



Pergamon

Aggression and Violent Behavior  
7 (2002) 513–528

---

---

AGGRESSION  
AND  
VIOLENT  
BEHAVIOR

---

---

# Good lives and the rehabilitation of offenders Promises and problems

Tony Ward\*

*Department of Criminology, University of Melbourne, 234 Queensberry Street, Melbourne 3010, Australia  
CORE—The Public Correctional Enterprise, Melbourne, Australia*

Received 11 November 2001; accepted 12 November 2001

---

## Abstract

In this paper, I argue that every rehabilitation program presupposes conceptions of possible good lives for offenders and, associated with this, an understanding of the necessary internal and external conditions for living such lives. I first clarify the notion of good lives and outline its necessary features. Second, I establish the conclusion that all offender programs presuppose a conception of good lives. In order to make the argument a little more concrete, I demonstrate how a state-of-the-art treatment program for sex offenders and research on the process of offender change presuppose such a conception and expose the problems evident in the way they engage with this dimension of rehabilitation. Third, I argue that it is necessary for individuals working to rehabilitate offenders to explicitly construct conceptions of good lives for different offenders and to use these conceptions to shape the behavior change process.

© 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Offender rehabilitation; Good lives; Needs

---

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, I argue that every rehabilitation program presupposes conceptions of possible good lives for offenders and, associated with this, an understanding of the necessary internal and external conditions for living such lives. By the term “good lives” I am referring to ways

---

\* Department of Criminology, University of Melbourne, 234 Queensberry Street, Melbourne 3010, Australia.  
*E-mail address:* t.ward@criminology.unimelb.edu.au (T. Ward).

of living that are beneficial and fulfilling for individuals. The primary goods comprising good lives are outcomes sought by individuals for their own sake and typically reflect propensities evident in basic human needs. The conception of a possible good life for an offender should also include a concrete understanding of the possible ways of living that are realistic for him or her. It should take note of each offender's capabilities, temperament, interests, skills, deep commitments (i.e., basic value system and preferred ways of living in the world, for example, as a teacher or provider), and support networks. The notion of primary goods overlaps to some extent with other motivational constructs outlined in research on psychological well-being. For example, the goals associated with personal strivings (Emmons, 1996) and the domains of life satisfaction identified by Cummins (1996), that is, material well-being, health, productivity, intimacy, safety, community, and emotional well-being.

The conception of good lives or well-being that underlie rehabilitation programs is what gives them their directedness. It effectively links identification of risk factors or psychological problems with the desired outcome of reduced recidivism. In other words, a necessary condition for the reduction of offending is the instillation of ways of living that are more fulfilling and coherent. That is, individuals are unlikely to refrain from offending if their lives are characterized by an absence of valued outcomes. In fact, I suggest that one of the reasons individuals commit crimes is that they are perceived to be rewarding in some ways, a criminal lifestyle represents one way of achieving personal goods (Ward & Stewart, *in press-Psychology, Crime & Law*). It may be the only way of living that is judged capable of this outcome. Thus, one of my core assumptions is that, in order to rehabilitate offenders, it is necessary to instill in them the skills, knowledge, and resources to live different kinds of lives.

Of course, therapists cannot dictate exactly what kind of life this should be. Offenders need to make their own choices, and this is guided by a conception of good lives and the belief that it is possible to achieve different ways of living in the world. The clinicians' task is to focus on establishment of the capabilities and skills needed to meet each offender's basic needs and therefore to increase the chances of him or her living a good life, that is, one characterized by the instantiation of basic goods or valued outcomes. The rehabilitation process is crucially dependent on identifying the internal and external obstacles that have been thwarting an individual's ability to meet his or her fundamental needs. These may be defensive strategies, personal and vocational skill deficits, maladaptive attitudes and beliefs, and lack of social support and integration.

Although the role of values in the rehabilitation of offenders has often been acknowledged (Marshall, 1999), there has been little explicit discussion of the ways in which this should occur. Too often, the conception of good lives in an offender program is unfocused and vague, for example, simply stating that the goal is to increase individuals' prosocial skills or to enhance their capacity to establish intimate relationships (Ward, Hudson, & Keenan, 2001).

In this paper, I will first clarify the notion of good lives and outline its necessary features. Second, I will establish the conclusion that all offender programs presuppose a conception of good lives. In order to make the argument a little more concrete, I will demonstrate how a state of the art treatment program for sex offenders presupposes such a conception and expose the problems evident in the way it engages with this dimension of rehabilitation. Third, I then

argue that it is necessary for individuals working to rehabilitate offenders to explicitly construct conceptions of good lives for different offenders and to use these conceptions to shape the behavior change process. Finally, I will conclude by suggesting ways in which these problems can be avoided and also sketch out a possible framework to guide the rehabilitation of offenders.

