

Tobias A. Fuchs

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Areas of Specialization Ethics, Moral Psychology
Areas of Competence Kant (esp. practical philosophy), Early Modern

Education

April 2018 (expected) Ph.D. in Philosophy, Brown University
Dissertation: *Well-being, Compassion, and Core-Desires*
Committee: Nomy Arpaly, James Dreier, David Estlund

2015 M.A. in Philosophy, Brown University

2012 B.A. in Philosophy, Columbia University in the City of New York
Summa cum laude, Departmental Honors, Phi Beta Kappa

2009 A.A. in Liberal Arts, Borough of Manhattan Community College
Departmental Honors in History, Phi Theta Kappa

Publications

“A Working Test for Well-being”, forthcoming in *Utilitas* (published online June 27th, 2017)

Review of Anna Alexandrova’s *A Philosophy for the Science of Well-Being* (2017, Oxford University Press), forthcoming in *Metascience*

Teaching Experience

Summer 2018 (scheduled) Instructor at Brown University, Pre-College Program
The Meaning of Life
How to Live: Ethical Perspectives from Buddhism, Islam & Native Americans

Summer 2017 Instructor at Brown University, Pre-College Program
The Meaning of Life

Summer 2016 Instructor at Brown University, Pre-College Program
The Meaning of Life

Fall 2015 Instructor at Brown University
Introduction to Philosophy

Summer 2015 Instructor at Brown University, Pre-College Program
The Meaning of Life

Summer 2014 Instructor at Brown University, Pre-College Program
The Meaning of Life

Talks

January 3, 2018	<i>A Working Test for Well-being</i> APA Eastern Division Meeting 2018, Savannah
September 20 th , 2017	<i>Sketch of a New Theory of Well-being</i> Philosophy Graduate Forum, Brown University, Providence
October 21 st , 2016	<i>A Working Test for Well-being</i> Lunch Talk Series, State University of New York at Buffalo
April 10 th , 2016	<i>Doing Right and Feeling Right: Cultivation of Character in Kant's Ethics</i> MARI Graduate Conference, University of Massachusetts at Amherst
March 30 th , 2016	<i>Doing Right and Feeling Right: Cultivation of Character in Kant's Ethics</i> APA Pacific Division Meeting 2016, San Francisco
April 17 th , 2015	<i>Autonomy, Wellbeing, and Compassion</i> LSU Graduate Conference at Louisiana State University

Commentaries

March 28 th , 2018	Commentary on <i>Frankfurt, Free Will, and the Problem of Self-Control</i> (symposium paper by Ryan Cummings & Adina Roskies) at the APA Pacific Division Meeting 2018, San Diego
November 7 th , 2015	Commentary on <i>Luck and the Moral Psychology of Gratitude</i> (Daniel Telech) at the 10 th Annual Shapiro Graduate Philosophy Conference, Brown University

Teaching Assistantships

Spring 2018	Moral Philosophy (Nomy Arpaly)
Fall 2017	Consciousness (Christopher Hill)
Spring 2016	Early Modern Philosophy (Paul Guyer)
Spring 2015	The Philosophy and Psychology of Happiness (Bernard Reginster & Joachim Krueger)
Fall 2014	Schopenhauer's Ethical Thought (Bernard Reginster)
Spring 2014	The Meaning of Life (Charles Larmore)
Fall 2013	Deductive Logic (Richard Heck)
Summer 2013	The Meaning of Life (Alexandra King)

Regular responsibilities included weekly office hours and grading papers and exams. For Professor Guyer, Professor Heck, and Professor Larmore I was also responsible for weekly discussion and review sections.

