

## Well-being: The concept

Some key theoretical distinctions:

- Well-being is not momentarily or static; it lasts over *time* and it develops. For any human, but especially for children, the temporal framework is obvious: The child's life at present and her or his life in the future must both be an indicator for her or his well-being: How does presence influence future? And how important are considerations about the future for present decision-making? Certainly, these questions are important for everybody's well-being.
- Well-being can be considered from *different perspectives* which refer to a range of criteria. It is either seen from a subjective perspective of happiness and life experiences, or from an objective perspective in regard to several criteria, such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP, which might be too narrow), the welfare system, the ability to work, or access to education and participation in society.
- Well-being can be considered on *different dimensions* in society. The hedonistic equation may balance out pain and pleasure from an individualistic level but may be problematic on another level, such as, for instance, the legal, ethical or social level.
- Well-being has been framed by *different philosophical approaches*, such as Eudaimonistic theories which emphasize the *good life*, deontological theories which focus on *autonomy* and *dignity*, or Utilitarian theories which emphasize the *quality of life* for the individual, for a group or for society. Models of care ethics or generative phenomenology focus, yet in different ways, on the relation between the humans, and hence, on the well-being in terms of a *relational being*. Each of these approaches and the corresponding model differs in its understanding of well-being but also in regard to the underlying norms and to its grounding claims and obligations.
- Well-being is framed by different disciplines and contexts, such as social, medical, political, educational, legal, or familial. Theorists and practitioners often disagree about the nature of what it means to live well.
- The challenge of theorizing the concept of well-being grounds in the basic tensions between (i) the present and the future views (*tension of time frames*), (ii) the subjective and objective perspectives (*tension of perspectives*), (iii) the individual, familial, social, and state levels (*tension of levels*), (iv) in the philosophical presuppositions, which are often not clarified (*presupposed philosophical model*), and (v) in the tension between different disciplines and contexts (*tension of discipline and contexts*).