

Richard Kraut and the Non-Existence of Absolute Goodness

The forthright title of Richard Kraut's recent book *Against Absolute Goodness* reveals the work's main thesis: that there is no such thing as absolute goodness, understood as goodness without qualification, or *simpliciter*.¹ According to Kraut, nothing is simply good or bad; rather, things are good or bad only insofar as they benefit or harm particular individuals in some way. For example, smoking is bad, not absolutely (whatever that could mean) but only insofar as it entails a harm to this or that individual, such as smokers themselves or their loved ones.

Kraut has in mind here philosophers such as G. E. Moore, who held that the only primary good of which we can speak is a simple and impersonal property, one that is not relative to anyone in particular. Moore thought that talk about what is "good for a certain individual" is demonstrably confused, unless what is meant is something which is both simply good and possessed by the individual in question.² In *Principia Ethica* he goes so far as to write that the sole possible reason which can justify an action is that by it the greatest amount of what is good absolutely should be realized.³ But Kraut notes how much is entailed by this ambitious claim of Moore's. Moore is committed to saying, 1) That there is a property of absolute goodness; 2) That this property provides a reason for action; 3) That this is the only possible reason for action; 4) That goodness has a magnitude and some actions produce a greater magnitude of it than others; 5) That we ought always to try and produce the greatest amount of absolute good (AAG 5-6). For his own part, Kraut writes that there is no reason to think that a property of absolute or impersonal goodness exists, and that if it did exist there would be no reason for anyone to pursue

¹ *Against Absolute Goodness*, (Oxford, 2011), henceforth AAG. See also *What is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being* (Harvard, 2007), henceforth WGW and "What is Intrinsic Goodness?", *Classical Philology*, 105, (2010), henceforth WIG. pp. 450-470.

² Moore, G. E. (1993/1903) §59.

³ *Ibid.*, §60. Cf. AAG 5.

it. It follows that the world is not a better place in virtue of containing more of such goodness, and that we have no obligation to try and maximize the amount of impersonal goodness in the world.

While ‘absolute’ suggests a contrast with ‘relative’, Kraut is not claiming that what is good for someone is relative to what people happen to believe. Any relativity, he thinks, is to an individual rather than to a belief. He points out that things can be genuinely advantageous or disadvantageous, regardless of whether they are believed to be so. Moreover, the one benefitted or harmed need not be a person, nor even a conscious being. A certain fungus can be bad for a tree, for instance (AAG 77). In the end, according to Kraut, a harm or benefit is specified with respect to what furthers or hinders the flourishing of a given individual, with what it is to flourish being different for different individuals. Among human beings, for instance, different states count as flourishing for different persons.⁴

Kraut draws a crucial further distinction between what he calls ‘instrumentally’ and ‘noninstrumentally’ good or bad things. That is, he says that some things derive their goodness or badness from what they give rise to, and are “mere tools for achieving further results that are good for us” or for preventing harm. Such goods he says are useful, or instrumentally good. Kraut assumes it to be obvious and uncontroversial that some things must by contrast be noninstrumentally good for people or other living things (AAG Ch. 7). As such, these noninstrumentally good things are said to be good for an individual “even if they do not lead to anything else” (AAG p.35). Pleasure, for example, is supposed to fit into this category (AAG p.76). An analogous noninstrumental badness is held to exist as well. Instrumental advantages and disadvantages thus inherit their goodness and badness from things that are “by themselves”

⁴ See Chs. 1 and 3 of *What is Good and Why* for a more extended discussion of flourishing.

good or bad for an individual, in the noninstrumental way (AAG p. 34). I will return to this proposed distinction later.

Kraut's Arguments Against Absolute Goodness

In countering the doctrine of absolute goodness Kraut has several lines of attack. He suggests that there is something morally objectionable in seeing everything and every person as a locus of absolute value, or as a means to increasing such value. People should not be treated as vessels in which an impersonal goodness is to be fostered. For example, sacrificing the welfare of individual persons simply in order to promote knowledge (viewed as an impersonal value) would be misguided, if there were no reason to think that any individual would benefit thereby. Viewing human life as sacred or intrinsically valuable and trying to prolong it even where no one benefits is said to be another instance (AAG Ch.26).

