

Disability, Options, and Well-Being : Does Losing Options Reduce Well-being?* **

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【요약문】 This paper critically examines the claim that the reduction of options due to disability is likely to decrease the well-being of affected individuals. It introduces a challenge-overcoming mechanism, grounded in an axiological perspective that values the exercise of agential capacities. This paper argues that while reduced options may introduce new difficulties, successfully overcoming them can enhance the prudential value of achievements. Building on this, it develops a challenge-overcoming interpretation of the sufficiency insight, which holds that if sufficient options remain, then the value gained through overcoming challenges can outweigh the disadvantages. This interpretation is used to respond to a criticism of the sufficiency insight and to challenge T. Crawley's options argument.

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** I wish to express my thanks to the three anonymous reviewers who provided their valuable opinions through their comments. However, due to limitations of both scope and my own current capabilities, many issues could not be fully addressed in this paper. I intend to cover these remaining topics and build upon these areas in future research.

I. Introduction

Disability can restrict the everyday activities of disabled individuals. For example, a German case study found that the majority of disabled students—particularly those with mental disorders—reported substantial difficulties due to inadequately adapted or structured learning materials.¹⁾ Drawing on this restrictive aspect of disability, T. Crawley claims that, even in the absence of ableism—systemic discrimination against disabled people—a person’s disabilities may lower their well-being, as disability limits their ability to engage in activities. Crawley would likely point to situations like the one in the case study, where students with disabilities have fewer available options compared to their non-disabled peers. This reduction, Crawley would argue, hinders the pursuit of prudential goods, like the development of intellectual capacities, thus likely lowering their well-being compared to before they became disabled. In the following discussion, this paper will critically examine the claim that a reduction in options for attaining prudential goods likely diminishes the well-being of disabled individuals. Section 2 will argue that, although this reduction introduces new challenges, overcoming them can, in turn, enhance the value of the goods attained. Building on this premise, Section 3 will develop the central insight that, as long as a sufficient range of options remains, the reduction is not likely to diminish a disabled person’s well-being. Finally, Section 4 will apply this insight to critique Crawley’s assessment of the

¹⁾ J. Bartz, “All Inclusive?! Empirical Insights into Individual Experiences of Students with Disabilities and Mental Disorders at German Universities and Implications for Inclusive Higher Education”, *Education Sciences*, Vol. 10, 2020, 11~12. A similar case was reported by Gonzalez, D. *et al.*, *Four in Ten Adults with Disabilities Experienced Unfair Treatment in Health Care Settings, at Work, or When Applying for Public Benefits in 2022*, Washington DC: Urban Institute, 2023. This study shows that U.S. adults reported that a lack of accessible facilities limits disabled people’s educational activities.

relationship between disability and well-being.

II. Theoretical Framework and the CO Mechanism

Prior to engaging with the central thesis, it is necessary to outline the theoretical framework that underpins this paper. Disability has been defined in various ways within philosophical literature, reflecting different assumptions about the nature and significance of bodily difference. One influential approach, the normal-function view, understands disability as a deviation from species-typical biological functioning.²⁾ In contrast, the inability view defines disability as a physical limitation that prevents individuals from fulfilling tasks that society arguably has a duty to ensure they can perform.³⁾ The social constructionist view shifts the focus further, treating disability as a social status shaped by stigma, exclusion, and prevailing cultural norms regarding bodily difference.⁴⁾ Finally, the welfarist view characterizes disability as a stable physical or psychological condition that significantly reduces a person's well-being, excluding harm caused by social prejudice.⁵⁾ Among the four definitions of disability outlined above, the welfarist view is incompatible with the central research question of this paper. Because this paper examines whether

2) For instance, C. Boorse, "Disability and Medical Theory", *Philosophical Reflections on Disability*, eds. D. C. Ralston/J. H. Ho, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2009, 60~61.

3) For relevant discussion, see A. Buchanan/D. W. Brock/N. Daniels/D. Wikler, *From Chance to Choice: Genetics and Justice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 286.