## 2. Conception of good lives

### 2.1. *What is a good life?*

Primary goods are actions or states of affairs that are viewed as intrinsically beneficial to human beings and are therefore sought for their own sake rather than as means to some more fundamental ends. While instrumental goods are actions or states of affairs that reliably result in primary goods, for example, possessing language or being in a relationship that leads to the primary human good of intimacy or relatedness. A good life becomes possible when an individual possesses the necessary conditions for achieving primary goods, has access to primary goods, and lives a life characterized by the instantiation of these goods. The chances of living a good life depend on the degree to which the facts of the body, self, and social life are established in human beings:

“The facts of the body, self, and social life constitute part of the foundation of human motivation. For we all want to protect the conditions in which we can obtain the benefits and avoid the harms these human characteristics define. Thus, the facts of the body, self, and social life establish what must be the minimum conditions for human welfare. To jeopardize these conditions is to harm us, and thus it is evil; to protect the conditions is to benefit us, and so it is good” (Kekes, 1989, p. 28).

The basic facts of the body (e.g., physiological needs met), self (e.g., establishment of the psychological capacities necessary to function in the world), and social life (e.g., social arrangements that facilitate the achievement of primary goods for an individual) provide the minimal necessary conditions for human well-being (Kekes, 1989). The ability to form a conception of good lives and to realize such a conception in the world requires certain capacities, for example, the ability to plan and make decisions and to implement plans embodying fundamental commitments. The presence of the internal and external conditions (facts of the body, self, and social life) enables an individual to form a conception of good lives and realize this conceptualization in concrete ways. That is, he or she is able to put into action a plan for living that provides access to primary goods by the way of certain commitments, living arrangements, and actions (see below). I suggest that primary goods are derived from the facts of the body, self, and social life in that such facts basically reflect fundamental human needs and the institutional arrangements necessary to met these needs. Thus, facts of the self point to the need for autonomy, mastery, and positive self-evaluation, facts of the body to basic physiological needs, and facts of the social life to the need for relatedness and the institutional arrangements that underlie this need (e.g., family, organ-

izations, etc.). Primary goods emerge out of these needs, and instrumental or secondary goods provide concrete ways of securing these goods, for example, certain types of work, relationships, language ability, etc. The establishment of these facts cannot guarantee that an individual will live a flourishing or fulfilling life, as adverse external events or problems may destroy the possibility of this occurring. However, without the possession of such skills, capacities, and opportunities, there is very little or no chance of living any sort of decent and happy life. Thus, the internal and external conditions required to meet the needs associated with the above facts are necessary but not sufficient for living a fulfilling or good life.

A conception of good lives is closely associated with explicit assumptions about what constitutes a fulfilling or worthwhile life and therefore has a strong normative basis (i.e., embodies fundamental values). This life is chosen by the individual, fashioned to some conceptualization of good lives, and yields a sense of personal identity and meaning. There may be room for the notion of natural basic goods (see below), but this needs to be tempered by the recognition that any conception of a worthwhile life is at least partly a social construction. Therefore, a key aim of rehabilitation should be to identify the internal and external conditions necessary to achieve primary human goods for a given offender.

A conception of good lives is a coherent vision of what constitutes a fulfilling (i.e., beneficial) life for individuals and spells out how the welfare of human beings is to be obtained. The concept of good lives as I understand it is essentially prudential rather than moral in nature (Den Uyl, 1991; Kekes, 1989). That is, the focus is on the factors that comprise a fulfilling or beneficial life for *an individual* rather than on the moral obligations he or she has toward others. Of course, for the purposes of this paper, I assume that a necessary condition of living a prudentially good life is that a person does not behave in an immoral or socially destructive manner.

The term “good lives” is preferred to the singular “good life” as I accept the view that there is no one ideal or preferred lifestyle for any given individual (Den Uyl, 1991; Rasmussen, 1999). A general plan or conception can be unpacked into related, but diverse, specific kinds of lives. For example, a conception that specifies working as a craftsman, establishing intimate and deep relations, establishing links with the church, taking up volunteer work, being physically active, etc., can take a number of related, although distinct forms, each faithful to the general conception.

The conception of good lives has a number of interrelated features (see Kekes, 1989; Rasmussen, 1999). First, human goods are viewed as objective and tied to certain ways of living that, if pursued, involve the actualization of potentialities that are distinctively human. Second, human well-being comprises a number of basic goods that contribute to it but that are also worthwhile ends in themselves. For example, knowledge, health, and intimate relationships contribute to a happy or fulfilling life but are intrinsically valuable in themselves. In addition, when we love, seek to understand, and function autonomously, we are expressing our basic potentiality as human beings; they are natural ends derived from our basic nature. Third, human well-being is individualized and only exists in relation to a person’s particular set of circumstances, abilities, and opportunities. The basic goods that comprise human well-being cannot be read off human nature like some kind of recipe and combined in the same way for all individuals. Different people will require slightly different weightings of the basic

goods or valued activities, although all will have the same set of basic goods. The set of generic goods will typically include such things as health, knowledge, creativity, friendship, positive self-regard, autonomy, but the actual mix for each individual will be relative to his or her abilities, circumstances, personal history, and social supports. Thus, there is no such thing as *the good life* or model of human well-being per se, there are multiple possibilities. Fourth, human well-being is a self-directed activity and therefore springs from each individual's own choices and effort; it cannot be a result of factors beyond the control of the person in question. Fifth, because human beings are naturally social animals any kind of flourishing life can only be achieved in a social context. In other words, individuals are mutually interdependent and can only achieve personal goods if others provide them with the necessary social, physical, and psychological nourishment. Finally, a conception should be relatively coherent and the relationship between the various goods outlined and the conditions necessary for the achievement of such a life, outlined.

