Against sentientism

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1. Introduction

Dogs, pigs, and humans, or most of them during much of their lives, have moral status; cars, and computers don't. Sentientism is the widely accepted view that sentience, or the capacity for affective consciousness, is both necessary and sufficient for having moral status. The core idea is that only sentient beings are welfare subjects – entities for whom things can go well or poorly from their perspective – which presupposes sentience. All and only sentient beings have moral status, because all and only sentient beings are welfare subjects. As David Chalmers articulates the core idea,

> Consciousness is the ground of all value. Whenever anything is good or bad for someone, it's because of their consciousness. Consciousness has value, what a conscious creature values has value, and relations between conscious creatures have value. If a creature has no capacity for consciousness, nothing can be good or bad for it from its own perspective. And it's natural to conclude that if nothing can be good or bad for a creature, then the creature has no moral status. (Chalmers 2022: 341-2)

The importance of consciousness, more precisely irreducibly phenomenal consciousness, has long been questioned (Carruthers 1999; 2004; 2007; Kammerer 2019; Levy 2014), and more recently, sentientism specifically has (Bradford 2023; Kagan 2019: 16-36; Kammerer 2022; Shepherd 2023; 2024). In response, it has been defended (Dung 2024; Lee 2022; Smithies, forthcoming) or amended (Chalmers 2022; Roelofs 2022). However, a positive rival has yet to emerge.

In this paper, I mount a new challenge to sentientism around the concept of welfare subject and its connection to moral status, and I offer a positive alternative according to which agency,

construed as flexible goal-directed behavior, can ground moral status independently of sentience. I argue that agency is a source of basic prudential value, which I call "agential value" and contrast with "phenomenal value[1]". Hence it is sufficient for welfare subjecthood—for one's life to go well or poorly in a sense that matters morally. Even if some beings lack sentience, the exercise or thwarting of their agential capacities can make their lives better or worse for them. I argue that all agents can be welfare subjects.

I will proceed as follows. I begin setting up the challenge to sentientism and motivating the alternative (§2). After defining key terms and stating the main thesis that agency is sufficient for moral status (§3), I introduce the concept of "agential value" to support the possibility of nonsentient welfare subjects (§4). I then clarify the welfare component by rejecting the "Experience Requirement" for well-being, arguing that agency-relevant states can contribute to prudential value without conscious experience, and endorsing instead the "Resonance Constraint," which nonsentient agents can satisfy (§5). This agential account of moral status expands our understanding of the moral landscape.

2. Sentientism and beyond

My motivation is two-fold. First, agency has been neglected as a dimension of well-being, often treated merely as a matter of respecting autonomy rather than contributing to welfare itself. Second, there may be sophisticated creatures, such as arthropods and future AIs, for which we lack sufficient evidence of sentience but which are nonetheless agents. My view is that they have a welfare in a sense that matters morally. The focus on sentience in animal ethics and beyond is such that the expansion of moral concern now seems exclusively fixated on determining which animals, especially invertebrates (and now digital beings), are conscious. The question remains Bentham's: *Can they suffer?* I take an alternative approach. Whether or not uncertain cases are sentient need not be resolved to make progress on the question of moral status. We tend to ignore another question: *Do they have agency?* Since, for instance, insects are the largest group of animals on earth, it is

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[1] The phrase "Phenomenal Value" is borrowed from Kammerer (2019). The thesis, as he defines it, is slightly different but related. The statement considered here is closer to what he calls "Exclusive Phenomenal Value".

important to decide whether they matter even if the issue of their consciousness remains fraught (Sebo 2023).[2]

The fundamental insight of sentientism is three-fold. First, moral status protects morally significant interests, which requires the capacity for welfare. Second, the latter presupposes a point of view; things can go well or poorly for a subject from their perspective. Finally, only sentient beings are subjects. There is something it's like to be a cat, but not catnip or a cat food dispenser. I believe that all sentient beings and all agents, *regardless of their overlap*, have welfare and moral status. Like sentientists, I assume that a fundamental link between welfare and moral status. What I deny is the claim that only sentient beings can be welfare subjects. I reject sentientism about moral status by rejecting sentientism about welfare.