4) For a leading perspective on this definition, refer to E. Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

5) For instance, G. Kahane/J. Savulescu, "The Welfarist Account of Disability", *Disability and Disadvantage*, eds. K. Brownlee/A. Cureton, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

a reduction in options caused by disability tends to lower well-being, the welfarist view—which defines disability itself as a condition that negatively impacts well-being independent of social prejudice rejudges the issue. Accordingly, setting aside the welfarist perspective, this paper will adopt an ecumenical approach, engaging with the remaining three views of disability.

Another important preliminary task is to clarify the axiological assumptions that underlie this paper. It is reasonable to judge that a person's well-being improves as they comprehend the course content and enhance their intellectual capacities.⁶⁾ One major theory on the nature of well-being, hedonism, might attempt to explain this improvement by the pleasure experienced when one understands the course content and enhances their intellectual capacities.⁷⁾ However, this explanation is not satisfactory, as it cannot show why this person's well-being is higher than that of someone who merely believes that they have understood the course content and feels the same pleasure, despite having neither understood the content nor enhanced their intellectual capacities.⁸⁾ On the contrary, another major theory, the desire-fulfillment theory, holds that the person's well-being improves because their desire to understand the course material and to become intellectually competent has been indeed fulfilled.⁹⁾ This

⁶⁾ For an introduction to the concept of well-being and the main theories concerning the nature of well-being, see E. Lin, "Well-being, Part 1: The Concept of Well-being", *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2022a; and E. Lin, "Well-being, Part 2: Theories of Well-being", *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2022b.

⁷⁾ For leading hedonistic theories, see F. Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life: Concerning the Nature Varieties and Plausibility of Hedonism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004; R. Crisp, "Hedonism Reconsidered", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 73, No. 3, 2006; A. Gregory, "Hedonism", *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*, ed. G. Fletcher, New York: Routledge, 2015; and B. Bramble, "A New Defense of Hedonism about Well-being", *Ergo*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2016.

⁸⁾ For a similar criticism, see S. Kagan, "Me and My Life", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 94, No. 1, 1994.

explanation is also insufficient, because it overlooks the key point that: even if the person did not have such a desire, the fact that they have genuinely improved their intellectual capacities through sustained effort provides a reasonable basis for judging them better off—at least slightly—than without such progress.

Perfectionism¹⁰⁾ and the objective list theory¹¹⁾ can explain the prudential value of grasping academic material and developing one's intellectual capacities—value that goes beyond mere pleasure or desire satisfaction. According to these theories, enhancing one's intellectual capacities through understanding course content can itself constitute a prudential good. For this reason, other things being equal, a person who has genuinely understood the material and improved their intellectual abilities is better off than someone who merely feels joy based on the false belief that they have done so. Moreover, even without the desire for such understanding, the fact that they achieved it still provides a reasonable basis for judging them better off. Because perfectionism and the objective list theory offer a plausible axiological account of such cases, this paper adopts the assumption that items beyond pleasure or desire fulfillment—such as intellectual development—can possess intrinsic value. Moreover, it will also assume that this value partly depends on the extent to which agential abilities are exercised in achieving such items. The more such abilities are exercised, the greater the item's intrinsic prudential value is presumed to be.

9) For representative views, D. Sobel, "Full Information Accounts of Well-being", *Ethics*, Vol. 104, No. 4, 1994; and C. Heathwood, "The Problem of Defective Desires", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 83, No. 4, 2005.

10) Prominent discussions on perfectionist theories and the challenges they face can be found in G. Bradford, "Perfectionism", *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*, ed. G. Fletcher, New York: Routledge, 2015; and G. Bradford, "Problems for Perfectionism", *Utilitas*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2017.

11) As an introductory account of the objective list theory, refer to G. Fletcher, "Objective List Theories", *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being*, ed. G. Fletcher, New York: Routledge, 2015.

One might attempt to reject the discussion of disability that follows by denying these theoretical assumptions. However, given that perfectionism and the objective list theory are prominent accounts of well-being and offer plausible evaluations, it would be unreasonable to dismiss the discussion simply by rejecting this paper's underlying axiological foundations.