In addition to these doubts about whether it is appropriate to try and increase the amount of impersonal good in the world at the expense of individuals, Kraut notes how puzzling it is to assert simply that a certain thing is good without qualifying that claim in some way. Just as saying 'Smoking is bad' is not understandable unless we indicate those for whom smoking is bad, and in what way it is bad for them, so the statement 'George is good' is puzzling without an indication of the respect of goodness. It cries out for some indication of what George is good at (tennis, say), or the other ways in which he excels. But while unqualified statements to the effect that this or that thing is good are incomplete, Kraut's considered view is that talk of impersonal value is false rather than unintelligible. He grants that the hypothesis of absolute goodness is meaningful, but argues that we have no reason to believe such a thing exists.

Kraut's main objection to absolute good is the argument from double value: he believes the notion of impersonal goodness requires us to count values a second time (AAG Ch.9). That is, showing how a certain project benefits someone gives people a prima facie reason to pursue that project; claiming that the project, in addition to benefitting individuals, is also good *simpliciter* does not add any new motivating force. We don't count the value twice, once for those who have benefitted and once impersonally. Similarly, pain is bad for those who experience it, says Kraut. An agonizing disease is a terrible personal misfortune for victims, for their friends and others. But pain does not have a disvalue both for individual persons and also absolutely. That would involve a double counting of the disvalue, and no new motive for action.

Granted that harm to individuals is distinct from absolute badness, why would anyone be tempted to believe that pain has such a property? It might be thought that if there is no absolute badness to pain, we would have no reason to try and prevent pains to people other than ourselves. However, such a claim does not follow, as we might have various reasons to try and prevent harms to others. Smokers have reason to cease from smoking because it harms them, but their loved ones, medical professionals, and perhaps others have reason to help them stop. This is because the smoker is being harmed, though, not because of an impersonal badness that has arisen. Kraut holds that sundry ethical considerations can justify and motivate our interactions with other people: justice, respect, desert, obligation, duty, responsibility, and so on are factors that may be relevant to our actions (AAG 96). Absolute good and bad are not.

There is much more to Kraut's subtle and methodical discussion than I can recap here, but in short, his strategy involves pointing out that there is no reason to value something except insofar as it is good for particular individuals. An impersonal goodness carries no weight in deliberation. Next, he seeks to disarm potential counterexamples by arguing that moral

considerations other than absolute good and bad provide reasons for acting: considerations such as respect, desert and duty. He rejects the temptation to speak as if absolute goodness were some valuable additive to the world which becomes preferable in ever larger quantities. Kraut does concede that there is an acceptable reading of ‘x is good (or bad) *simpliciter*’, namely when this claim is understood as just saying that there is a reason to promote (or discourage) x. But he interprets talk that the world as a whole is a better or worse place as talk about what we have reason to prefer on grounds other than an increase in absolute value.

On the Nonexistence of Goods-as-Ends

I am going to take issue with some of what Kraut says, but my criticism will arrive from a direction that may be unexpected. Kraut’s defences are deployed mainly against the champions of absolute good. However, it is possible to join him in rejecting absolute goods and goodness, while holding that he has failed to go far enough. There is indeed no impersonal good in itself; but I will argue that there are also no personal goods in themselves. There is no good in itself for anyone, in the following regard: no sense of ‘good’ meaning ‘good as an end’, and no such property lending its reflected glory to those things which are merely good as means. All goodness is in reality goodness for some end other than the good thing itself, or so I shall claim.

The assumption that there are goods as ends, though dubious, is widespread among value theorists.⁵ Kraut himself thinks the idea so obviously true that he scarcely bothers to examine it.

⁵ Cf. Plato, *Republic* Bk. II, 358a, where justice is said to be valued for its own sake as well as for the things that come from it. Plato’s student Aristotle takes *eudaimonia*, the highest good, to be chosen both for its own sake and for the sake of nothing else (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.7, 1097b6). See also, e.g. NE I.6, 1096b14. Plato and Aristotle are patriarchs of that numerous tribe for whom the good is primarily *the object of choice or desire* rather than *that which is such as, sufficient, or adequate to realize an end*. But good things are objects of rational choice in virtue of their sufficiency for an end which is aimed at; they are not sufficient in virtue of being aimed at.

Indeed, he writes elsewhere that to his knowledge no respectable philosopher has ever denied that at least some things are good for us apart from their instrumental value (WIG 451).