## 2.2. *The origin of human goods*

An important issue concerns the source of primary human goods and whether they are rooted in the nature of human beings or totally conditioned by the social circumstances encountered by each individual (Kekes, 1989). Arnhart (1998) argues persuasively that “the good is the desirable . . . human ethics is natural insofar as it satisfies natural human desires” (p. 29). He further adds “I call these desires natural because they are so deeply rooted in human nature that they will manifest themselves in some manner across history in every human society” (p. 29). According to Arnhart, there are at least 20 different kinds of natural desires or goods including religious and intellectual understanding, sexual mating, familial bonding, parental care, friendship, beauty, wealth, social ranking, and practical reasoning. Because these desires represent basic goods, then political and social systems can be evaluated in terms of how well they promote these goods relative to other possible arrangements.

The research literature on human needs and evolutionary psychology indicates that individuals are naturally inclined to seek certain ends (Arnhart, 1998; Kekes, 1989). From a psychological perspective, Deci and Ryan (2000) have developed the Self-Determination Theory of Needs, which states that human beings are inherently active, self-directed organisms who are naturally predisposed to seek autonomy, relatedness, and competence. *Autonomy* refers to individuals' propensity to self-regulate and organize their experiences and to function as unified, integrated beings. *Relatedness* refers to individuals' propensity to establish a sense of emotional connectedness to other human beings and to seek the subsequent goals of feeling loved and cared for. *Competence* refers to the propensity to establish a sense of mastery in one's environment, to seek challenges and to increasingly master them. They define needs as “innate psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being” (p. 229). Human needs outline the conditions essential for psychological well-being and fulfillment, and individuals can only flourish if they are met. The failure to meet the three basic needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence will inevitably cause psychological distress and result in the acquisition of

maladaptive defenses. In other words, thwarted basic needs result in stunted lives, psychological problems, and social maladjustment. Under these circumstances, individuals acquire substitute needs that give them *some* degree of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. However, the goals associated with these proxy needs are likely to result in a poorly integrated self, ultimately frustrating and unsatisfying relationships, self-esteem disturbances, and a sense of personal helplessness. The fulfillment of all three fundamental needs is a necessary prerequisite for living a deeply satisfying and fulfilling life. Additionally, the exercise of basic needs is constitutive of human nature and, in part, defines who we are; they are not means to some other, more fundamental end. Deci and Ryan argue that in order to experience a sense of enduring well-being, all three needs have to be fulfilled; social conditions that pit one need against the other are likely to result in defensive motives and the development of substitute needs. The outcome of this forced accommodation is reduced levels of well-being.

Further support for the ubiquity of goal or goods seeking behavior comes from the self-regulation literature (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). As Emmons (1996) states “why are goals important for well-being. Simply, it is because that is how people are designed. Goal-directedness is a human enterprise” (p. 331). Self-regulation consists of the internal and external processes that allow an individual to engage in goal-directed actions over time, and in different contexts (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). This includes the initial selection of goals, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and modification of behavior to accomplish one’s goals in an optimal or satisfactory manner (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1998). Goals are key constructs in theories of self-regulation and function to guide the planning, implementation, and evaluation of behavior. In essence, goals are desired states or situations (i.e., valued states or goods) that individuals strive to achieve or to avoid, and as such are important components of personality (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Emmons, 1996). Arguably, they have their origin in basic human needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When a goal is salient or is activated, it functions as a reference value or standard of comparison, and subsequent information concerning an individual’s behavior (and its consequences) are compared to this standard. The relevant cues can be internal, for example, emotions, or external factors, such as the responses of other people. If there is a discrepancy between the perceived information and the internal standard or goal, then the individual attempts to change his or her behavior to match the desired outcome.

I suggest that while there are some basic human tendencies or primary needs related to our common biology, these are always mediated by specific social learning experiences. The basic goods constitutive of human well-being are derived from categorical or basic needs, and these needs are essentially expressions of human nature (Ward & Stewart, *in press*). However, the way they are met and the different ways of living available in the world reflect the contingencies of social and cultural circumstances. The nature of the primary goods sought by individuals and their weightings are formed in specific cultural contexts and represent individuals’ interpretations of interpersonal and social events. This knowledge is clearly influenced by culturally derived beliefs, values, and norms (D’Andrade, 1995). A conception of good lives stipulates or recommends certain kinds of living for individuals and in its application to individual lives provides a plan for living well that takes into account the skills,

temperament, opportunities, and social context of each person. Whether or not a conception of good lives can be actualized depends crucially on the existence of specific internal and external conditions. Internal conditions refer to psychological characteristics such as skills, beliefs, attitudes and values. External conditions refer to social, cultural, and interpersonal factors that facilitate the development of the above psychological characteristics and include effective parenting, education, vocational training, social supports, and the opportunity to pursue valued goals. Human goods reflective of a fulfilling lifestyle are derived from, or made possible by, the meeting of basic psychological needs and the possession of the necessary internal and external conditions. These goods include friendship, enjoyable work, loving relationships, creative pursuits, sexual satisfaction, positive self-regard, and an intellectually challenging environment. The presence of internal and external obstacles results in impaired social and psychological functioning and therefore a less fulfilling life. The rehabilitation process is crucially dependent on identifying the internal and external obstacles that have been thwarting an individual's ability to secure and to retain the basic goods constitutive of good lives. Rehabilitation should focus on identifying the various obstacles preventing offenders from living a balanced and fulfilling life and to then equip them with the skills, beliefs, values, and supports needed to counteract their influence.

