This part will allow us to determine how we should *not* understand the division into what is good for us and good for the world.

Impartiality versus partiality

Most analytical philosophers look for the source of the distinction we are discussing in the reflections of Henry Sidgwick and his student G.E. Moore. In *The Methods of Ethics*, Sidgwick defines the concept of good in two ways, depending on whether it refers to one's own good or to the good of all. He suggests that we should interpret "ultimate good on the whole for me" to mean what I should practically desire if my desires were in harmony with reason, assuming my own existence alone to be considered. On this view, "ultimate good on the whole", unqualified by reference to a particular subject, must be taken to mean what as a rational being I should desire and seek to realise, assuming myself to have an equal concern for *all* existence (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 112).

Sidgwick makes a distinction between what is good for me and what is good on the whole, because he is convinced that from a moral, as well as a rational, point of view it is desirable to aspire both to our own good, i.e. well-being (partially) and to the good of all (impartially). In this way,

he faces the most difficult problem in ethics – what he calls the “Dualism of Practical Reason.” His reflections lead him to the conclusion that “the ‘Cosmos’ of Duty is thus really reduced to a Chaos, and the prolonged effort of the human intellect to frame a perfect ideal of rational conduct is seen to have been foredoomed to inevitable failure” (Sidgwick, 1874, p. 473). The conflict Sidgwick talks about consists in adopting different moral principles – the egoistic principle that “You should strive for your own good” and the utilitarian one that “You should strive for the good on the whole.” There is no difference at the value level – in both cases it is a value for a being that is to be maximized, for according to Sidgwick, “the ultimate good” is nothing but the sum of individual beings’ goods, i.e. the sum of their well-being, calculated in an impartial manner.

If we follow Scanlon in holding that “the good” is... a notion of how it would be best for the world to go, or of what would be best for particular people”, we do not follow Sidgwick’s division into partial and impartial action. Instead, we are looking for a difference within the theory of value, not in the theory of rational or moral choice. Only by noticing this difference can we understand how the concept of prudential value differs from the concept of value simpliciter, or of value for the world.

Objectivism versus subjectivism

Sidgwick’s utilitarian heir G.E. Moore is most often cited as the one who criticized the division between “good” and “good for.” Like Sidgwick, he saw in this distinction the conflict between impartiality and partiality. Moore’s goal was to reject egoism, which he considered “absurd.” In his opinion, egoism was a problem for Sidgwick only because of his division into what is “good” and what is “good for me.” Sidgwick’s problem was what Moore called “the confusion involved in the conception of my own good as distinguished from the good of others” (Moore, 1922, p. 97). Moore explains that when I say that something is good for me, I argue either that the thing I aim at is good or that my possessing the thing is good. Yes, this thing is mine, because it is in my possession, but “the goodness” of the thing is not mine, nor the fact that it is good. That I will say that this thing is good for me does not add anything to this thing, it is enough to say that it is good. “The good of it” writes Moore “can in no possible sense be private

or belong to me; any more than a thing can *exist* privately or *for* one person only” (Moore, 1922, p. 99). He claims that what is good for me is not different from what is good.

The only reason I can have for aiming at my own good, is that it is *good absolutely* that what I so call should belong to me – *good absolutely* that I should *have* something, which, if I have it, others cannot have. But if it is *good absolutely* that I should have it, then everyone else has as much reason for aiming at *my* having it, as I have myself. If, therefore, it is true of *any* single man’s interest or happiness that it ought to be his sole ultimate end, this can only mean that *that* man’s interest or happiness is *the sole good, the Universal Good*, and the only thing that anybody ought to aim at (Moore, 1922, p. 99).

Sidgwick probably would not have anything against this statement. Nor would he object to Moore’s assumption that there is only one, objective good, the same for each of us. As we have already said, Sidgwick had no problem with determining what the ultimate value is; his main concern was with whether or not partial action can be considered rational at the same time. Moore apparently did not understand the problem of the dualism of practical reason, and therefore his proposal to deal with it did not succeed.