David Chalmers (2022: 335-337) suggests that Vulcans, hypothetical emotionless intelligent beings inspired by the *Star Trek* series, would have moral status. It would be wrong to torture, kill, kidnap, imprison them. Vulcans are *phenomenally* conscious (unlike philosophical zombies) but lack *affect*. They can think, remember, plan, and desire, they have goals and projects, but none of these states are affectively experienced. Whether or not philosophical Vulcans are possible, we can imagine some creatures that are conscious in some sense yet lack the affective capacities associated with sentience in its narrow sense.

Chalmers does not deny Vulcans sentience in a broad sense, only affective consciousness (more on this soon), so let me sketch what a similar challenge to sentientism (broadly construed) would look like.

> **Step 1.** We can conceive of beings who lack sentience but whose lives are sites of valence.

> **Step 2.** If such beings exist, they have some moral status—there are ways it would be wrong to treat them for their own sake.

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[2] In what follows, I do not deal with clear cases such as birds and mammals, as well as rocks, stars, clouds, and cars. I assume that most vertebrates, including fish, and some invertebrates, including cephalopod mollusks, are definitely sentient (Browning and Birch, 2022). I remain agnostic about plants, fungi, protists, and other forms of life.

Step 3. Moral status does not fundamentally depend on sentience.

This is not meant as a complete argument. Still, steps 1 and 2 imply that *if some non-sentient beings are sites of valence, they have moral status*. The crux of the issue, which I tackle in Section 4, is whether sentience is necessary for valence. Let's start by laying out the conceptual framework.

3. Welfare and moral status: from sentience to agency

Sentience

We can distinguish two senses of sentience (Browning and Birch 2022: 1). In the *broad* sense, sentience is the capacity for subjective experience, or phenomenal consciousness (Block, 1995; Nagel, 1974). There is something it's like to, say, be in such-and-such sensory and affective states (among others) and, by extension, to be a such-and-such creature. In the *narrow* sense, sentience is the capacity to experience positively or negatively valenced affective states (pain, pleasure, joy, frustration, warmth, hunger, anger, sadness, boredom, anxiety, distress, etc.), i.e. that which Vulcans lack, valenced experiences that *feel* good or bad. Hereafter I use sentience in this narrow sense. Sentientists are interested in the value of different valenced experiences, not just the fact that a creature is conscious.

Welfare

Welfare, or wellbeing, refers to how well or poorly one's life is going. Welfare is prudential value and denotes the set of basic goods (and bads) that a subject can accrue and has self-interested reasons to want, desire, prefer (or avoid). Prudential goods and bads are finally valuable for those that accrue them. Prudential value also gives moral agents moral reasons to care about and benefit or refrain from harming welfare subjects.

An entity is a welfare subject if and only if it has the capacity for welfare, can accrue prudential value. According to sentientism, this requires a perspective from which things can go well or poorly. Only the interests of sentient beings can matter morally because having interests requires the "capacity to experience events as positively or negatively valenced" (Rosati, 2009: 225). Without sentience how could anything matter to a tree, a mycelium, or a robot, however unified,

complex, and goal-directed they may appear? My view will locate (some) prudential value outside the bounds of sentience.

Moral status

Moral status involves moral value, duties (of moral agents to moral patients), and interests deserving consideration (and, on some views, rights protecting them). Succinctly, if X has moral status, moral agents morally ought to treat X in certain ways for X's sake. That is, X's having moral status means that X's interests matter morally for their own sake, and X's interests explain why one morally ought to treat them so. Distinguish two aspects. *Axiologically*, X and/or the promotion of their interests are finally valuable, as opposed to valuable only instrumentally and derivatively—like, say, a chair or a painting. *Deontically*, moral agents have direct duties for X's sake (typically *to* X) (Kamm, 2007; Warren, 1997).