At the risk of disrespectability, let us consider whether the means/end distinction as Kraut understands it might be defective. Since he thinks we can establish that if there is something instrumentally good then there exists a property of being noninstrumentally good (by which he seems to mean a property of being good as an end AAG 36), we must look more closely at what he believes instrumental value is and what he thinks the alternative sort of value amounts to. In characterizing what he thinks of as instrumental goodness or advantage, Kraut mentions tools, useful things, that which leads to something good, and that which is a means to an end. Now, of tools, instruments and mere means the following is true: those who choose them purely *qua* instrument would take no interest in them independently of their role. For instance, suppose a certain toothbrush is regarded merely as an instrument, chosen to bring about a state of better dental hygiene. Then a different toothbrush suitable for the same ends would serve as well, and after the brush has entirely satisfied its ends (including future applications) it would lose its value completely. In practice it is rare, of course, that a thing is chosen as a mere instrument to a single end. People take some pleasure in a toothbrush in virtue of its colour, shape or tactile qualities, and in the simple fact of owning a clean and well-designed object. It has some slight monetary worth or exchange value, and there is also a notable endowment effect, in that people tend to value more highly those objects with which they have an association than they value other objects of the same type.

Even a toothbrush, therefore, is rarely treated as a mere means to a single end, however useful it is in its primary role. It is good for various ends, including what can broadly be described as ends of aesthetic pleasure; and the goodness of a toothbrush for such ends consists

in its being such as to serve them. It is significant that when we simply desire or enjoy something, we do not necessarily regard it as a mere means or instrument.⁶ Those admiring a fine tree, or stopping to watch some children playing would normally find it odd to say that they were using the tree or the children as instruments. It would typically be a misleading thing to say that they were being used as a means to pleasure. To treat the stately tree or the charming children as mere instruments to pleasure would be to remain indifferent to them except insofar as they could contribute to the pleasure in question. “Why did you sign up for badminton?” “To tell you the truth, badminton was a means to an end. What I really wanted was to meet that attractive red-haired player on the team.” Understood: you aren’t actually into badminton. But in reply to “Why did you attend the concert?”, though you went in order to enjoy the music you can’t say “Well, my attendance was merely instrumental, in order to enjoy the experience.”

Kraut thinks the noninstrumental cannot be chosen entirely for its goodness *for an end* other than itself. But to be good for an end in view is not the same as being an instrument, and it does not follow from the fact that some things are noninstrumentally advantageous that there must be some things which are “good as ends”. If we want, we can describe toothbrushes, music, trees and children as being “noninstrumentally advantageous”, bearing in mind that this is perfectly consistent with their being such as to realize various aesthetic (and other) ends. This just shows that we cannot immediately jump to the conclusion that there are goods as ends which need not be good for anything other than themselves.⁷ The fundamental notion in value is adequacy for an end, but this is consistent with both instrumental and noninstrumental instances

⁶ Cf. Hume’s *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, where ‘desirable on its own account’ is glossed as ‘merely for the immediate satisfaction which it conveys’. Appendix 1, 244.

⁷ John Dewey: “To pass from immediacy of enjoyment to something called ‘intrinsic value’ is a leap for which there is no ground.” This also holds if we replace ‘intrinsic value’ with ‘good-in-itself’ or ‘end-in-itself’. For Dewey, ‘end-in-itself’ is a contradictory term. Dewey (1939), Ch. VI ‘The Continuum of Ends-Means, p. 41.

of goodness. In fact, talk of instrumentality, or of something being used as a means, is a red herring. It is sometimes said that one meaning of the word ‘good’ is ‘useful’.⁸ But the word ‘good’ *never* means ‘useful’, though certainly things good for some end in view may, in virtue of their goodness for that end, be useful in realizing it. For instance, good friends are likely to make themselves useful in various ways, but ‘good friend’ does not mean ‘useful friend’. Neither does ‘good’ ever have a special sense of ‘strong’, though strong bridges and weightlifters may be good in various ways in virtue of their strength.