### 2.3. *Conclusions*

Human beings naturally seek primary goods, so called because they are viewed as desirable or good ends in themselves. There are three classes of primary goods derived from the facts of the body, self, and social life, and the basic human needs associated with such facts. The primary goods of the *body* include basic physiological needs for sex, food, warmth, water, sleep, and the healthy functioning of the body as a whole. The primary goods of the *self* are derived from the basic needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Each of these needs is associated with a cluster of related primary goods. For example, relatedness can be further broken down into goods of intimacy, understanding, empathy, support, sexual pleasure, sharing, etc. The primary goods of the *social life* include social support, family life, meaningful work opportunities, and access to recreational activities. A conception of good lives should be based on these three classes of primary goods and specify the forms that they will take in each individual's life plan. The possibility of constructing and translating such conceptions of good lives into actions and concrete ways of living depends crucially on the possession of internal and external conditions (capabilities). The specific form that a conception will take depends on the actual abilities, interests and opportunities of each individual and the weightings he or she gives to specific primary goods. The weightings or priority allocated to specific primary goods is constitutive of an offender's personal identity and spells out the kind of life sought and, relatedly, the kind of person he or she would like to be. However, because human beings naturally seek a range of primary goods or desired states it is important that all the classes of primary goods are addressed in a conception of good lives; they should be ordered and coherently related to each other. For example, if an offender decides to pursue a life characterized by service to the community, a core aspect of his or her identity will revolve around the primary goods of relatedness and social life. The offender's

sense of mastery, self-esteem, perception of autonomy, control, etc., will all reflect this overarching good and its associated subclusters of goods (e.g., intimacy, caring, honesty, etc.). They should be organized in ways that ensure each primary good has a role to play and can be secured or experienced by the individual concerned. A conception that is fragmented and lacks coherency is likely to lead to frustration and harm to the individual concerned, as well as a life lacking an overall sense of purpose and meaning (see below).

### 3. Conceptions of good lives and offender rehabilitation

In the last section, I defined the construct of good lives and discussed the features that constitute this concept. It remains to establish the claim that every rehabilitation program for offenders presupposes a conception of good lives. I have three main arguments. The first sets out to demonstrate that rehabilitation programs, as a matter of fact, do allude to goods or values. I achieve this by way of the example of a sex offender treatment program and a consideration of a study by Maruna (2001), which examined the differences between offenders who desist and those who persist in committing further crimes. This first argument is *descriptively normative*, describing what values are, as a matter of fact, evident in the treatment program and rehabilitation process. In the second argument, I aim to prove that every rehabilitation program necessarily presupposes a conception of good lives, however rudimentary. That is, attempts to treat offenders are always guided by primary goods or values. The third argument states that all programs ought to have an *explicit* conception of good lives to guide rehabilitation. That is, the relationship between treatment and primary goods is *prescriptively normative*. Every program ought to have a conception of good lives underlying its assessment and treatment strategies.

#### 3.1. Offender rehabilitation programs allude to primary goods

##### 3.1.1. Treatment programs for sex offenders

A careful consideration of the research and clinical literature on child sexual abuse suggests that there are four clusters of problems or symptoms typically found among adults who sexually abuse children: emotional regulation problems; intimacy/social skill deficits; deviant sexual arousal; and cognitive/empathy distortions (Marshall, 1999). These core clusters of phenomena are typically the foci of interventions in sex offender treatment program (Marshall, 1996, 1999). Each of the problem clusters can be further broken down into subcategories, for example, intimacy deficits may manifest as excessive approval seeking or emotional detachment.

I suggest that sexual offenders may exhibit different types of psychological characteristics, each profile associated with variations in the four problem clusters mentioned above. Thus, differences between offenders will be a function of the severity, direction, and pervasiveness of the problems rather than simply whether or not they are absent or present. For example, unreliable monitoring of internal states or the application of ineffective coping strategies may cause emotional regulation deficits. Sexually abusive behavior with a child may be a function

of entrenched deviant sexual preferences or situational opportunism. Additionally, dysfunctional implicit theories (cognitive distortions) may predispose an individual to offend, a stable dynamic risk factor. Another offender might only display distorted thinking when seeking to excuse his reprehensible behavior. Finally, interpersonal conflicts may be the result of enduring intimacy deficits or a failure to apply perfectly adequate social skills due to a lack of motivation or a compromised mental state. In other words, all offenders display problems in each of these four domains. However, the type of deficit is a function of the particular causes generating each individual's behavior.