Grounded in these theoretical and axiological commitments, this paper now explores how disability interacts with the pursuit of prudential goods. A person, due to disability, faces fewer options and challenges they did not face before becoming disabled. These difficulties might negatively affect a person's well-being, but they can also lead to positive outcomes. In particular, through the following mechanism, disability can contribute to the well-being of disabled people:

The Challenge-Overcoming Mechanism (the CO Mechanism): When a disabled person encounters new challenges due to having fewer options in pursuing a prudential good, the exercise of their agential abilities in overcoming these challenges increases the value of that prudential good.

Imagine a student with a hearing impairment participating in a university course. In this scenario, as with other disabilities, their hearing impairment will leave them with fewer options for understanding the course content than students without disabilities. For instance, they may not be able to rely on the instructor's verbal explanations to grasp lecture material. This reduction in options will make the process of understanding the material more challenging, requiring them to exercise their abilities more to overcome these difficulties. For example, the student may need to invest additional effort, such as independently reviewing course materials and seeking clarification from the instructor. If they successfully exercise their abilities, then they will be able to enhance their intellectual capacities. More importantly, since the value of a prudential good is partly determined by the extent to which one exercises their abilities to attain it, the student's effort to improve their intellectual capacities

contributes to their well-being.

III. The Challenge-Overcoming Interpretation

The CO mechanism illustrates how a reduction in options due to disability can still contribute to the well-being of the disabled person. In addition, this mechanism provides a compelling theoretical framework for articulating an insight that disability is unlikely to diminish a person's level of well-being relative to their pre-disability state. Crawley articulates this insight about disability as follows:

Restricting goods (RG): For a subject S and some multiply realizable non-instrumental good G [i.e., prudential good], restricting S's options to access G won't affect S's well-being prospects [i.e., it does not generally lower well-being] as long as S still possesses some/enough options(s) which enables(s) her to access G.¹²⁾

This paper will refer to this idea as the *Sufficiency Insight*. Crawley argues that relying on this insight to reject the claim that disability tends to reduce well-being faces a serious challenge¹³⁾, but he acknowledges that it nonetheless provides a strong basis for resisting the view that disability is likely to diminish well-being. For instance, if a person becomes disabled due to a traffic accident but still retains a sufficient set of options to achieve their everyday goals, then it is plausible to suggest that their well-being, in relation to those everyday goals, is unlikely to decline compared to their pre-accident state.

¹²⁾ T. Crawley, "Disability, Options and Well-being", *Utilitas*, Vol. 32, 2020, 320.

¹³⁾ Crawley argues that accepting the sufficiency insight renders it unable to accommodate the phenomenon where disability-specific options enhance well-being even when sufficient options still remain. In the discussion that follows, this paper will show that the CO interpretation can successfully refute this criticism.

Therefore, a productive starting point for defending the view that a reduction in options is unlikely to lower the well-being of disabled people is to develop the sufficiency insight.

One of the key tasks in developing the sufficiency insight is to explain why a person's well-being, in relation to achieving a prudential good, is not likely to decline after becoming disabled, as long as they still have a sufficient number of options for that good. The CO mechanism can offer an explanation for this. According to this interpretation, the sufficiency insight underscores the relationship between available options and the challenges of achieving goods. When a person has very few options after becoming disabled, those options are likely to be poorly suited to their preferences and circumstances, creating severe challenges. While exercising agential abilities to overcome challenges may enhance the value of a prudential good, this increase cannot compensate for the disadvantages caused by a significant reduction in options. In contrast, if a sufficient number of options remain available after becoming disabled, then a person can likely still find one that is reasonably suitable, even if it is less well-matched to their preferences and circumstances than the options they previously had. In such cases, because the harms resulting from the reduced range of options are minor, the added value of the prudential good—generated through the exercise of abilities—can offset those disadvantages. This paper refers to this interpretation as the *Challenge-Overcoming Interpretation* (the CO Interpretation).¹⁴⁾

¹⁴⁾ A reviewer pointed out that the CO interpretation is similar to the common-sense notion that 'physical difficulties can be overcome with mental strength,' thereby questioning its academic contribution. It is my understanding that this common-sense idea pertains more to achieving goals despite disability, rather than being a claim specifically concerning disability and well-being. Furthermore, even if it were to be viewed as a claim about disability and well-being, I would suggest that the paper still makes an academic contribution by attempting to philosophically refine this 'prototypical' assertion and by also offering a critique of Crawley's argument.

