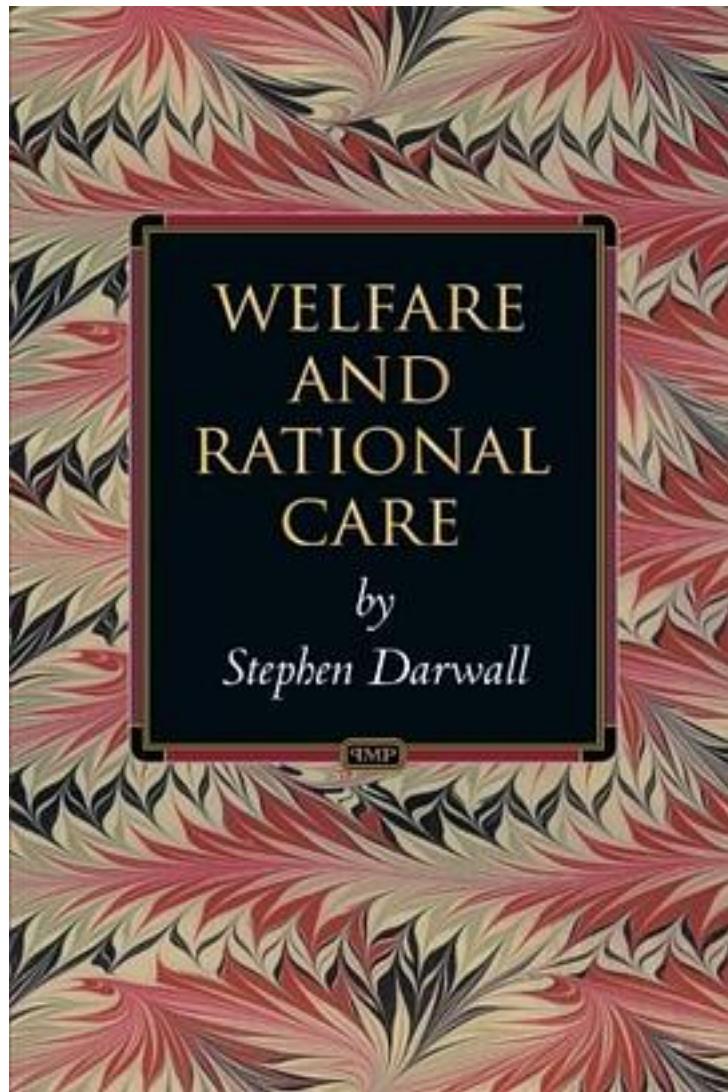


# Welfare and Rational Care



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What kind of life best ensures human welfare? Since the ancient Greeks, this question has been as central to ethical philosophy as to ordinary reflection. But what exactly is welfare? This question has suffered from relative neglect. And, as Stephen Darwall shows, it has done so at a price. Presenting a provocative new "rational care theory of welfare," Darwall proves that a proper understanding of welfare fundamentally changes how we think about what is best for people. Most philosophers have assumed that a person's welfare is what is good from her point of view, namely, what she has a distinctive reason to pursue. In the now standard terminology, welfare is assumed to have an "agent-relative normativity." Darwall by contrast argues that someone's good is what one should want for that person insofar as one cares for her. Welfare, in other words, is normative, but not peculiarly for the person whose welfare is at stake. In addition, Darwall makes the radical proposal that something's contributing to someone's welfare is the same thing as its being something one ought to want for her own sake, insofar as one cares. Darwall defends this theory with clarity, precision, and elegance, and with a subtle understanding of the place of sympathetic concern in the rich psychology of sympathy and empathy. His forceful arguments will change how we understand a concept central to ethics and our understanding of human bonds and human choices.

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