It must be admitted, then, that although Moore rejected the division into what is good for us and good simpliciter, he could not have had in mind the distinction between what contributes to our well-being and what is good for the world and therefore he could not deny the reasonableness of that distinction. Nor could it be denied by philosophers like Bernard Williams or Philippa Foot, who rejected the possibility of taking an objective perspective of what good is for us. For them, exactly the opposite of Moore, good is always relativized to a specific recipient, that is, it depends on the attitude of a particular person.

Williams claims that we are unable to take the Sidgwickian “point of view of the universe” because these are our dispositions, desires or commitments that give our lives “some meaning, and gives one some reason for living it” (Williams, 1982, p. 191). “There is simply no conceivable exercise that consists in stepping completely outside myself and from that point of view evaluating *in toto* the dispositions, projects and affections that constitute the substance of my own life” (Williams, 1982, p. 191). There is therefore no objective point of reference. Nor is there what Sidgwick called “the sober judgment of reflective persons” in a “cool hour” (Sidgwick, 1907,

p. 400). We are unable to look at ourselves, our inclinations or desires, and even our own philosophical reflection, as if from the outside. What is good, valuable, or what we should do is coupled with our desires and our own history.

Similarly, Philippa Foot criticizes the utilitarian understanding of what is good simpliciter, or what she calls – “the best state of affairs” (Foot, 1985, pp. 199–201). First, in her opinion, something can be good or bad only from someone’s own point of view. The fact that I will lose money may be bad for me, but good for the poor person who finds it. Also in the case when I evaluate a situation of others, when good or evil does not directly concern me, sentences about good or bad state of affairs that I utter are “speaker-relative.” Secondly, she contends that “good” understood by utilitarians as welfare or well-being is only a part of what we should care for morally. We can treat benevolence as one of many virtues that should be cultivated.

Moore assumed the existence of an objective good, the same for everyone. Williams and Foot denied that there can be any such objective good, because what is good for each of us depends on who we are. Although their discussion is interesting and worth further consideration, it does not directly concern the division we are interested in. When we divide good into good for us and good for the world, we do not want to imply that one is whatever an agent chooses for himself and the other is the same for everyone. The question we are dealing with here is not whether everyone can choose their own good for themselves or there is only one good for everyone.

Realism versus antirealism – The way in which values exist

One may think that when we draw a distinction between “good for us” and “good for the world” we mean by this that there are two different views on the way values exist: they exist either in so far as there are people who favour them, have some kind of positive attitude towards them, or they exist independently of such attitudes, and would exist even if there was no one to favour them or have a positive attitude toward them. The first view is called antirealism and the second realism about values. It is important to note that an ontological question of the existence of values is not the same as the question how a value can be realised. We understand that there is a difference between pleasure and beauty such that in order to achieve a certain

amount of pleasure in the world, we need someone who will experience the feeling, while a beautiful world may exist without any sentient beings who will appreciate it.

When we say that pleasure, love or beauty are elements of our well-being, do we want to say at the same time that these values would not exist in a world without people? That's what Sidgwick seems to think when he wrote that no one "would consider it rational to aim at the production of beauty in external nature, apart from any possible contemplation of it by human beings" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 114). In response, Moore tried to argue that, facing a choice between a beautiful world and a world full of "all trash and filthiness" it would be rational to choose this first world even if there were nobody who could admire it.

The distinction between good for the world and good for me does not say anything about the ontological nature of the existence of the good. The way values exist is a large question that concerns all kinds of values – prudential, moral, aesthetic, and any other. I will here put it aside.

How not to understand well-being

I have suggested that looking at the short history of the division into what is good for us and good for the world will allow us to define well-being in a negative way – what it is not (see also Galewicz, 2016).