A Questionable Aristotelian Argument

Of course, those who believe in the existence of goodness-as-an-end can grant that ordinary objects are seldom treated as mere instruments, while insisting that there must still be some good as an end in the neighborhood: residing in persons or virtues, perhaps, or in harmless pleasures. And here the defenders of goods as ends often rely on an influential but mistaken form of argument inspired by Aristotle.⁹ One version of the reasoning goes like this: Some things are good just because they lead to something else that is good, or at least something that prevents harm. This further thing is either good as an end, or not. If it is, then we have shown there is something good as an end; if it is not, then the thing must in turn lead to something further that is itself good as an end or at least prevents some harm. The chain of justification (it is said) cannot go on indefinitely, so if we classify a certain thing as a good means or as instrumentally advantageous, it must be ultimately effective to some extent, either in bringing about what is good as an end or in preventing what is harmful in itself for someone (Cf. AAG

⁸ E.g. by W. D. Ross in *The Right and the Good*, Ch. III ‘The Meaning of ‘Good’’ (Oxford, 1930).

⁹ NE I.7 I will not take up the interpretive question of what exactly Aristotle may have intended by saying that some things are good “*kath’hauto*” or by his vexed claim that goodness is said in many ways. [Cite Kraut’s *Aristotle and the Human Good*.]

37). Hence, the reasoning concludes, there must be at least be such a property as being good-as-an-end, even if there are no actual instances of the property.

Plausible though this argument may seem, it establishes neither that there are any goods as ends, nor that there is any property of being good-as-an-end, nor that there is any special sense of the word ‘good’ such that a good thing does not look to an end other than itself. For, let X be something that satisfies a desire. We are, to be sure, born with desires, and desires continually arise and are shaped throughout our lives. If X is such as to satisfy a desire, we can say it is good for achieving that end, at a minimum. For example, X may feel or taste good as various desires are sated, and needs and expectations met. An end may be a temporary arrest, in the sense that nothing more is sought at the moment, or it may immediately give rise to new ends. We can go on to ask whether or not the realization of these ends in turn is good, but the question must be understood in terms of whether the proposed course of action is such as to serve further ends: perhaps the satisfaction of the agent’s other desires, or perhaps the approval, acceptance and admiration of persons concerned.

If its conclusion is false, why has this Aristotelian reasoning been so influential? Part of its plausibility comes from failing to notice the difference between desiring and choosing. There is a distinction between choosing something that is not desired but sought for its effectiveness in reaching some other objective, and choosing something because one desires or enjoys it. It would indeed make no sense to choose one thing entirely for the sake of another, and that for some third thing, without ever desiring anything. A thing which is desired or enjoyed must be good in at least this way: it must be such as to be desired, or to produce pleasure in the pursuer. However, the phrase ‘desired for the sake of x’ is misleading, since a thing may be chosen without being desired: that is, while it may come to be desired as a result of an agent realizing

that it is effective, it may also be chosen for its effectiveness without coming to be desired itself. Failing to see any difference between desiring and choosing, and noticing that things can be chosen as a way of achieving what is desired, one may be led to suppose without warrant that there must be things which are “desired as ends”, as opposed to “desired as means”, perhaps in virtue of some postulated special property of value that resides in themselves.

By contrast with desire, choice invites a view of some further end for which a chosen thing is being considered. Now, it is true that we sometimes talk about doing, choosing or valuing something for its own sake, and sometimes this does not merely mean ‘because it is enjoyed’ or ‘because it is desired without desiring its further effects’. In such talk of doing, choosing or valuing something for its own sake, we may intend to stress that the very act of choosing this object is somehow desirable. ‘Choose honesty for its own sake!’ That is, it is praiseworthy and desirable to behave honestly, independently of whether the actions happen to profit oneself; one should refrain from calculating what is in one’s own interest when tempted to behave dishonestly. Here the speaker is not claiming that the act is somehow self-sufficient.. Rather, it is asserted that this act of doing or choosing what is honest, and without attending to its possible benefits for oneself, is sufficient for the further ends of acceptance and admiration. It may also happen that a thing which serves some immediate end (e.g. a dishonest pursuit of one’s own interest) is such as to subvert the broader economy of needs and desires, in which case it is undesirable in other respects. Thus, when praising honest actions as good or choiceworthy “in themselves” we are saying that they are such as to elicit praise and support, though they may not

realize this end in practice or be profitable under the actual circumstances. We are not thereby suggesting that they can be good without being good for anything, or good only for themselves.¹⁰

