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On the Good in Aristotle and Early Buddhism: A Response to Abraham Vélez

Damien Keown¹

Abstract

In an earlier publication I compared Aristotelian and Buddhist concepts of the consummate good. Abraham Vélez de Cea has claimed I misrepresent the nature of the good by restricting it to certain psychic states and excluding a range of other goods acknowledged by Aristotle and the Buddha. My aim here is to show that my understanding of the good is not the narrow one Vélez suggests. The article concludes with some observations on the relationship between moral and non-moral good in Buddhism.

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Introduction

In 1976 the distinguished scholar honored by this festschrift² published a seminal paper that gave significant impetus to a new branch of Buddhist Studies, namely Buddhist ethics. Combining meticulous textual research and careful argument in the manner characteristic of his work, Professor Premasiri explored the meaning of two key ethical terms—*kusala* and *puñña*—and showed that previous scholarship had erred in claiming that the Buddhist saint transcends good and evil, a misunderstanding now happily laid to rest. There remains much to say, of course, about the nature of the good in Buddhism, and the present article is a contribution to that topic.

In *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics (NBE)* I offered an interpretation of Buddhist ethics in terms of Aristotelian virtue ethics. Abraham Vélez finds fault with the account of the good I provide there, claiming that I restrict the consummate good to certain psychic states, in the case of Buddhism to the absence of greed, hatred, and delusion. This results in what he calls an “Abhidharma” view of the good, which he regards as deficient insofar as it excludes a range of other goods mentioned in Buddhist sources. Vélez describes these other goods as “proximate goals,” citing as examples “prosperity, fame, accumulation of merit, wholesome karma, and a happy rebirth” (126).³ In philosophical discussions, goods of this kind are commonly known as ordinary, ontic, or non-moral goods,

² This article will appear in a forthcoming festschrift in honor of P.D. Premasiri on his retirement in 2016. Thanks are due to the festschrift editor, Ven. Mahinda Deegalle, for permission for prior online publication in *JBE*.

³ These are similar to the benefits of *sīla* often referred to in the sources. A common list mentions five, namely a large fortune, a good reputation, confidence in public assemblies, an unconfused death, and a happy rebirth in heaven (e.g., DN.ii.85).

and as before I will retain the designation *non-moral* to distinguish them from moral goods like the virtues.⁴

I am grateful to Vélez for his constructive criticism, which provides an opportunity for me to clarify my position on this topic. I will do so by considering first, in section one, two different interpretations of the role of non-moral goods in well-being that have been attributed to Aristotle. The specific non-moral goods in question are the so-called “external goods,” examples of which include wealth, honor, and political power.

From here I go on to show, in section two, that I have never categorically excluded non-moral goods from either *eudaimonia* or *nirvāṇa* in the way Vélez suggests. In section three I clarify three issues which seem to have caused confusion, namely (i) the distinction between the good in its moral and non-moral forms; (ii) the role of psychology as a criterion of the right; and (iii) the relation between the right and the good in virtue ethics. In the fourth and final section I offer some reflections on the relationship between moral and non-moral good in Buddhism, and make a suggestion relating to Premasiri’s 1976 article mentioned above

I. Eudaimonia and External Goods

Vélez’s aim is to expand “Keown’s conception of virtue ethics, making it even more consistent with Aristotelian ethics and other Western traditions of virtue ethics” (140). He sees this as necessary because, in his view, “Keown proposes a version of virtue ethics where only teleological actions are part of the moral domain of the good” (132). The charge is

⁴ For a helpful discussion of the good in Buddhism see Gowans chapter 5.

that I restrict human good to the virtues, denying that other goods make a contribution to happiness. Vélez does not discuss Aristotle's view of non-moral goods in detail, and precisely what role Aristotle attributed to these goods is a matter of some dispute. Scholars have come to different conclusions, and debate on this point has produced an extensive literature.

A useful summary and contribution to the debate has been provided by T. D. Roche. As Roche informs the reader (34), in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE i.7) Aristotle initially offers only an "outline of the good" in terms of which eudaimonia is described as "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue . . . over a complete life" (NE 1098a16-20). The virtues are indisputably the primary component of eudaimonia, but as Roche explains, some commentators see evidence that Aristotle has expanded his initial sketch of eudaimonia when later (NE i.10) he asks rhetorically "What is to prevent us, then, from concluding that the happy person is the one who, *adequately furnished with external goods*, engages in activities in accordance with complete virtue?" (35, my emphasis). Aristotle mentions external goods elsewhere, but what are they, and how do they relate to eudaimonia?

At NE i.8, Aristotle reports the received view of his day that goods fall into three classes: goods of the soul (the moral and intellectual virtues, and positive feelings or affections such as pleasure); goods of the body (such as health, strength, and good looks); and external goods (such as wealth, friends, political power, noble birth, good children, and honor). The debate among interpreters of Aristotle concerns his understanding of the role of external goods in eudaimonia.