First and foremost, prudential values should not be equated with moral, aesthetic or religious values (Crisp, 2016; Heathwood, 2010, p. 646). Of course, it may happen that what we consider good for us will also be good from the moral perspective. As we have seen from Sidgwick's considerations, there is a moral theory that recognizes no moral values other than prudential ones. Utilitarianism proclaims that the only value to be maximized in the world is the well-being of individual beings; nothing can be good unless it is good for someone. At the same time, many utilitarians will call well-being simply "good" and will not make any division into what is good for someone and good for the world. Philosophers supporting other moral theories will be forced to prove that the moral values propagated by their theory will be more important than the prudential values. Which value we should choose in case of a value conflict will require separate reflection and argumentation. Some will say that we always have decisive reasons to

choose moral values over prudential values, while others recognize that we often have enough reason to strive for either of these.

Secondly, some people might think that when we are talking of what is good for some we are taking an egoistic standpoint. As we have seen, theories of well-being, as opposed to egoism, are theories of value, not theories of rightness of action – they say what is good and not what should be done. Egoism is a theory that says that we should always aim at our own good. Theories of well-being will not say anything about how we are to distribute the prudential value. They only ask what constitutes our, my or your, good life; they do not decide whether it is rational to strive for your own good or for the good of someone else. Well-being can be promoted both by an egoist and an altruist.

Last but not least, what is good for us does not have to be, by definition, the same as what is good according to us. We should not prejudice whether well-being is an objective or subjective value, that is whether it is the same for everyone or dependent on each person's choice.

How to understand well-being

We shall now consider the positive definition of well-being. Does the concept of well-being have certain specific qualities, thanks to which we can distinguish prudential values from other types of values? It seems that the same value, for example knowledge or pleasure, can be both a prudential and a moral one. How will we know when we are dealing with one or the other? Beauty, as an aesthetic value, may be a prudential value as well, if we believe that it contributes to a good life. How can we capture the intuitions that we have presented at the beginning when giving an example of sacrifice for the good of the world?

Our well-being can be defined as what those who love us want for us. This is how Fred Feldman understood well-being when he presented the so-called “Crib test” (Feldman, 1988, 2004, pp. 9–10). Feldman encourages us to imagine that we are proud and loving parents of a newborn child. We are standing over his crib, in which he is sleeping peacefully. Our hearts are filled with love and joy, but also parental care. We wonder what kind of interests he will develop, which school he will go to, or whether he will start a happy family. We hope that everything will work out well for our

child. We think: “Let him have a good life.” When we wish that only good things happen to our child, we have in mind what is good for him, not what is good for the world. Feldman explains that what we have thought about now, this “good life” is his well-being. This “crib test” is designed to help us distinguish thinking about well-being from thinking about other types of good: moral good, aesthetic good, etc. We can, of course, want our child to be a morally good person, but we also understand that moral choices can result in a sacrifice of his own good.

Feldman sees some weaknesses in his test. What, he wonders, if this child-loving parent is a religious fanatic who instead of thinking, as he stands over the crib, about his child’s successful career as a doctor, is thinking about him becoming a martyr of the Lord? It seems that the mere fact of being a loving parent who thinks about the good life of his offspring is not enough to determine in what well-being can consist. As Feldman admits, what is good for us does not come down to what others want for us, even if they love us a lot (Feldman, 2004, p. 10).

We might say that whether Feldman’s test is credible or not depends on whether, in his own example, the child will receive a proper reward (heaven) for his martyrdom. If there was an afterlife and the best afterlife was reserved for martyrs, the wish of the father might not be irrational. That would lead, though, to a more objective theory of well-being based on what it is rational to desire for your own child.

Such a theory is presented by Stephen Darwall who uses Feldman’s intuitively convincing example of a concerned parent but significantly modifies it. Darwall goes on to say that what is good for someone is what benefits her (Darwall, 2002, p. 1). As he explains, what benefits someone differs from what a person considers to be valuable to herself, what she wants or what she prefers. The good for us is not what we choose. Darwall points out that we often consider things to be valuable that do not benefit us. We may, for example, sacrifice our own good for the benefit of someone else, recognizing that this person is more important. If the benefit to us and what we consider to be the valuable were the same, then our sacrifice would always be beneficial to us, and so not truly a sacrifice at all.