Crawley introduces a rival interpretation to the CO interpretation.¹⁵⁾ According to this interpretation, saying that a person retains sufficient options for a prudential good means that, although the number of options has been reduced due to disability, they can still choose one from the remaining set that is as well-suited to their preferences and circumstances as those available prior to the disability. This situation is akin to that of an engineer with a toolbox full of countless tools. Even after losing a few, they will experience no additional difficulties in completing their work because there will still be other tools similar to the ones they used before. The rival interpretation would hold that, so long as the remaining tools are sufficient, completing the task will involve no additional difficulty, enabling it to be carried out just as successfully as before the loss. Similarly, if a person retains sufficient options after becoming disabled, then their well-being is unlikely to be lower than it was prior to the disability. This is because, though the number of options is reduced, they can still identify one among the remaining options that is just as well-suited to their preferences and circumstances.

The CO interpretation and its rival differ in terms of how easily one can meet the condition of having sufficient options. Imagine a university student who became hearing impaired. According to the rival interpretation, the student can be considered to have sufficient options only if, using the options they still have, they can continue to develop their intellectual capabilities without encountering any new challenges they had not experienced before becoming disabled. In contrast, according to the CO interpretation, the student can still be considered to have sufficient options if, despite facing challenges from their hearing impairment, the options they still have prevent these challenges from becoming severe. Both the CO interpretation and its rival set conditions for having sufficient options that are difficult to meet. For instance, it is not easy for a hearing-impaired student to completely avoid or significantly reduce

¹⁵⁾ T. Crawley, "Disability, Options and Well-being", 320~322.

disability-related difficulties with remaining resources such as accessible lecture materials and cooperative instructors. However, when comparing the two, reducing the severity of challenges will be easier than eliminating them entirely. For the hearing-impaired student, making difficulties less severe through accessible materials and cooperative instructors is more feasible than eliminating them.

The claim that retaining sufficient options despite disability is not likely to lower a person's well-being does not imply that most disabled individuals are likely to have levels of well-being that are at least not worse than those they had prior to becoming disabled. For example, one might acknowledge the theoretical possibility of maintaining well-being after becoming disabled, while also recognizing that in practice only a relatively small number actually do so. However, for those who believe that in most cases the loss of options due to disability is not likely to lower well-being, the CO interpretation offers a more satisfactory explanation than its rival of why having sufficient options matters. This is because the conditions set forth by the CO interpretation can be more readily satisfied by the options remaining after disability. In other words, compared to the rival interpretation, the CO interpretation offers a more effective response to the negative perception that a reduction in options due to disability is likely to harm well-being. For instance, as previously noted, a significant majority of German students encounter challenges stemming from disability-related reductions in options. In this case, the rival interpretation struggles to explain that these disabled people can continue to achieve a level of well-being that is not lower than before disability. In contrast, the CO interpretation can argue that these people may experience a level of well-being not lower than before. Given that reductions in options due to disability are common, the CO interpretation is better equipped than the rival interpretation to counter the negative perception that disability tends to undermine well-being.

A further advantage of the CO interpretation is its ability to provide a theoretical basis for responding to a major criticism. E. Barnes makes the

following statement regarding the impact of disability-specific options on well-being:

The experience of disability [...] isn't just one of absence [...] It's rather, one of absence in particular areas that creates (in virtue of that very absence) opportunities in other areas—opportunities not open to the non-disabled. And some disabled people report that the resulting experiences disability creates mean that, on the whole, disability is of great benefits to them.¹⁶⁾

Crawley, citing Barnes's report, claims that disability-specific options can enhance a person's well-being even when they have sufficient remaining options. However, the sufficiency insight implies that if a disabled person has enough options, then adding disability-specific options does not increase their well-being—just as losing some options does not reduce well-being when enough remain, gaining more does not enhance it. Therefore, Crawley concludes that the sufficiency insight fails to account for the positive effects of disability-specific options on well-being, making it an unreliable foundation for understanding the significance of disabilities. This paper will refer to this critique as the *Report* objection.