Awards and Grants

January 2018	APA Graduate Student Stipend (awarded August 2017)
May 2017	Andrew W. Mellon Graduate Workshop Grant Workshop Title: “Compassion: Nature, Morality, and Society”
April 2017	Conference Travel Grant, Brown Graduate School
Fall 2016–Spring 2017	Dissertation Fellowship, Brown Graduate School
March 2016	Conference Travel Grant, Brown Graduate School
Fall 2015	Teaching Fellowship, Brown Graduate School
April 2015	Conference Travel Grant, Brown Graduate School
Fall 2012–Spring 2013	Graduate Fellowship, Brown Graduate School
Fall 2009–Fall 2011	TOMS Scholarship, Columbia University

Service

Fall 2017–Spring 2018	Creating and organizing interdisciplinary Mellon Graduate Workshop Workshop Title: “Compassion – Nature, Morality, and Society” Responsibilities include creating the syllabus, running bi-weekly seminars with graduate students from various departments, selecting and inviting guest speakers, and managing the \$5000 budget.
Fall 2012–Fall 2017	Referee for the Annual Shapiro Graduate Philosophy Conference
June 2014–May 2017	Founder and Organizer of the Brown Ethics Reading Group
April 2017	Colloquium Chair at the APA Pacific Division Meeting 2017, Seattle
Fall 2012–May 2017	Department Representative to the Graduate Student Council
August 2015	Peer Mentor for International Student Orientation
June 2015	Admissions Referee, Tutor, and Panel Participant for SIPP@Brown (the Brown Philosophy Department’s Summer Immersion Program in Philosophy aimed at increasing diversity in philosophy)
August 2014	Peer Mentor for Graduate Student Orientation
Summer 2014	Referee for Research Matters (Brown’s showcase event of graduate work)
Spring 2014	Organizer of the Prospective Graduate Students Visiting Days
September 2013	Conference Assistant for <i>Nature and Freedom in Kant - A Conference in Honor of Paul Guyer</i> , Brown University

Languages

English (fluent; primary research language)
 German (fluent; native speaker)
 Spanish (fluent)
 Farsi (beginner)

Graduate Coursework

(* indicates audit)

Ethics and Metaethics

Spring 2017	Shame and Guilt (Bernard Reginster) *
Spring 2016	Moral Emotions (Michelle Mason) *
Spring 2015	The Nature of Morality (James Dreier) *
Fall 2014	Third Year Literature Review: Moral Psychology (Nomy Arpaly)
Spring 2014	Independent Research Study: Compassion (Nomy Arpaly)
Fall 2013	Moral Psychology (Nomy Arpaly)
Spring 2013	Graduate Proseminar: 20 th Century Value Theory (Nomy Arpaly)
Spring 2011	What are Values? (Katja Vogt)

History

Spring 2015	Moral Sentiments from Hutchinson to Kant (Paul Guyer) *
	Kant's <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> (Paul Guyer) *
	Third Year Paper Workshop: <i>Kant and Cultivation</i> (David Estlund)
Fall 2014	Independent Research Study: Kant and Sympathy (Paul Guyer)
Spring 2014	Plato (Mary Louise Gill)
Spring 2013	Reception of Kant's Ethics (Paul Guyer)
Fall 2012	Aristotle and the Mind/Body Problem (David Charles)
	Kant's Practical Philosophy (Paul Guyer)
	Graduate Proseminar: 20 th Century Analytic Philosophy (Joshua Schechter)

Metaphysics and Mind

Spring 2014	Metaphysics of Chance (Nina Emery)
Fall 2013	Mental Causation (Jaegwon Kim)
Spring 2013	Metaphysical Grounding (Selim Berker)
Fall 2012	Emergence versus Reduction (Jaegwon Kim)
Spring 2012	Direction of Time (Tim Maudlin & David Albert) *
Fall 2011	Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics (David Albert)

Epistemology and Logic

Fall 2013	The Epistemic Significance of the Etiology of Belief (Joshua Schechter & David Christensen)
Spring 2013	Independent Study: Advanced Logic (Joshua Schechter)

References

Nomy Arpaly

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David Christensen

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James Dreier

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David Estlund

Lombardo Professor of the Humanities

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Paul Guyer

Jonathan Nelson Professor of Humanities and Philosophy

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Dissertation Abstract

What is well-being? Philosophers disagree widely on this question. The dominant view ties well-being to the satisfaction of desires. It seems intuitive that what is good for us has to do with what we care about. But there are notorious difficulties for such accounts. My dissertation advances the debate by overcoming two of those problems, and by proposing an original theory.

The first issue is that our desires can be satisfied without us being aware of it, but many think what we don't experience cannot affect our welfare. I argue against this, by showing that when people are unknowingly betrayed or ridiculed, compassion is fitting towards them, which tells us that they are badly off.

