

# RESEARCH STATEMENT

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I primarily work in *ethics* and *philosophy of religion*.

My research in **ethics** centers on theories of well-being and their impact. A theory of well-being is a theory of what is good *for* individuals, in other words, a theory of self-interest. Well-being is worth studying in its own right, but it also plays a pivotal role in normative ethics, theories of the good life, and philosophical discussions of the meaning of life. I am particularly interested in the distinction between subjective and objective theories of well-being and the relationship between theories of well-being and theories of the good life.

I am currently developing a subjective theory of well-being that identifies faring well with self-fulfillment and pleasure. This view contrasts with the family of (broadly) Aristotelian theories—often called eudaimonism or perfectionism—that tie well-being to flourishing as the *kind* of thing one is. My theory, on the other hand, focuses on the flourishing of one's *individual* or *particular* nature. I further argue that nature-fulfillment theories, even self-fulfillment ones, cannot satisfactorily explain the goodness of pleasure or badness of pain (see my [writing sample](#) for a defense of this claim). This leads me to identify well-being with self-fulfillment and pleasure, rather than self-fulfillment alone.

I am also interested in the relationship between theories of well-being and theories of the good life. Many philosophers, especially virtue ethicists, lump the two together, but they are at least conceptually distinct. Consider a wealthy antebellum slave owner who enjoys a rich home and social life but cares little about the harsh working conditions of their slaves. Pretheoretically, this looks like a case in which one increases their well-being at a cost to the overall goodness of their life—my work on well-being aims to preserve this intuition. If I want to live a good life—a life that is choice-worthy on the whole—I will likely have to make sacrifices to my own well-being.

My research in **philosophy of religion** is divided between issues in Christian philosophical theology and issues in theism, broadly construed. Most Christian philosophers working on well-being advance objective

theories, but my dissertation, “Well-being and Christian Theism,” proposes a subjective theory of well-being. Objective theories tend to alienate welfare subjects from their own good. I argue that my theory better addresses alienation concerns without compromising Christian doctrinal claims—most notably, that human persons are best off in union with God and the saints in the new heaven and the new earth. (For more details, see my [dissertation summary](#) and [chapter 1 draft](#).) I also work on more traditional problems in philosophy of religion. Here, my work tends to focus on the problem of evil and the coherence of theism.