A state-of-the-art treatment program for offenders who sexually abuse children should address the above problem clusters through the utilization of cognitive–behavioral strategies (Ward et al., 2001). The majority of cognitive–behavioral treatment programs for sex offenders are entirely group based with individual therapy kept to a minimum, that is, sufficient only to enable a resident to participate in group. I suggest that seven core components or modules underlie effective cognitive–behavioral treatment for child molesters: norm building, cognitive restructuring, arousal reconditioning, victim impact and empathy, mood management, relationship skills (including problem solving), and relapse prevention. Each of these modules sets out to provide offenders with the necessary skills and knowledge to modify the particular problems that are targeted. Alongside this technical task, is also an indirect attempt to highlight certain primary goods or values.

To briefly illustrate, the overarching framework of programs for men who sexually abuse children is typically that of relapse prevention. The aim is to teach offenders ways of managing high-risk situations through the utilization of adaptive coping responses. The overarching value evident in this type of treatment is that of risk or harm reduction rather than the enhancement of capabilities to enable offenders' to live better lives. In the module *norm building*, the acceptance of personal responsibility and respect for other individuals as persons are stressed. In addition, there is an attempt to link offending behavior with the meeting of offenders' needs at the expense of those of the victim. Moreover, issues pertaining to personal identity are raised when it is pointed out that the offender is someone who has committed a sexual offence rather than being essentially a sexual offender. The primary goods of the self and social life are obliquely referred to in this module and are thought to motivate the offender to acquire a new understanding of his abusive behavior.

Second, in the module *cognitive restructuring* the major focus is on the values that are associated with knowledge generation, for example, evaluating each offenders account of his sexually abusive actions by comparing it to alternative explanations in terms of its explanatory depth, accuracy, interpretation of “evidence, simplicity, depth, consistency, etc.” In addition, self-esteem and identity issues are raised by the careful management of challenges and the therapist is careful to reinforce honest and thoughtful responses on the behalf of the offender. The aim here is to help the offender disengage his core self from his sexually abusive actions and to also learn to honestly appraise his behavior. Third, in the module *victim impact and empathy*, the primary goods evident concern the need to take the well-being and perspective of other people into account when interacting with them. The putative mental states and needs of the victim become a focus and remind the offender to value equally the well-being of others alongside his own. In addition, there is an appreciation

of the nature of harms (related to deprivation of good such as self-autonomy, choice, etc.) that can be inflicted on victims of sexual offenses. Finally, in the module *relationship skills*, the goods associated with different types of relationships are canvassed with the focus being on establishing a link between each individual's need for safety and their habitual interpersonal strategies. The aim is to provide offenders with the capacity to form deeply satisfying intimate and supportive relationships and thus to cease using deviant sex as a substitute for such relationships.

As stated above, it is interesting to note that the orientation is that of harm reduction and risk management and, therefore, there is little acknowledgement of the goods/values that actually underpin the program. There is also no attempt to tailor treatment to the needs of individual offenders based on a conception of good lives. The plan that offenders develop on leaving the therapy program is based on risk or relapse management rather than a consideration of how they are to achieve important goods through the construction of a meaningful life plan. It is also clear that all the modules described above appeal indirectly to certain primary goods or value in order to justify their content and to motivate offenders.

### 3.1.2. *Desisting from crime*

In a ground-breaking study, Maruna (2001) interviewed offenders who were both desisting from, and persisting with, lives of crime. Desistence was defined as the process of remaining crime free in individuals who had long histories of persistent criminal offending. His approach was phenomenological and based on the assumption that “to successfully maintain this abstinence from crime, ex-offenders need to *make sense* of their lives. This sense-making commonly takes the form of a life story or self-narrative” (p. 7). Maruna proposed that, in order to be effectively rehabilitated, individuals need to establish a coherent, prosocial identity. This requires the construction of a narrative that made sense of their earlier crimes and experiences of adversity and created a bridge between their undesirable life and the adoption of new ways of living. The rationale for focusing on self-narratives was the considerable amount of empirical research indicating “that internal self-narratives are used to guide and organize human behavior patterns” (p. 39).

In his study, Maruna compared the self-narratives of desisting ex-offenders and those of a carefully matched sample of active offenders. He interviewed 65 offenders, 30 of whom were classified as desisting, 20 as persisting, and 15 were designated as neither one nor the other. The results revealed that there was no real difference in the personality traits between the two groups, with both exhibiting more deviant profiles than normal adults. Thus, desisting offenders were just as anti authority, rebellious, etc., as those who continued to commit crimes; the difference appeared to reside in their construction of new identities.

Persistent offenders appeared to live their lives according to a *condemnation script*. Basically, they saw themselves as victims of deterministic forces and believed that the structure and tone of their lives were set in stone. There was very little possibility of a change for the better and an impoverished sense of personal agency or self-efficacy; they felt powerless to change the fate that was prescribed for them. Maruna suggested that antisocial behavior could be plausibly viewed as an attempt to restore a sense of personal control or agency. Such individuals appeared to have a clear sense of what characterized a good life but

believed that they lacked the means and/or opportunity to achieve the goals associated with this ideal.