Let us now unpack the relationship between welfare and moral status. The widespread assumption I have been working under so far says:

> WELFARE: All and only welfare subjects have moral status.[3]

What does it mean to act for a creature's sake? To take their interests directly into consideration in deciding how to treat it. Interests are that with respect to which things can go well (when are promoted) or poorly (set back) for a subject. Interests are necessary for moral status because how one ought to treat an entity (our obligations) is grounded in its interests. Accordingly, the scope of moral status coincides with that of welfare subjects, which gives us WELFARE.

WELFARE doesn't say much about who has moral status and what we owe welfare subjects, but it tells us that bearers of moral status and welfare subjects are coextensive sets. And there is an explanatory relation between welfare and moral status: the same properties determine welfare and

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[3] A weaker version says:

> WELFARE*: only welfare subjects have moral status.

WELFARE* allows there to be welfare subjects who are not morally considerable. Maybe plants, computer programs, or corporations are like that—some things are good for them but not in a way that matters morally (in the deontic sense). I set this possibility aside here.

moral status, because interests and the characteristics that ground them determine what treatments of X are right or wrong. This is unsurprising if prudential value is a source of reasons not just for the subject but also for moral agents: we owe other creatures to treat them as is called for by their interests.

What does WELFARE rule out? Unlike rocks and clouds, organisms and ecosystems have an internal dynamic structure. They appear to be striving toward self-maintenance and persistence, and, for organisms, reproduction. According to ecocentrists, ecosystems, species, and other holistic entities have a good of their own. According to biocentrists, all living organisms, but probably not assemblages thereof, have a good of their own. For sentientists, only sentient organisms do. But none contest WELFARE. What matters, for instance when we ask whether AIs can be moral patients is whether they can have "a good of their own." (Moosavi 2023) Can we meaningfully ascribe interests to artifacts as opposed to externally stipulating the conditions of their integrity or functioning (Varner, 1998)? Now here is the sentientist restriction on welfare and moral status:

> (A) All and only creatures to whom things matter can have a welfare, and (B) all and only sentient creatures are such that anything can matter to them at all.

Note that the conjuncts are independent. A does not entail B. We can interpret A—there are ways for things to "matter to" a being—without appealing to sentience. My main thesis is:

> AGENCY: Agency is a sufficient moral-status-conferring property

A moral-status-conferring property is such that having it entails that one has moral status—and certain properties entail different degrees of moral status if it is a matter of degree. Such properties also determine the content of our moral obligations by determining one's interests. According to AGENCY, if X is an agent, X has moral status even if it is not sentient. X's having agency explains both that it has moral status and what makes treating it in certain ways wrong such as the deprivation of opportunities to exercise its faculties, to make its own choices, or to accomplish its goals.

Cards on the table: *I do not have a knock-down argument for* AGENCY. But it deserves a fair hearing. AGENCY accounts for the judgment that it is wrong to treat certain entities in certain ways even if they might not be sentient, the sort of (if not quite the same) intuition that motivated Chalmers's Vulcans thought experiments.[4] In the next section, I offer the beginning of an argument based on the existence of a kind of prudential value that does not require sentience.

4. Agential value

In what sense are agents distinct from rocks, cars, trees, and computers? Water, sunlight, and nutrients are good for plants because they promote their growth and reproduction. Oil, proper grade gas, and regular service are good for cars because they enable them to perform the functions that we've assigned to them. That is, things can harm or benefit plants and artifacts in an external, derivative, and descriptive sense, whereas things can be good or bad for agents in an internal, nonderivative evaluative sense (on complexities regarding the ascription of interests to nonsentient and/or nonliving things, see Basl and Sandler 2013; Moosavi 2023). For biocentrists, organisms are teleological systems with goals (and a good) of their own (Goodpaster, 1978; Taylor 1986).

If having goals of one's own matters evaluatively, we can state:

> AGENTIAL WELFARE: some morally significant interests are based on agency; it is basically and *pro tanto* good (bad) for an entity to have such agential interests promoted (frustrated, setback, thwarted).