Darwall combines the concept of well-being (or what he calls welfare) with the concept of care and defines the benefit as what the one who cares for us wants for us. When someone cares for us, he explains, he wants our life to be successful. Care is a specific attitude characterized by deep

emotional involvement, respect and the conviction that the person we care for is worthy of our care. An initial objection to such a concept could be that our benefit depends on the “whim” of someone else and on the fact that someone cares for us. Darwall is aware of this objection and therefore introduces two additional elements. First of all, our well-being or benefit is not just what someone wants for us because he cares for us, but what he should “want when he cares.” Secondly, our well-being does not depend on the fact that someone actually cares for us – it is assigned to us by the very fact that we are beings worthy of care. Regardless of whether someone cares or loves us, we are a subject of well-being. In this way, Darwall presents his theoretical idea: “what is for someone’s good or welfare is what one ought to desire and promote insofar as one cares for him” (Darwall, 2002, p. 7).

To strengthen the thesis that welfare should be treated as an objective value, independent of our actual desires, Darwall relies on our intuitions about nature. In his opinion, only his definition allows us to attribute well-being to creatures who are unconscious and have no preferences, and even to “non-sentient biological species or natural places” (Darwall, 2002, p. 21). Darwall thinks we can want their well-being (for example, we want to keep them intact), because that’s good for them. Darwall’s example shows clearly his “Aristotelian” way of thinking. It also makes an argument against this type of thinking. Can we really say that anything is good for something that feels neither pain nor pleasure, and has no desires nor any other states of consciousness? Can a stone, stream or universe have their own well-being? As we suggested at the beginning, even if we do talk in ordinary language about things being good for trees or our planet, they are good in a manner that is very different from the way in which things can be good to rational beings who can reason over their own life and make it meaningful. To support a concept of well-being for human beings by reference to a concept of well-being of unconscious and non-rational nature seems a dubious strategy.

The concept of well-being defined by Darwall is objective in the following way: it is not defined by desire as such, but by rational desire, i.e. what one should desire; it is not determined from our own perspective, but from an objective perspective based on the assumption that we are beings worthy of somebody’s care. Darwall’s idea, though immune to, for example, a “fanatical father”, poses other serious problems. First of all, it will generate an allegation of paternalism (Wolf, 2006, pp. 421–422; Fletcher, 2016, p. 59). Not only are we not in any way privileged to decide what is good or

beneficial to us, but our well-being does not depend on our judgment, desire or contentment at all. To think in this way about the well-being of others is to give them the same status as little children who, knowing little about the world, must be instructed in what is good and what is not. Second, Darwall's approach requires a theory of rationality to determine which actions are rational and which are not, a theory that he does not present (Feldman, 2006).

Assume that we have learned that someone has cheated our best friend and she does not know anything about it. We've known her for years, we care for her and we want her good. We think we should tell her the truth about the whole incident. Are not truth and honesty essential to a good life? We know, however, that her knowledge of the fraud will not change anything in her situation. It will not have any positive effects; it will, on the other hand, upset her and cause her suffering. We hesitate, therefore. In conversation with her, we present an imaginary, analogous situation and we encourage her to express her opinion – would she like to know the truth in such a situation? She says that she would not want to know the truth. What should we do in a situation in which our opinion about her good differs significantly from her own desires about her good? Should we decide against her will? Would Darwall think that it would be rational to tell her truth or rather to be silent?

According to Darwall, the most distinctive feature of the concept of well-being is neutrality towards the subject's desires. Well-being understood in this way is objective and independent of the wants of the person whose well-being we are considering. Peter Railton expects exactly the opposite from a prudential value. In his influential article *Facts and Values*, he puts a condition on the values that he holds to be good for us: these values are to be such that we care about them, we like them and we want them. In order for something to be valuable in itself for someone, it "must have a connection with what he would find in some degree compelling or attractive, at least if he were rational and aware", explains Railton, who calls this our "internal resonance" (Railton, 2003, p. 47). He goes further to say that a conception of something being good for us even though that something did not involve us and was not attractive to us in any way, would an extremely alienated conception of our good. Therefore, something can be good for us only if resonates with us in some way.