Although much depends on how one understands what counts as “sufficient” options, the claim that newly added disability-specific options can enhance a disabled person's well-being—even when they already retain sufficient options—carries intuitive appeal. Furthermore, it is plausible to contend that the sufficiency insight falls short in explaining how such disability-specific options contribute to well-being in cases where sufficient options are already present. This is because, as disability-specific options make the acquisition of goods easier, the effect of overcoming challenges in enhancing the value of those goods may diminish. In other words, the ease of acquiring goods may lessen the burdens involved in the process; however, this gain could be offset by a

¹⁶⁾ E. Barnes, “Disability and Adaptive Preference”, *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 23, 2009, 15.

reduction in value due to the limited opportunity to exercise one's abilities. These two claims by Crawley require careful examination, but for the sake of discussion this paper will assume that they represent facts about disability and well-being. Even under these assumptions, the CO interpretation can dismiss the report objection by highlighting the breadth of the sufficiency insight's explanatory scope.

According to the CO interpretation, the sufficiency insight identifies a mechanism in which the very exercise of abilities to overcome the challenges of reduced options enhances the value of the achieved prudential good. This interpretation does not imply that this mechanism is the sole pathway through which disability enhances well-being. Therefore, the CO interpretation can avoid the report objection by recognizing mechanisms in which disability-specific options contribute to well-being. For instance, the CO interpretation can respond to the report objection as follows. There are multiple mechanisms through which disability can contribute to a person's well-being. One such mechanism is precisely the one identified by the CO interpretation. If the sufficiency insight had claimed that this was the only mechanism for well-being improvement, then the report objection could refute it, as it demonstrates that a disabled person's well-being can be enhanced through various other mechanisms other than the one emphasized by the sufficiency insight. However, the sufficiency insight can maintain that its mechanism is one of pathways to well-being improvement. This is why the report objection does not succeed in defeating the sufficiency insight.¹⁷⁾

¹⁷⁾ Crawley interprets Barnes's report as suggesting that the addition of disability-specific options can enhance the well-being of a disabled person. In contrast, S. M. Campbell, J. A. Stramondo, and D. Wasserman understand Barnes's report as indicating that, like any other remaining option, a person can benefit from a disability-specific option once they choose it. They rely on this interpretation to reject the report objection. For a detailed discussion, see S. M. Campbell/J. A. Stramondo/D. Wasserman, "How to (Consistently) Reject the Options Argument", *Utilitas*, Vol. 33, 2021, 239~241.

Another strength of the CO interpretation with regard to disability-specific options lies in its capacity to explain how prudential goods can be attained through such options, even when sufficient options remain available. Barnes reports that a key disability-specific option for improving the well-being of disabled individuals is participation in the disabled community. In particular, through interactions with other members of this community, disabled individuals can attain greater prudential goods—most notably deeper bonds with fellow disabled individuals—than those they had before becoming disabled.¹⁸⁾ According to the CO interpretation, having sufficient options after acquiring a disability means that, although reduced options make it harder to find ones that align with their preferences and context as well as before, there are still reasonably well-matched options among the remaining ones. Thus, even if a person retains sufficient options after becoming disabled, the CO interpretation suggests that they may still encounter challenges from reduced options that they did not face before. One of the main reasons disabled individuals can form deep bonds with one another is their shared experience of confronting and overcoming challenges resulting from reduction in options.¹⁹⁾ Therefore, the CO interpretation can show that even when sufficient options remain available, participation in the disability community enhances the well-being of disabled people by enabling the formation of deeper bonds.

The disability community is not the only disability-specific option. For example, preferential policies for disabled individuals are another type of disability-specific option available to them. Furthermore, the formation of deeper bonds through shared experiences of overcoming challenges is not the sole prudential good that the members of the disability community can achieve. Disabled individuals may also gain positive self-concept from their fellow

¹⁸⁾ E. Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability*, 116.