Desisting offenders appeared to live their lives according to a *redemption script*, where negative past experiences were reinterpreted as providing a pathway or conduit to the forging of a new identity and more authentic ways of living. In this script or narrative, the offender viewed himself or herself as an essentially good person who was corrupted or overwhelmed by external influences and who got involved with crime and drugs to assert some sort of power within otherwise bleak circumstances. However, this heroic attempt at recovering a sense of agency and control only led to a vicious cycle of drug abuse and further crime until a pivotal event or person intervened to “rescue” them. The key features of such narrative were the discovery of the offender’s “true self” (i.e., skills, abilities, roles, traits, etc.), a sense of empowerment and control over his or her destiny and life, and the desire to be productive and give something back to the community, family, and other offenders. This latter feature encompassed the domain of work and a sense of purpose and meaning in life. A notable aspect of desisting individuals was the recognition of a need to be embedded in a social network and to be viewed as a reformed or a new person by members of the community.

The different self-narratives associated with desisting and persisting offenders were associated with distinct clusters of goods and corresponding conceptions of good lives. For those individuals who continued to offend, “making good” was a distant dream, and they were resigned to eking out the best lives that they could under difficult circumstances. Primary human goods were frequently unobtainable, for example, the goods associated with positive self-evaluations and autonomy. They reported little hope of being able to live purposeful lives shaped by goals representing basic commitments; they viewed their lives as imposed on them with little opportunity to become involved in personally meaningful or valuable projects. There appeared to be a lack of coherency in their conceptions of good lives and the goods actually pursued were secondary rather than primary (e.g., money, pleasure, status, or material goods) and therefore unlikely to be experienced as personally fulfilling. The personal identities that linked the various goods together were also fractured and typically negative in nature, for example, a survivor, victim of the system, or someone who was feared or admired by other criminals.

By way of contrast, the primary goods evident in the lives of desisting offenders were clustered around new and adaptive personal identities. The goods associated with control, empowerment, self-respect, being socially valued and supported, family relationships, meaningful work (paid or voluntary), and a sense of autonomy were all evident. However, the weighting of the various goods, and the forms they took were tailored to each offender’s circumstances, interests, and capacities. It is noteworthy that the core features of the new self-narratives mirrored the primary goods generated by basic human needs outlined earlier (see [Deci & Ryan, 2000](#)): goods of relatedness (e.g., social connectedness and a sense of belonging), goods of autonomy (e.g., sense of empowerment, self-control), and goods of competence (e.g., meaningful work, positive self-esteem). The major task for offenders attempting to live a crime-free life was to “make good” by working out a different way to live based on a clear set of personal values and a coherent self-narrative. It was not enough to simply fashion a new conception of the self; it was necessary to learn new skills, identify and

link primary goods, identify opportunities, seek and accept social support, and translate these changes into actions that reflected a new identity. Thus, these was an objective aspect to the kinds of self-narratives fashioned by offenders who were intent on forsaking crime, and a sense in which they discovered for the first time what it was to live in an authentic manner. It is also clear that such conceptions and their associated self-narratives are context dependent and socially embedded; it is simply not possible to secure the primary goods associated with a desisting identity on ones own.

### *3.2. Offender rehabilitation programs necessarily presuppose primary goods*

The above two examples demonstrate that, as a matter of fact, offenders who are serious about relinquishing an offending lifestyle seek primary goods or valued outcomes and that the securing of these goods (embedded in a self-narrative) are thought to be crucial components of successful rehabilitation. However, even if rehabilitation programs and the process of “making good” are based on such values, it does not follow that this is a necessary part of effective treatment. It may be neither necessary nor sufficient to focus clinical attention on the identification and promotion of values; it is possible that the relationships described above between primary goods and desisting from crime are merely coincidental. In this section, I aim to establish the conclusion that offender programs necessarily presuppose conceptions of good lives and the human goods that comprise them.

In view of the fact that all individuals naturally tend to seek certain goods and that these goods reflect their conceptualization of possible good lives, it follows that offenders do the same. The problem resides in their way of realizing primary goods and in the form of life that embodies their conceptualizations of good lives. For example, a violent man may seek the goods of intimacy and support through destructive and aggressive relationships. Moreover, the goods associated with positive self-regard may be sought through intimidation and aggressive actions. Alternatively, the problem could lie in the fact that offenders do not seek a wide range of human goods and, therefore, their lives lack scope and fulfillment. Their conceptualization of good lives could lack coherence and, therefore, they may fail to obtain all the human goods necessary for a sense of well-being. It may also be that they lack the internal and external conditions (e.g., intimacy skills, the ability to regulate emotions, and effective problem solving skills) necessary to achieve primary human goods in socially acceptable ways.

In light of the above comments, it follows that any rehabilitation program aiming to change offenders’ behaviors must attempt to teach them to achieve primary goods through different means and/or to change or broaden the ranges of goods sought. This means that therapists attempting to rehabilitate offenders ought to be guided by an awareness of the role that values and primary human goods play in facilitating well-being. In other words, the rehabilitation of offenders should be guided by a conceptualization of good lives. While the general features of such a model will apply to all offenders, its application to individuals requires the consideration of the internal and external obstacles that currently frustrate a particular person’s capacity to live a satisfying, prosocial life. Therefore, any rehabilitation program

necessarily requires a conception of good lives that incorporates the primary human goods and specifies how they are to be achieved for a given offender.