Someone drawn to the idea of goods as ends might object that those things which would be chosen “even if nothing else followed from them” are naturally described as chosen for their own sake, for example harmless pleasures or a happy life. The claim might go, that if a thing really does need nothing else in order to be chosen, if it is such as to be chosen for its own sake, why can’t we say that it is simply good and not necessarily good for anything? We should be cautious here. It is not clear that one really can choose something without any regard whatsoever for any of its actual or potential consequences. Preferring, pursuing, attaining or realizing some objective requires that it has certain capacities and effects which are taken into view. As noted earlier, choice seems to involve some further purpose with respect to which the chosen thing is selected. If there were no further purpose involved, the agent would simply be picking a thing, as opposed to choosing it.¹¹

Even granting that something can be chosen “for its own sake”, it does not follow that such a thing can be choiceworthy for its own sake. This would mean that the thing is such as to be chosen independently of any end outside itself. Yet to use the expression ‘being chosen’ is already to indicate an end. Again, to claim that a harmless pleasure is good is to say that it is desirable. To say that something is desirable is to say that it is such as to be desired. Here the ‘-able’ suffix indicates the adequacy of the thing to be desired by the agent or by others concerned.

¹⁰ Bernard Williams (2006) proposes taking ‘valuing x as an intrinsic good’ as a more primitive expression than ‘intrinsic good’, thus giving up on the project of explicating valuing in terms of intrinsic goodness itself. Valuing in turn is said not to be reducible to any talk about wanting, pursuing, trying to bring about or the like. But a slide into opaque talk of valuing, though it gets us away from the barren idea of a self-explanatory intrinsic goodness, trades one obscurity for another. Williams has failed to free himself from the trap of treating things as final goods, though he seeks to contrast them with “derivative” as opposed to “instrumental” goods.

¹¹ Piiippa Foot makes a similar point.

Nothing licenses the inference that it is such as to be desired because it has some prized property identical with a value that serves no end.¹²

But is the very satisfaction which can arise from the fulfilment of a desire a good in itself? There is a potential equivocation in this question, which can be illustrated by the sentence ‘The satisfaction of my desire brought me (a feeling of) satisfaction’. On the one hand, ‘satisfaction’ like ‘pleasure’ can indicate a sensation, feeling or emotion which may arise as a desire is sated. And this feeling may sometimes be an object of sophisticated attention and deliberation and may be such as to stimulate and to fulfil desire in turn, hence good for those ends.

Alternatively, ‘the satisfaction of a desire’ can be taken to indicate the very fulfilment of that desire. Here the satisfaction is itself a case of success, being the realization of an end in view. In this case, if we say that the satisfaction is good, we may mean that a certain instance of goodness is good, uttering a truism. Construed as a necessary truth, its necessity may present the illusion of a special form of goodness, one which looks to no end at all. Again, in saying that satisfaction is good we may have moved to a statement of a higher order: rather than an identity statement we may be making a statement about the goodness of a thing’s goodness. It may be unclear exactly what is asserted by this second order claim about the goodness of goodness/satisfaction for some end, but to say that goodness is itself good is to say something of a different logical status than the first order claim. However interpreted, the claim that satisfaction and success are themselves good does not drive us to posit a property of goodness without an end.

¹² Compare this to the view defended by Christine Korsgaard in her influential paper ‘Two Distinctions in Goodness’.

The above discussion allows us to grant that there is indeed some point to the expression ‘good in itself’ when that phrase is rightly understood. It has at least two uses. First, things that are necessarily cases of adequacy or sufficiency can be said to be good in themselves insofar as their goodness follows from their definition. ‘Whatever is such as to satisfy a given end is such as to satisfy that end’ is necessarily true. For example, the virtue generosity, taken as a sufficiency of giving for praise, is a special case of goodness and so “a good in itself” in this way.

Second, things which are good for some end in view can be said to be good “in themselves” to the extent that they are good independently of other things. For instance, a happy and creative life is good in itself, or by itself, in the sense that independently of other things (such as additional money or more pleasures) it is a desirable thing. Likewise, if a certain act is praiseworthy and sufficient to be desired independently of whether it also profits the agent we can say that it is good in itself. (Indeed we may feel that under the circumstances a calculated act directed at gaining some personal advantage is to that extent defective.) Thus the expression ‘Generosity is good in itself’ can be true in at least two ways: as a necessary truth about the virtue being a special case of goodness; and as a truth about particular generous acts and what they need in order to be good for their ends. The ‘in itself’ does not indicate that there is no end in view, nor that the virtuous act has some special good-as-an-end property, nor that the subject is good for itself, whatever that could mean.