Railton connects his idea of resonance with an antirealist belief that values exist only in so far as people do. He writes: "good and bad would have no place within a universe consisting only of stones, for nothing matters to

stones. Introduce some people, and you will have introduced the possibility of value as well” (Railton, 2003, p. 47). It does not, however, seem necessary to connect one statement with the other. We said above that a question of how values exist does not have to be decisive for a definition of well-being, or of “good for.” So we do not have to accept Railton’s antirealism in order to agree with him that:

an individual’s good consists in what he would want himself to want, or to pursue, were he to contemplate his present situation from a standpoint fully and vividly informed about himself and his circumstances, and entirely free of cognitive error or lapses of instrumental rationality.

(Railton, 2003, p. 54)

L.W. Sumner is in agreement with Railton when he argues that the immanent feature of the concept of well-being is its subjectivity. By “subjectivity” he understands what “pertains to, or is characteristic of, subjects”, i.e. someone who “is capable of conscious states or processes” (Sumner, 1996, p. 27). To have a state of consciousness is to have some vision of the world “from the inside”, which is different from the way in which someone else sees the world. The world appears to me to be something and that it is to me, and not to someone else, allows me to separate my consciousness from that of others. The appearance of the world depends on my mind and therefore Sumner concludes that to say that well-being is subjective is to say that it is dependent on our mind. Our mind creates our “attitude” towards the outside world. Our well-being, what is good for us, is mind-dependent (Sumner, 1996, p. 35). Whether our lives are good will depend on whether we have a positive attitude towards our lives as a whole or a part of it (Sumner, 1996, p. 36).

I have an attitude towards something when the thing matters to me, or I care about it, or it is an object of concern to me, or I mind it, or (in the more formal psychological terminology) it is valenced for me. My attitude is positive... if I favour the thing or am favourably disposed toward it, negative... if I view it unfavourably (Sumner, 1996, p. 36).

Both Railton and Sumner propose that prudential good needs to depend on our attitudes. It seems reasonable that what is good for us should be connected in a certain way to our mental states – it should fulfil the resonance condition. One way of agreeing on the usefulness of this condition is to go back to the example of sacrifice. We think of a sacrifice as something that

we decide to do against our own desires or preference. We acknowledge a conflict of values and agree to treat our own good as something less important in a certain case (perhaps from the point of view of the good for the world). In order to sacrifice our good we need to have a positive attitude towards that good. Otherwise, it would not be a sacrifice (Campbell, 2015, p. 410).

It is difficult to maintain that our well-being should be defined as what someone who loves us wants for us. Although love is usually a feeling that brings many advantages, it is not difficult to imagine a situation in which someone who loves us will want something for us that is completely outside our own interests. The condition that it will be a person who cares about us, when we understand caring as a certain objective and rational state, will help to stave off this problem, but it will bring another one. It is hard to think of our lives as good, when they are filled with things that we do not want, and do not think about in any positive way. A person who loves us or objectively cares for us may not provide us with a good life *for us*. Perhaps he is able to present the ideal of a moral or religious life. However, if we agree that we can talk about what is good in different ways and one of them is acknowledging that something can be good for us, we must also accept that one type of value really differs from the other. Well-being should be considered from the perspective of the person to whom it relates. Because we are conscious beings who can reflect on our own life, we should decide for ourselves what the good for us is. Admittedly, our knowledge may be imperfect, and a loving parent, or indeed any wise person, may be able to give us good advice. “Try reading Jane Austen,” she may say, “even if at first it seems slow and boring, give it a chance.” But for this suggestion to be a wise one, then eventually Austen’s writing will have to resonate with us. And we should conclude that what is good for us must resonate with us in some way.