### 3.3. *Offender programs ought to be guided by a conception of good lives*

In the above two sections, I attempted to secure two related conclusions. First, that, as a matter of fact, rehabilitation programs for offenders do promote certain human goods or values. Second, that not only is the dependence on values a matter of contingent fact, it is also necessary. In other words, it is not possible to shift individuals from an antisocial lifestyle to a prosocial one without promoting certain values or human goods. I now want to make the case that, in order to do this effectively, it is necessary to explicitly plan the rehabilitation of individual offenders guided by a conception of good lives. In order to support this argument, I will discuss a number of problems evident in offender programs that are caused by the lack of attention to normative issues.

The first problem is that there is rarely an acknowledgement of the significant role that prudential values play in the treatment of offenders. In fact, researchers such as [Andrews and Bonta \(1998\)](#) stress that their approach to rehabilitation is value free in some important respects. They state that the relationship of criminogenic needs (rational treatment targets) is essentially an empirical process. This is a mistake. Rather, researchers detect dynamic characteristics that appear to be associated with disvalued outcomes (crime) and make normative judgments that such risk factors or predictors are needs. Thus, there are independent value judgments that the factors in question are related to harmful outcomes, and, additionally, if needs are viewed in the categorical sense, that ultimately failure to meet such needs will result in serious harm and contribute to social maladjustment and antisocial behavior. In other words, needs reflect both factual and normative judgments and also an understanding of the fundamental architecture of the human mind. The failure to acknowledge the role that values or human goods play is to run the risk that the values that are implicitly embedded (necessarily so, see above) in a treatment program will not be critically scrutinized. In addition, because there is little awareness of the normative underpinning of therapy, therapists will not make the connection between skills necessary to live an offending free lifestyle (i.e., develop and implement a conception of good lives) and the primary human goods such skills are designed to secure.

A related problem is that any discussion or utilization of the concept of human goods is often at too general a level to be useful for rehabilitation planning. The concept of good lives is a *contextual* one, where the basic human goods sought by all individuals are translated into different forms (i.e., concrete realizations). Such distinct forms reflect the weighting individuals give to different values and their capacities, social supports, and opportunities. In a sense, a conceptualization of good lives is tied together by personal identity, a way of characterizing the direction and meaning of each person's life. To offer offenders overly general or "prepackaged lives" (even if only tacitly) is a mistake. Such abstract conceptions lack applicability to individuals and therefore suffer from irrelevance and meaninglessness.

The reliance on manual-based interventions in the treatment of offenders can add to this problem. Because therapists tend to follow standardized procedures, they may fail to consider

the appropriate form of life for a given individual. Instead, they may uncritically accept the generic conception of good lives implicit in the treatment manual. For example, with sex offenders, it is often assumed that all offenders should be able to establish personally satisfying, intimate relationships with other adults. Therefore, therapy may emphasize the value of personal disclosure, learning how to be mutually supportive and acquiring the ability to listen to another person's feelings and opinions. However, the valuing of relationships to this degree may not be appropriate for certain individuals and may even be unrealistic and harmful. They may place more significance on developing vocational skills or consorting with friends rather than intimates. While it may be true that most individuals need some degree of human contact, certainly, there are individual differences in the type and intensity of relations preferred (and needed). In addition, some offenders may be so damaged by a history of abusive relationships that it is unrealistic to expect them to ever be able to establish and maintain deeply intimate relationships. The point is that conceptions of good lives require a consideration of the offenders' particular profile of capacities, preferences, commitments, etc., and the possible opportunities available in the world. It is a question of trying to ensure that a full range of human goods (from all three sources) are accessible but accepting that they can (and should) be realized in varying ways for different offenders.

Another problem is that the failure to explicitly acknowledge the construct of good lives can result in a lack of coherence in treatment planning and in the life plans that offenders construct during this process. Psychological research suggests that a lack of coherency among goals is associated with lower levels of subjective well-being and less life satisfaction (Emmons, 1996). It is important to be aware of the guiding conception or theme embodied in preferred ways of living and to ensure that the three types of primary goods are linked in a manner that reflects this meaning. For example, one offender may place most emphasis on his being a "family man" and therefore stress the goods associated with being a good parent, partner, and provider. His hobbies and outside interests would be more likely than not to involve his partner and children, and he would prefer his support and peer groups to share these values. Basic human goods associated with work, positive self-regard, autonomy, creativity, health, meaning, etc., would all take a form that reflects this overarching value and his associated personal identity. Alternatively, another individual might see himself as a religious or spiritual person and want to shape his life around the core goods of spiritual growth and community service. In other words, when constructing conceptions of good lives, it is necessary to order or rank the importance of the various human goods. It is the task of those involved in an offender's rehabilitation to make sure that he or she has the necessary skills and capacities to realize a particular conception of good lives. Of course, any conception has to be evaluated in terms of its feasibility (in view of the person's abilities, opportunities, etc.) and, most crucially, its potential to result in a fulfilling life for the *specific individual* in question.