Note that this statement need not be incompatible with biocentrism. Life and agency could, like sentience, be independent sources of welfare. The important point is: some non-living, non-sentient beings have welfare in virtue of being agents. This is the normative bridge between the value of agency and moral status. In what follows, I offer support for step 1 (see §2). It is valence, not sentience, that is fundamental to moral status, and valenced agency is sufficient for AGENTIAL WELFARE.

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[4] Importantly, this is *not* an argument from risk or uncertainty that we should treat such entities as having moral status because there is a non-negligible chance that they are sentient (cf. Birch, 2017; Sebo, 2018).

A rudimentary desire-belief psychology, sufficient for goal-directedness, might confer welfare without requiring sentience. This "minimal agency" involves pro-attitudes, sensory input, and cognitive representations that explain and rationalize behavior (Dretske, 1999). If understood in behavioral-functional terms, this doesn't require sentience. Insects, for instance, might qualify:

1. They represent the world
2. Act based on this information to promote certain goals
3. Their behavior is rationalized by these goals

Thus, insects might "care" about what happens to them, albeit not consciously. Harming them would then mean interfering with their agency (cf. Carruthers 2007; Delon et al. 2020).[5]

Rachell Powell, Irina Mikhalevich, and Allen Buchanan tie the emergence of welfare to subjective experience:

> It is only with the emergence of the welfare platform that organisms began to experience states of affairs as good or bad, as pleasurable or painful, as things to approach or avoid. … Moral standing arose with valuing, and valuing arose with embodied experiences of valence. (2021: 235)

Without consciousness, life cannot go well or poorly from the organism's point of view, its aims cannot matter. It lacks, as Powell and Mikhalevich put it elsewhere, "the feelings that make the frustration of their goals frustrating or the achievement of their goals rewarding" (2020: 3)

In response, and in lieu of an argument, let me offer an empirical conjecture. Aims came first in animal life, even if they were closely associated with the evolution of consciousness. Reverse engineering this evolution make branchings of non-sentient agential life conceivable. And maybe somewhere in the phylogenetic tree, the agential basis of consciousness went on without

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[5] We can set a lower bound on cognitive sophistication such that thermostats, automated vacuum cleaners, and voice assistants are not agents in the sense that matters (flexible, internal goal-direction).

experience. Thus, maybe interests emerged in between life and consciousness rather than with life itself (*pace* biocentrism).

Consider the action-perception nexus that Peter Godfrey-Smith (2020) locates at the root of the evolution of experience around the Cambrian explosion (c. 540 million years ago). Subjectivity and agency "pick out different aspects of a whole" (104). Drawing on Susan Hurley's work, Godfrey-Smith suggests they are bound up together (Hurley, 1998: 249). But minimal subjectivity consists in *sensing*, not yet *feeling*. There's already a "point of view" though no sentience proper. "Roughly," writes Godfrey-Smith, "the evolution of animal agency brings with it the origin of subjects" (105). Agency, I submit, bridged the gap between sensing, found everywhere in the tree of life, and subjective experience, only found in animals. Goal-directed behavior in unified organisms gradually led to the evolution of conscious subjects. Admittedly, the line between subjectivity and sentience is blurry, and Godfrey-Smith is keen on gradualism about the evolution and distribution of sentience and open about his uncertainties (277-8). Still, there was a point when agents existed that were not sentient. These animals, according to AGENCY, already mattered.

Consciousness helps organisms to navigate complex, unpredictable environments to achieve their internal goals (self-maintenance, feeding, reproduction, affiliation, predator evasion…). It is therefore unsurprising that it is bound up with action. Still, perception, learning, and goal-based valence came first. And they were already sufficient for organisms to matter. Minimal agency—the basis of the more complex forms of learning that mark the birth of consciousness—is presupposed by experience. Such agency qualifies as what Dretske (1999) calls "purposeful action", behavior "governed by thought" and done *for a reason*, as opposed to mere (automatic or reflexive) behavior. This is where valence and interests arise.