It may be that the ends in view are not restricted to those of the agent, and it may be that an agent’s ends do not all involve the satisfaction of his or her own desires. In judgments of

goodness the end in view is often left unspecified.¹³ However, there is no need for the reasoning to terminate in something with a special property of goodness in itself. Such a property would be useless so far as deliberation is concerned. Of what interest would it be? A thing cannot be good for itself, and a thing good for nothing else would be no good at all. Intoning the phrase ‘just plain good’ does not add to the idea’s intelligibility, nor does the expression ‘ought to be chosen’ tell us enough unless we know what end is in view. True, there is a use for the phrase ‘good in itself’. We can say that justice is a good in itself, for instance, meaning that a thing is such as to be desired insofar as it is really just, and that it is not desirable or praiseworthy to pursue a thing which is just, merely for the sake of some personal pleasure. But to try and dignify the objects of choice with an unintelligible notion of “simply good” does not contribute anything. The philosophical doctrine of goods as ends is a non sequitur and itself a dead end in the theory of value.

Conclusion

I have been contrasting two fundamental theories of value which have rarely been stated with enough clarity: on one, Platonic/Aristotelian version, value resides primarily in an end which is aimed at. On the other, pragmatist (or neopragmatist) conception, a subject’s value is just its capability, adequacy or sufficiency to realize an end. My goal, in support of the pragmatist, is to try and remove the various temptations that lure theorists into saying that

¹³ [Cf. Sparshott’s view that ‘X is good’ is to be analyzed as ‘X is such as to satisfy the interests of the person or persons concerned’, where it is not explicitly spelled out who those persons are.] I don’t mean to assert that all ends consist of desire satisfaction. It’s natural to say that excessive moisture is bad for a house. In so doing we suggest that the house has ends of structural integrity, though a house has no desires. However, the fact that humans have desires for the integrity and preservation of their own bodies is surely relevant to our assignment of ends to houses. These ends of a house are in any case not ends in themselves; and, of course, it is odd to talk about a house flourishing.

goodness is anything other than adequacy or sufficiency for ends. Not only is there no absolute good; there is no good in regard to an individual that is not goodness for an end in view.

In some ways, Kraut's view is not far from the thesis urged here, since his claim is that 'good' is a relational term, being relative to the individual whose advantage is served. For Kraut, the only real good in itself is what is some part or aspect of an individual's flourishing. He writes, '...I hold that a thing's making a contribution to someone's flourishing and its being good for someone are one and the same relationship' (AAG 70). Pleasure, for instance, he thinks is good for a person if and only if it contributes in this regard. He further suggests that there need not be any property of goodness which grounds judgments about what is good for someone (AAG 170f), though this sits ill with his conclusion, quoted above, that there must be a property of noninstrumental advantageousness (AAG 36).

With due skepticism Kraut quotes Immanuel Kant on the supposed intrinsic worth of the good will: "Like a jewel", Kant says, it "glistens in its own right as something that has its full worth in itself." (AAG 118; AAG 128).¹⁴ This is a revealing example, as jewels are in fact valuable only in virtue of the ends they are such as to serve. They gleam, they attract attention, they can be exchanged and they bring desire and delight. Kant's simile therefore undermines his own point. Yet Kraut replaces the big jewel of absolute good with many little jewels. While he is right to say that all goodness holds in respect of individuals, he should have moved further and concluded that the idea of goods in themselves for individuals is confused. Rather than elevate the expression 'good for an individual' while downplaying 'good for an end'; we should do the reverse. Why not simply hold that the goodness lies in being such as to contribute? But, like Aristotle, Kraut still has a residual notion that goodness must lie in the end rather than entirely in

¹⁴ *Grundlegung*, 4.394: "so würde er wie ein Juwel doch für sich selbst glänzen als etwas, das seinen vollen Wert in sich selbst hat".

the adequacy or sufficiency for an end.¹⁵ Kraut has rightly rejected absolute good but he should also reconsider the misleading instrumental/noninstrumental advantage distinction if he wants to bring us to a fuller understanding of value and practical reasoning.

Glen Koehn
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¹⁵ As Richard Bosley has stressed, the doctrine that excellence is a state lying in a mean between deficiency and excess is an advance toward recognizing goodness as sufficiency, though other strands in Aristotle's philosophy prevent him from fully exploiting his own insight that virtues are means.

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