¹⁹⁾ For instance, see C. Han./Y. Kim, “A Phenomenological Study on the Experiences of Counselors and Clients in Peer Counseling for People with Disabilities”, *Journal of Rehabilitation Psychology*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2018, 101.

disabled peers that can improve their lives. However, the prudential good of forming deeper bonds through shared challenges serves as a primary way in which the disability community contributes to the well-being of disabled individuals even when sufficient options remain. Thus, a comprehensive account of disability's positive well-being effect should be able to explain how this prudential good is achieved in this context. The CO interpretation can not only develop the sufficiency insight to counter negative perceptions of disability but also explain how the formation of deeper bonds among disabled individuals even when sufficient options remain is possible. Therefore, the CO interpretation is useful for developing a comprehensive account of disability's effect on well-being.

IV. The Options Argument

As noted earlier, Crawley argues that, all things considered, a reduction in options due to disability is likely to lower a disabled person's well-being compared to their pre-disability state. To support this view, he presents what he calls the *Options Argument*.²⁰⁾ First, Crawley argues that when a person's condition limits their options for achieving prudential goods, it has both positive and negative effects on their level of well-being. In particular, Crawley explains the negative effects of reduced options in terms of the increased difficulty and associated suffering in achieving prudential goods. For example, if an individual has fewer resources for understanding course materials than they did before, then the task may become more challenging, as they might have to rely on materials that are less well-suited to their learning style or circumstances. Moreover, in the process of overcoming these additional challenges, the individual may experience greater suffering and may also miss out on other

²⁰⁾ T. Crawley, "Disability, Options and Well-being", 320.

prudential goods they could have achieved if the additional challenges had not existed. Second, according to Crawley, an individual's disability reduces the number of options available for accessing prudential goods. Third, Crawley contends that in the case of disability, the negative effects of option reduction tend to outweigh the positive effects. Therefore, Crawley concludes that, all things considered, a person's disability is likely to lower their overall level of well-being compared to their pre-disability state.

The first premise, that a reduction in a person's options has both positive and negative effects, is uncontroversial. For example, if an individual has fewer class materials available than before, then they may struggle with using less suitable resources, but the reduced options could also ease the difficulty of choosing among them.²¹⁾ The second premise, that a person's disability reduces the number of options available to them, is also plausible, as suggested by evidence discussed earlier.²²⁾ Therefore, the central point of contention lies in the third premise: that in the case of disability the negative effects of option reduction tend to outweigh the positive effects. However, Crawley does not offer justification for the third premise—a crucial step in the options argument—seemingly taking it as largely self-evident that the negative effects of option reduction tend to outweigh the positive ones. On this issue, the CO interpretation offers a theoretical basis for challenging the third premise. The CO interpretation holds that if a person loses some available options for attaining prudential goods after becoming disabled but still has enough remaining, then the negative impact of this reduction may be offset by the

²¹⁾ Thanks to Sungwoo Um for noting this effect of reduced options—removing decision-making difficulty. Crawley, however, argues that reduced deliberation costs would not improve the disabled person's well-being beyond their pre-disability level. See T. Crawley, "Disability, Options and Well-being", 328~331.

²²⁾ J. Bartz, "All Inclusive?! Empirical Insights into Individual Experiences of Students with Disabilities and Mental Disorders at German Universities and Implications for Inclusive Higher Education".

increased prudential value gained from the effort required to overcome the challenges. If there is evidence supporting this interpretation, then it would constitute a major challenge to the options argument.