This (admittedly speculative) conjecture puts pressure on the standard view that it is consciousness that constitutes or enables value (Kriegel, 2019; Powell et al., 2021; Siewert, 1998; Smithies, forthcoming; for criticism, see Bradford 2023; Kammerer 2019; Levy, 2014), and the view that consciousness is the central question for moral status (Birch, 2022; Shepherd, 2018).

Let us see where the conjecture can lead us. Prudential value is goodness-for (Rosati, 2009). But goodness-for does not require consciousness, although consciousness give rises to distinctive

value. If aims (desires, goals, etc.) generate *independent* value, the standard view is false, since it says that they can only generate value *in combination with* consciousness. AGENTIAL WELFARE explains what positing combination effects leaves unexplained. It explains why the achievement of aims (etc.) contributes to the welfare of sentient animals and so why agency grounds a distinct kind of moral status.

Now contrast two axiological statements:

> AGENTIAL VALUE: some states and events are prudentially good or bad for a subject because they promote the subject's aims or because they involve the exercise of agency (e.g., planning, decision-making, exploring, playing, etc.).

> PHENOMENAL VALUE: states or events can only be prudentially good or bad for a subject because of their intrinsic qualitative character (e.g., pleasures and pains, emotions, feelings, and moods).

Notice their different scopes. PHENOMENAL VALUE rules out AGENTIAL VALUE, but the latter is compatible with a weaker version of the former:

> PHENOMENAL VALUE*: some states and events are prudentially good or bad for a subject because of their intrinsic qualitative character.

Instead of PHENOMENAL VALUE, sentientists could have appealed to PHENOMENAL VALUE * and made room for AGENTIAL VALUE.

Agential value is typically experienced, leading us to assume all value is phenomenal. Our introspection suggests that our welfare is tied to conscious experiences—successes, failures, emotions, and discoveries seem valuable because of how they feel. This provides an error theory for the apparent congruence of value and phenomenality: sentientism's intuitive appeal stems from our personal experiences as conscious beings. However, we may be mistaken in concluding that this is the only way value can exist. Our inability to imagine non-phenomenal value doesn't preclude its existence in other forms of life.

Let me offer three main considerations in favor of AGENTIAL VALUE.

First, it secures the distinct significance of appeals to agency. Marc Wilcox (2020) argues for the coextension of agency and sentience (and Sebo [2017] and Thomas [2016] presuppose sentience in their accounts). But this weakens the significance of agency-based accounts of moral status if it turns out it's been sentience all along! We want an explanation of why agency itself could matter.[6] If agency matters only with sentience, then it's no more independently significant than other aspects of our lives that sentience brings to light, from simple carnal pleasures to rarefied intellectual activity, from healthy food to professional success. None of these are grounds of moral status. In contrast, AGENCY appeals to a distinctive source of prudential value and ground of moral status. We can see this already in Chalmers's Vulcans. Consciousness plays a minor role, if any, in explaining why it's wrong to torture them, imprison them, or sacrifice five of them to save one person on a trolley track. Agency, and our interference with it, is what's driving our judgment that it's wrong (cf. Kagan 2019: 16-36).

Second, exercising your faculties and accomplishing your goals matters to you. Your life would be better if you succeeded in climbing the mountain, acing your test, or baking your cake, if you so desired, independent of how this would affect your hedonic levels. As L.W. Sumner puts it: "Agency has value, in so far as it enriches the lives of agents." (1996: 205) AGENTIAL VALUE explains why the exercise of faculties and the achievement of goals matter to agents, a point to which I return in the Section 5.

Finally, AGENTIAL VALUE honors a central commitment of sentientism and motivates the first two steps of our challenge: that valence grounds value. To bring this out, consider how the case for hedonism about well-being posits:

    (i)   a valenced aspect of affective experience (sensations, feelings, emotions, and moods typically have a positive or negative valence) and

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[6] On one reading, Wilcox's view is that only sentient beings can be agents, but this is an *extensional* claim. On another reading, sentience is a *constitutive* aspect of agency. The first reading is more defensible to me, though my conjecture puts pressure on it. Either way, Wilcox denies that agency *per se* gives rise to moral-status-relevant welfare.

(ii)   a qualitative aspect of valence.