A related point is that because of the tendency to focus on the technology of behavior change, most learning-oriented rehabilitation programs fail to appreciate the importance of personal identity and its relationship to conceptions of good lives (Maruna, 2001). A necessary step in desisting from a criminal career appears to be the construal of the self as someone who does not need to offend and who is able to secure important goods in socially

acceptable and personally rewarding ways (for a fascinating study of the change process, see [Maruna, 2001](#)). The process of reconstructing a personal identity depends crucially on fashioning a conception of good lives. Such a conception specifies what is most important to offenders and indicates how they can live their lives in different and more meaningful ways. Personal identity is pivotal in cementing together a conception of good lives and is based on values and their associated human goods.

A further problem in the way contemporary behaviorally oriented programs approach treatment is that they fail to realize that conceptions of good lives are contestable because of the substantive values and their rankings that constitute them. The different forms basic human goods can take reflect the weighting or emphasis given to particular values (see above). One individual might place more importance on his work and locate the other aspects of his life around this human good. While another may view his relationships with his friends and family as constituting the core or center of his way of life. Each could still ensure that the other human goods are achieved but vary in the ways they prioritize and secure them. It is possible to contest individuals' ways of living because they reflect different judgments about the comparative evaluations of human goods and also about the internal and external conditions necessary to achieve them. A good lives approach to rehabilitation is not relativistic; individuals can be mistaken about their abilities, interests, and social opportunities. In addition, on examination, some conceptualizations of good lives might prove problematic and unable to realize the range of goods needed to live a fulfilling and worthwhile life. The issue of value judgments and conflict is complex, and it is not my intention to address it here (see [Larmore, 1996](#)). The key point is that because rehabilitation programs implicitly or explicitly embody conceptions of good lives, value conflicts and disagreements are inevitable and necessary. The latter occurs when a therapist runs his or her eye over an individual's rehabilitation plan and notes fundamental problems in its coherency and content. Part of the problem could reside in the way human goods are specified and/or the form that they take within the plan. This is a normative issue and should be addressed.

#### **4. Conclusions**

I argue that clinicians ought to explicitly construct a conception of good lives to guide the rehabilitation of each offender. The identification of individuals' psychological dispositions or vulnerability factors causally related to their offending is a first step in the assessment process. This provides information on the internal and external obstacles that are frustrating the meeting of basic human needs and therefore preventing the achievement of primary human goods. Once this is done, it is necessary to construct a conception of good lives that is tailored to each offender's overarching good, etc., and to inquire about the necessary conditions required to live a different kind of life. As stated above, a conception of human well-being should outline the primary goods to be instantiated in good lives and the range of specific forms that they can take. The ordering or relationship between the various goods should also be described and the internal and external conditions necessary for their attainment noted.

The conception of a possible good life for an offender should also include a concrete understanding of the possible ways of living that are realistic for him or her. It should take note of each offender's capabilities, temperament, interests, skills, deep commitments (i.e., basic value system and preferred ways of living in the world, for example, as a teacher or provider), and support networks. Thus, psychological, social, vocational, and environmental factors are all explicitly incorporated within a model of human well-being in a rehabilitation context. The emphasis of rehabilitation should be on goals that are associated with basic human goods and that lead to valued outcomes. This necessarily involves the instillation in the offender of knowledge, competencies, strategies, skills, and also the creation of opportunities to live better kinds of lives.

## References

- Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (1998). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (2nd ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing.
- Arnhart, L. (1998). *Darwinian natural right: the biological ethics of human nature*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Austin, J. T., & Vancouver, J. B. (1996). Goal constructs in psychology: structure, process, and content. *Psychological Bulletin*, *120*, 338–375.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Heatherton, T. F. (1996). Self-regulation failure: an overview. *Psychological Inquiry*, *7*, 1–15.
- Cummins, R. A. (1996). The domains of life satisfaction: an attempt to order chaos. *Social Indicators Research*, *38*, 303–328.
- D'Andrade, R. (1995). *The development of cognitive anthropology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, *11*, 227–268.
- Den Uyl, D. (1991). *The virtue of prudence*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Emmons, R. A. (1996). Striving and feeling: personal goals and subjective well-being. In P. M. Gollwitzer, & J. A. Bargh (Eds.), *The psychology of action: linking cognition and motivation to behavior* (pp. 313–337). New York: Guilford.
- Heckhausen, J., & Schulz, R. (1998). Developmental regulation in adulthood: selection and compensation via primary and secondary control. In J. Heckhausen, & C. S. Dweck (Eds.), *Motivation and self-regulation across the lifespan* (pp. 50–77). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kekes, J. (1989). *Moral tradition and individuality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Larmore, C. (1996). *The morals of modernity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Marshall, W. L. (1996). Assessment, treatment, and theorizing about sex offenders: developments over the past 20 years and future directions. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *23*, 162–199.
- Marshall, W. L. (1999). Current status of North American assessment and treatment programs for sexual offenders. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *14*, 221–239.
- Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: how ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Rasmussen, D. B. (1999). Human flourishing and the appeal to human nature. In E. F. Paul, F. D. Miller, & J. Paul (Eds.), *Human flourishing* (pp. 1–43). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ward, T., Hudson, S. M., & Keenan, T. (2001). The assessment and treatment of sexual offenders against children. In C. R. Hollin (Ed.), *Handbook of offender assessment and treatment* (pp. 349–361). Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Ward, T., & Stewart, C. A. (in press). Criminogenic needs or human needs: a theoretical critique. *Psychology, Crime & Law*.