Resonance as a formal condition of well-being

We should, therefore, agree that the fulfilment of the resonance condition is necessary for a given value to be a prudential value, or to be part of our well-being. Something can be good in various ways, but if it’s good for us, we cannot be indifferent to it. What exactly does this “resonance” or

“positive attitude” mean? Most often resonance is understood simply as “wanting”, a certain volitional state. We say that our well-being consists of things or states that we desire. It does not seem, however, that such an understanding would exhaust the concept of resonance. It can manifest itself in an affective way through feelings of acceptance such as liking, loving or admiring. The feeling can be treated as a separate form of resonance, because we do not always want things that we like, and sometimes we like things we do not want. Finally, the attitude can have a cognitive dimension – we think of something as valuable or good. When we consider something good, we express our acceptance of a given value. In this way, everything that is good for us depends on some kind of attitude that we have to it.⁴

These three different sorts of resonance lead to a wide range of possible substantive solutions for what a prudential value may be. In fact they open up an infinite number of possible values, all united by one idea – that we are not indifferent to them. We can desire and like various things, or we may think of them as values – from such lofty goods as knowledge, truth or beauty, through friendship or love, to such primitive ones as physical pleasure. Nor does anything prevent us from wanting or thinking well of unreasonable or bizarre things – to suffer on a future Tuesday, as in Parfit’s example (Parfit, 1984, p. 124), or to count blades of grass, as in Rawls’ example (Rawls, 1971, p. 431). This may create considerable problems. The theory of well-being which requires resonance as a necessary condition of well-being can be accused of calling things good that are irrational or in the long-term harmful for the very subject of these goods. Some philosophers, like Harsanyi (1982, p. 55) or Railton (2003, p. 52), recognize this problem and argue that one should not take into account all of our desires, but only those that are rational or well-informed. But how do we determine which are rational and well-informed? This will still need to be specified.

Since we have admitted that the resonance condition allows for an infinite number of values, even those which seem irrational or harmful in a long run, we need to agree that it is only a necessary condition, not a sufficient one, for calling something a prudential value (Rutkowski, 2015, p. 8). That leaves further crucial tasks ahead of us. We may need to investigate further whether all of the above-mentioned sorts of resonance should be taken into account

⁴ Fletcher enumerates affective, attitudinal and volitional states in Fletcher (2016), pp. 61–62.

by rational beings. Perhaps an attitude of desiring something should not be a feature of a formal definition of the well-being of rational beings? It may turn out that cognitive attitudes better fulfil the function of deciding what is good for us. After all a normative judgment of the form “X is good for A” may, in line with Sidgwick’s deliberations (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 112), provide a reason for action, even if only one among others. Realising that something is part of our well-being, is “good for” us, may give rational beings a reason to pursue it. So the notion of well-being may convey a normative ground for aiming at it. Moreover, cognition of something being good for us may serve as a motivational push towards that good.

In order to address the tasks just mentioned, and to decide what the correct account of prudential value is, we will need to tread the well-known path of analytical philosophers, and engage in a substantial discussion of what the good for us is. Studying different theories of well-being will make it easier to decide what we are ready to accept, and what seems to us too radical, or irrational. I hope to discuss of all of these questions on another occasion.

There is one last comment left to make. Having spent most of these pages on defining formally the notion of good for us, I should say something about the concept of good for the world, or good simpliciter. I said at the beginning that it can be defined in a negative way – “good for the world” is what is left over when we mark out the realm of well-being. We can therefore say that one of the formal qualities of good simpliciter is its independence from the resonance requirement. I will postpone further discussion on what the good simpliciter might be in a substantial sense for another paper.

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O POJĘCIU DOBROSTANU

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem artykułu jest próba formalnego zdefiniowania pojęcia dobrostanu i określenia jakości pozwalającej odróżnić wartości dla dobrostanu typowe, tj. wartości roztropnościowe od innych. Aby ten cel osiągnąć, przyjrzałam się najpierw dyskusji historycznej, dzięki której zasugerowałam, w jaki sposób nie należy rozumieć pojęcia dobrostanu, aby następnie, odwołując się do współczesnej dyskusji prowadzonej przez filozofów analitycznych, zaproponować rozwiązanie pozytywne. Określiłam także warunek konieczny (choć niewystarczający) klasyfikujący wartości roztropnościowe.