Now, (i) and (ii) are logically independent. Just like we can imagine conscious Vulcans without affective valence, we can imagine valence without affect while conceding that these are typically two sides of the same coin *for the creatures we are familiar with*.

Peter Carruthers (2018) defines valence as the nonconceptual representation of value, distinguishing it from the hedonic view that ties valence to affective experience. Crucially, this representation need not be phenomenal. If valence can be dissociated from experience, non-sentient creatures could engage in valence-based decision-making. Carruthers argues that "valence may underlie all intentional action" and is best understood as "an intrinsically motivating nonconceptual representation of goodness or badness" (675). This separation of valence and experience provides a foundation for the concept of AGENTIAL VALUE.

Together, these three considerations support AGENTIAL VALUE. It accounts for the significance of agential goods, it secures the distinct relevance of agency to moral status, and it coheres with an explanatorily ambitious and empirically grounded account of valence.

Because AGENTIAL VALUE supports AGENTIAL WELFARE, we've made progress towards AGENCY. Agents can be welfare subjects. We've earned our way to steps 1 and 2 and therefore close to step 3. AGENTIAL WELFARE will not be secure until we address an important objection, however.

5. Constraints on well-being: Experience or Resonance?

Sentientism implies "mental-statism" about well-being, the view that all basic goods consist in some more or less complex mental state (DeGrazia, 1996). AGENCY is a kind of mental-statism, but it rejects a consciousness requirement on well-being. In principle, AGENCY is compatible with desire-satisfaction theories, life-satisfaction, and objective-list theories of well-being, and so with both subjectivist and objectivist views, but it denies that all welfare-relevant states are experienced. Theoretical trade-offs are inevitable: my proposal is biased against hedonism; hedonism is biased

toward PHENOMENAL VALUE. Eventually, there may be conclusive reasons to accept hedonism and reject AGENCY, but we should weigh their respective merits and costs beforehand.[7]

On to the Experience Requirement. It says that something can be good for a subject only if it affects their experience in some way, and differences in the subject's level of well-being correspond to experiential, or phenomenological, differences (Griffin, 1986). In other words, "there cannot be a difference in well-being without a phenomenological difference" (Lin, 2021, 869).

AGENTIAL VALUE rejects the requirement and denies that e.g. the satisfaction of a desire or the obtaining of certain list item matters to well-being only if experienced: knowledge can be a basic good even if it doesn't change your experience; it is good for you if your daughter wins her tennis game, even unbeknownst to you (if you so wished). AGENTIAL VALUE can thus strengthen desire-satisfaction and objective-list theories against similar objections that follow from identifying prudential value with PHENOMENAL VALUE (also see Bradford 2023; Kammerer 2019).

The requirement is entailed by hedonism. Other varieties of subjectivism such as desire theories (let alone objectivism) admit of basic goods (e.g. satisfaction of a remote desire) that find no echo in the subject's experience. One argument for the requirement is that "unless we accept [it], we cannot explain why only sentient beings are welfare subjects" (Lin, 2021, who argues that the argument fails.)[8] But of course, this is precisely what's at stake here.

If non-sentient welfare subjects exist, we cannot apply the Experience Requirement to their well-being, nor use it to argue that only sentient beings have welfare. As Lin (2021: 880) notes, the claim that only sentient beings are welfare subjects could be supported by reasons other than the

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[7] AGENCY does not entail that a single theory of wellbeing applies to all subjects, no more than the claim that animals can be welfare subjects entails that the same theory applies to all species. The view that's there's a single theory for all welfare subjects—*welfare invariabilism*—has its defenders (Lin, 2018) and critics (Bruckner, 2019). It's possible that one theory applies to insects, another to AI, another to dogs, another to whales, and yet another to humans. If non-sentient agents are welfare subjects, and there's only one true theory, welfare cannot consist in hedonic states. However, I don't presuppose invariabilism in what follows.

[8] The requirement is not the same as the view that only sentient beings are welfare subjects. Most animal ethicists accept the view yet are at best agnostic about the requirement. Famously, until his turn to hedonism, Peter Singer endorsed preferentism about well-being (compare Singer 2011 with Lazari-Radek and Singer 2014).