The second issue is that desire-satisfaction views apparently cannot accommodate cases where people willingly act against their self-interest, as in self-sacrifice. I propose a novel desire-based theory of well-being which avoids this problem and offers several advantages over its competitors. On my view, not all desires count towards well-being, but only a limited set of desires, which I call core-desires.

We all want to live a good life. But what is it that makes for a good life? What is it that is good for us? The answers to these questions amount to what philosophers call well-being. Many think that well-being has to do with getting what we want, that is, having our desires satisfied. This is an intuitively attractive view, because it ties what is good for us to what we care about. But there are problems with it. Suppose some stranger tells you of her illness. You come to desire her recovery. You part ways and she later gets well, unbeknownst to you. Does this make your life go better? Surely not. It seems that what we don't experience cannot affect our well-being. Call this the Experience Requirement. But our desires can be satisfied without us being aware of it, so desire-satisfaction based accounts of well-being must be false.

Part one of my dissertation saves desire-satisfaction theories from this predicament. If only what one experiences can affect one's well-being, then Jill's being cheated on by her spouse does not make her life any worse, as long as she never finds out. And being secretly despised and ridiculed by her colleagues won't be bad for Jane, as long as she remains unaware of it. Unpalatable results, it seems, but there is controversy as to their implications. I show that they constitute counterexamples to the Experience Requirement.

Developing an idea suggested by Nagel, I argue that we can find out about changes in well-being by exploiting a conceptual connection between well-being and compassion. Our feelings of compassion are fickle, like all emotions. They are unsuitable as epistemic tools. But emotions are *fitting* only under certain conditions. Fittingness – to be distinguished from moral appropriateness – is not fickle. Compassion is fitting only when a person is badly off. This can be used in a test. If compassion is fitting towards a person, then that person's well-being is negatively affected. Applying this to said problem cases, we get the result that Jill and Jane are indeed worse off for being cheated and ridiculed behind their back. Therefore, the Experience Requirement is mistaken. There are many cases like those of Jill and Jane. Denying that compassion is fitting in all of them is highly implausible.

Some worry that assessments of the fittingness of compassion are parasitic on judgments about well-being. But we can judge that someone warrants compassion without having a belief about their well-being, making use of common, every-day emotional competence. This is broadly analogous to attributing responsibility to a person based on the fittingness of blame and indignation. I take fittingness of

compassion to be a reliable indicator of diminished well-being, and conclude that the Experience Requirement should be rejected. This has far-reaching implications, especially for mental-state based views of well-being.

There remains the problem of self-sacrifice. A freedom fighter caught by an oppressive regime chooses execution rather than naming names. Apparently, she desires to protect her comrades more than she desires saving her own life. The basic idea of desire views is that what is good for you is to have your desires satisfied. But if satisfying her self-sacrificial desire promotes the rebel's well-being, then there is no such thing as self-sacrifice, which is patently false.

The standard response has been to incorporate some kind of idealization (e.g. only fully informed, or fully rational desires count towards well-being). But there are a number of problems with this approach, for instance it divorces well-being from what we actually care about.

I propose a novel desire-satisfaction theory. There are some intrinsic desires we all seem to share, like the desires for love and affection, self-determination and -expression, pleasure, connection with others, sex, safety, bodily integrity, etc. Call these our *core-desires*. On my view, satisfying our core-desires is what is good for us. Satisfying any non-core desire is good for us only insofar as this contributes to the satisfaction of core-desires.

This solves the problem of self-sacrificial desires. The freedom fighter may satisfy her core desires for self-determination and the good of loved ones, but she clearly frustrates most of her other core desires by accepting execution, making satisfying the self-sacrificial desire bad for her (even if it is morally good). The view has the advantages that it does not rely on any idealization, but only on what she actually cares about.

My core-desire theory offers a plausible account of well-being that has significant advantages over other extant views, and promises to solve many long-standing problems. The compassion test appears to be a natural companion to the core-desire theory. When we survey the paradigmatic cases where compassion is fitting, they usually seem to involve the objects of our core-desires. This dissertation therefore makes several separate contributions to the literature in a coherent picture, including a promising new theory of well-being.