Imagine that both a person with a disability and a non-disabled person successfully achieve their goal of climbing Mt. Everest. In this case, if the physical limitations resulting from the disability do not restrict movement so severely as to make the climbing process overwhelmingly painful, then it is reasonable to hold that successfully climbing the mountain enhances the well-being of the person with a disability more than that of a non-disabled person. Put differently, an appropriate response to their climb would be: “The fact that they successfully climbed Mt. Everest is a key reason for judging that their lives are better for them than they were before the climb. Furthermore, the fact that the person with a disability accomplished this climb despite their disability provides a ground for evaluating their life, at least in relation to the climb, more highly than that of the non-disabled person.” This response suggests that, in the case above, the prudential value of the effort required to overcome the disability offsets the disadvantages it causes—so long as the physical limitations imposed by the disability do not restrict movement to such a degree that they cause significant suffering. Otherwise, conquering Mt. Everest would not benefit the person with a disability more than the person without a disability. In other words, when the remaining options—that is, possible physical movements—are sufficient, the reduction in options caused by a disability is unlikely to diminish the individual’s well-being in achieving the good—that is, climbing Mt. Everest.

Ordinary prudential goods, such as understanding class material and developing intellectual abilities, may be less valuable than an exceptional feat like the conquest of Mt. Everest. However, this does not mean that the way in which exceptional feats contribute to a person's well-being is entirely distinct from the way in which achieving ordinary goods enhances their well-being. The conquest of Mt. Everest is similar to the achievement of ordinary goods in that

they are the results of one's exercising their abilities. Just as the value of conquering Mt. Everest is heightened by the exercise of the abilities it demands, so too is the worth of ordinary goods enhanced by the abilities exercised in their attainment. This parallel suggests that a phenomenon akin to the conquest of Mt. Everest may also emerge in the pursuit of ordinary goods. Put differently, it offers a reason to believe that a person with a disability may attain a greater level of well-being than a non-disabled person upon attaining an ordinary good too, provided that the reduction in options leaves enough intact to avoid severe challenges. This is because the added value of exercising abilities to overcome those limitations can compensate for the disadvantage of reduced options. This line of reasoning provides a basis for thinking that the positive impacts of a reduction in options can outweigh its negative impact. In this respect, it shows that, contrary to Crawley's view, the burden of proof does not lie with those who deny that option reduction diminishes well-being, but rather with those who affirm it.

Hereinafter this paper will refer to the critique of the options argument grounded in the CO interpretation as the *CO Reply*. A limitation of the CO interpretation is that not all prudential goods are acquired through the exercise of one's agential abilities. While some prudential goods are achieved through the exercise of one's agential abilities, others are received passively, without requiring such involvement. For example, people set goals and strive to achieve them, such as understanding course material and developing intellectual abilities, but they also find themselves unexpectedly taking pleasure in the beauty of natural landscapes and the delicate fragrance of flower. Consequently, within the framework of the CO interpretation, the positive effect that can be attributed to option reduction due to disability is limited to prudential goods that require the exercise of agential abilities. Given this limitation, Crawley might argue that option reduction due to disability can have both positive and negative effects on well-being when it pertains to goods attained through the exercise of agential abilities; however, when it comes to prudential goods passively received

through sensory experience, it has only negative effects. For instance, losing one's hearing would preclude the joy of unexpectedly encountering beautiful sounds. Therefore, considering all types of effects that a reduction in option entails, a person's level of well-being after becoming disabled would be lower than it was before.

It is true that the CO interpretation cannot account for the positive effects of reducing options when prudential goods are passively received. However, this alone does not warrant the conclusion that the negative effects tend to outweigh the positive ones, given the full range of prudential goods affected by disability. As mentioned above, provided that a sufficient range of options remains available, the value of prudential goods enhanced through the exercise of agential abilities in overcoming difficulties can surpass the disadvantages posed by those difficulties. By appealing to this surpassed value, the CO reply can respond to the aforementioned objection as follows. The prudential value gained by exercising agential abilities to overcome disability-related limitations can outweigh the associated costs. In particular, this surplus value may outweigh not only the burdens involved in exercising agential abilities but also the disadvantages arising from the loss of passively received prudential goods. In this case, while the CO interpretation fails to capture the positive effects of option reduction in relation to passively received goods, it is still possible that, when all goods affected by option reduction are considered, the reduction of options due to disability leads to an enhancement of the agent's well-being.