Experience Requirement. While the requirement, if true, would support this claim, it's not conclusive. Conversely, if we independently believed only sentient beings have welfare, we'd have a reason (though not conclusive) to accept the requirement. As Deilj (2021) suggests, if sentientism about welfare seems intuitive, the requirement explains it well. But alternative explanations are possible. So, we should proceed assuming two views are independent. Decoupling them preserves the viability of both desire-satisfaction and objective-list theories, including for sentientists.[9]

The decoupling doesn't guarantee AGENCY. Still, rejecting the requirement puts some pressure on sentientism. Lin asks, if "a sentient being can become positive in welfare without undergoing a change in phenomenology", then "why isn't the same true of non-sentient beings?" (2021: 878) As argued, an agential but non-sentient creature (AI or insect) can fare well or badly on account of having certain aims and desires that can be met or frustrated. Lin's question points to a weaker constraint on well-being. In a succinct and formal statement:

> *Resonance Constraint*: a thing, x, is basically good for some subject, S, only if either S has a satisfied positive attitude toward x or x itself involves S's having a satisfied positive attitude toward something. (Heathwood, 2021: 15; originally, Railton, 1986: 9)

The constraint is commonly invoked against objectivism about well-being. How could friendship, knowledge, achievement, or aesthetic appreciation be good for me if I don't care about them? Something must resonate with me to benefit or harm you. Pleasure and satisfaction normally resonate with their subject (setting aside remote, immoral, or compulsive desires; Heathwood, 2019). Knowledge or achievement without resonance may have impersonal value but are not prudentially good. However,

Crucially, though, the constraint does not require that x affect S's experience. If non-sentient beings can have positive attitudes, a specification of AGENTIAL WELFARE can meet the constraint.

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[9] The sentientist should then say: Yes, all welfare subjects are sentient, but not all prudential goods and bads must be experienced. Yes, only sentient beings possess what it takes to accrue prudential value (e.g., the kind of desire-satisfaction or knowledge that can be prudentially good), but their levels of well-being do not supervene on their phenomenology.

If, say, success in one's rational aims (Scanlon 1998: 118-26) or goals (Keller 2009), as achieved by the agent and without phenomenality, contribute to well-being, then AGENTIAL WELFARE can meet the Resonance Constraint, making it part of an attractive theory of well-being.

Building on these ideas, suppose a cockroach is motivated to explore a new cache of food scraps and through perceptual attention and selective orientation aims at and obtains the best pieces. He acts intentionally and is (access) conscious of his goals and whether they obtain. He thereby accrues positive prudential value. One might object that this description of a cockroach's attitudes is insufficient to make claims about his welfare, on the assumption that he is not phenomenally conscious. But what does it take for pro-attitudes to count? Chris Heathwood (2019) interprets the notion of "genuine desires" relevant to welfare as involving affect (attraction, excitement, enthusiasm) as opposed to the sort of "behavioral", "dispositional", or "functional" desires I have ascribed to non-sentient agents in the previous section. Heathwood denies that *Star Trek*'s Spock and IBM's Deep Blue have desires that count. They can only 'care' about their success metaphorically. I've claimed that a creature can care without affect. Caring arises with agency. I've also granted that functional desires and the like might give rise to weaker (or fewer) interests than "genuine" (i.e. presumably conscious) ones. Maybe affect does make a huge difference and "genuine desires" carry more prudential weight. That doesn't mean mere agents can't be welfare subjects at all.

We can now put the pieces together. If agency contributes to well-being, then our assessment of an animal's well-being and its relevance to moral status must go beyond sentience. AGENTIAL VALUE explains AGENTIAL WELFARE, which supports AGENCY. In many species, agential and phenomenal prudential value overlap. This fact can explain (but does not justify) our intuition that sentience is necessary for welfare. If there are non-sentient agents, there can be non-sentient welfare subjects. This may include quintillions of arthropods and maybe even future digital beings.

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