The above supposition—that the value enhanced through the exercise of agential abilities can outweigh the disadvantages associated with passively received goods—finds support in debates concerning the nature of well-being. One prominent example is the so-called “philosophy of the swine” objection to hedonism, which centers on the claim that mere sensory pleasure has limited value. According to this objection, if pleasure derived from sensory stimulation were to hold substantial value, then a life devoted solely to the pursuit of such experiences would, counterintuitively, count as a commendable one from the

perspective of well-being. To avoid this implication, hedonists claim that even when the intensity of pleasure is comparable, the pleasure that arises from the exercise of one's agential capacities—especially rational capacities—possesses greater prudential value than that which stems from mere sensory stimulation.²³⁾ This discussion about the value of pleasure has important implications not only for hedonism but also for other theories of well-being. In other words, to avoid the implication that a life focused exclusively on sensory pleasure is as valuable as one marked by the successful exercise of agential capacities, any plausible theory of well-being must hold that such exercise carries greater prudential value than sensory pleasure alone. Based on this discussion, the CO interpretation can claim that, although option reduction diminishes the amount of benefit derived from sensory stimulation—such as the enjoyment of a flower's scent—it can be more than outweighed by the value gained through the exercise of agential capacities.²⁴⁾

V. Conclusion

This paper has focused exclusively on one specific impact of disability on well-being—namely, the reduction in options. Given that disability can also diminish well-being through pain, discrimination, and economic hardship, the

²³⁾ F. Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life: Concerning the Nature Varieties and Plausibility of Hedonism*, 117~123.

²⁴⁾ This discussion can serve as a response to a question raised by an anonymous reviewer. The reviewer suggested that if listening to music inherently possesses intrinsic value, then it would not just be difficult but impossible for an individual with a hearing impairment to acquire this particular prudential good. One possible response is that, although the prudential good of music appreciation may be unattainable for them, the value derived from efforts to acquire other goods could potentially offset this disadvantage.

scope of this study is admittedly limited. Furthermore, it does not identify the specific conditions under which the exercise of abilities offsets the disadvantages caused by option reduction; such conditions may be clarified through empirical research beyond the reach of philosophical argumentation. Nevertheless, by offering a basis for the idea that option reduction due to disability can positively affect well-being, this study contributes to a more affirmative and multidimensional understanding of disability. The limitations identified here will be addressed in future work, including empirical investigations into the CO mechanism.²⁵⁾

²⁵⁾ I agree with an anonymous reviewer's suggestion that a more precise understanding of the CO interpretation could benefit from a clearer elucidation of various factors, such as the difficulties experienced by individuals with disabilities and the nature of the challenges they face. However, as noted in the conclusion, these topics go beyond the scope of this paper. I intend to develop a more refined version of the CO interpretation in future research.

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<국문초록>

장애, 선택지, 복지 : 선택지 감소는 복지를 저하시키는가?

최동용(인하대 조교수)

본 논문은 장애인에 대한 차별이 없더라도, 장애로 인해 선택지가 제한될 경우 해당 장애인의 복지가 감소할 수 있다는 주장을 비판적으로 검토한다. 먼저, 본 논문은 행위 주체의 능력 발휘를 중시하는 가치론적 관점을 바탕으로 ‘도전-극복 기제’를 제시한다. 장애로 인해 선택지가 줄어들면 새로운 어려움이 발생하지만, 이러한 어려움을 성공적으로 극복하는 과정은 성취 결과의 가치를 높일 수 있다고 논증한다. 이어서 본 논문은 도전-극복 기제를 중심으로 충분성 통찰에 대한 새로운 해석을 제안한다. 즉, 어려움이 압도적이지 않을 정도로 충분한 선택지가 남아있다면, 극복 과정에서 창출된 가치가 선택지 감소로 인한 불이익을 상쇄할 수 있고, 그 결과 복지 감소의 가능성은 줄어들 것이라는 것이다. 마지막으로 본 논문은 T. Crawley의 선택지 논증, 즉 선택지 감소로 인한 불이익이 그로 인해 얻는 이익보다 클 것이라는 주장을 도전-극복 해석을 통해 반박한다.

주제어: 복지, 장애, 선택지 감소, 도전-극복 기제, 충분성 통찰, 선택지 논증