Opinion is divided broadly into two camps: those who believe that external goods are *included* in eudaimonia (what Roche calls the "I" interpretation); and those who believe they are *excluded* (the "E" interpretation). Roche suggests that while some scholars follow the "E" inter-

pretation, and others take an intermediate position, “Most interpreters agree that Aristotle holds that a human life can be regarded as happy only if it has an adequate supply of external goods” (37). He places himself in this last camp, but with an important qualification:

While I believe that I-interpreters are correct in thinking that at least some external goods make an intrinsic contribution to a person’s happiness, I believe that a crucial qualification to this position is required. The qualification is this: an external good, for Aristotle, can directly promote a person’s happiness only if that person is a virtuous person and therefore pursues and uses external goods in an excellent manner. (40)

Roche’s point is that *eudaimonia* is not enhanced merely by *possessing* external goods. Just as the possession of a lyre does not make one a musician, so external goods do not promote happiness unless pursued and used in a noble manner. Riches, for example, can contribute to *eudaimonia* in the hands of a generous person but not in the hands of a miser or a spendthrift.⁵ Aristotle believed that external goods enhance well-being by “embellishing” or “adding ornament” to their virtuous possessor (NE 1100b22-33), a point I will return to in the final section.

Historically, the “E” position is associated with the Stoics. As Roche notes, “The Stoics notoriously claimed that living in accordance with virtue was sufficient for *eudaimonia*. As long as an agent retains virtue, she cannot be dislodged from happiness” (37). This was thought to hold true even in the case of great misfortune, poverty, sickness, and the death of family and friends. Roche comments, “The Stoics go so far as to

⁵ The Buddha seems to be in agreement on this point since he informs Anāthapiṇḍika that wealth brings happiness only when it is righteously earned and righteously spent (AN.ii.69).

deny that the things Aristotle calls ‘external goods’ are really ever goods at all, reserving that expression for what they take to be the conditions that constitute *eudaimonia*, namely, the virtues” (37). In other words, for the Stoics, happiness consists solely in the exercise of good psychic states.⁶

It seems two main positions are available on the relation of external goods to *eudaimonia*. The “E” interpretation may be characterized as *monism about eudaimonia*, since it holds that *eudaimonia* consists of virtue alone. The “I” interpretation may be described as *pluralism about eudaimonia*, since it holds that *eudaimonia* consists of virtue supplemented by non-moral goods.

II. *Eudaimonia* and *Nirvāṇa*

The relation of external goods to *eudaimonia* is clearly a complex question. In what respect, then, does Vélez believe that I have departed from Aristotle’s position? The view attributed to me seems to correspond to the “E” interpretation, namely the Stoic view that non-moral goods make no contribution to *eudaimonia*. It is unclear why am I thought to hold this view since what I have said about the nature of the *summum bonum* in Buddhism and Aristotle does not support this interpretation.

Chapter eight of *NBE*, entitled “Buddhism and Aristotle,” marks the culmination of my argument that Buddhism can be understood as a form of virtue ethics on the Aristotelian model. The chapter explores various aspects of the relationship between these two systems of

⁶ As Roche explains (39), a variant of the Stoic position allows that external goods (which the Stoics termed “preferred indifferents”) can make an indirect contribution to *eudaimonia*.

thought. The first section—“*Eudaemonia* and *Nirvāṇa*”—is particularly relevant to the present topic. Curiously, Vélez makes no reference to this discussion, which is unfortunate since it has an important bearing on his critique. There I state: “I will argue that *eudaemonia* and *nirvāṇa* are functionally and conceptually related in that both constitute the final goal, end and *summum bonum* of human endeavour” (195). I also say: “This formal equivalence of *eudaemonia* and *nirvāṇa* seems unexceptionable, and in fact involves little more than the conceptual unpacking of the notion of an inclusive final goal” (199).

Note the characterization of *eudaimonia/nirvāṇa* as an *inclusive* final goal. I made no distinction between moral and non-moral good since the discussion concerned the conceptual similarities between *eudaimonia* and *nirvāṇa* rather than their substantive content. However, nowhere do I suggest that goods other than the virtues are excluded. On the contrary, I point out that *eudaimonia* and *nirvāṇa* both function as “second-order ends,” which means “a kind of umbrella covering a range or cluster of primary or first-order ends” (196).

I quote Aristotle’s characterization of the final good (*eudaimonia*) as that which “makes life desirable and lacking in nothing,” hardly a narrow criterion, and cite his comment that *eudaimonia* is “most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others” (197). I offered this as the reason *eudaimonia/nirvāṇa* cannot be identified with a single dominant end, since the end as perfective should be “inclusive of other goods rather than opposed to them” (197).

The discussion also mentioned Aristotle’s reference in the *Eudemian Ethics* to four possible ends around which a person may organize her life, namely “honour, or reputation, or riches, or intellectual cultivation” (198). The first three of these are external goods. With respect to the fourth, intellectual cultivation, I made the point that the proposal to make wisdom (*prajñā*) a dominant end in Buddhism “fails to do justice to

the rich and complex pattern of other worthwhile ends commended in the texts,” adding in the next sentence “The Buddha recognized a plurality of human goods” (200).

I concluded my discussion of the formal similarities between *eudaimonia* and *nirvāṇa* by noting that in the case of Buddhism, the thesis that the *summum bonum* can be identified with a single dominant end such as wisdom “cannot account for the value which Buddhist sources place upon morality and other non-intellectual human goods such as love and friendship” (201). Friendship is an important external good for both Aristotle and Buddhism.

My conclusion in *NBE*, then, was that the Buddhist *summum bonum* of *nirvāṇa* can be understood as a superordinating *inclusive* final end conceptually similar to Aristotle’s *eudaimonia*. The discussion specifically mentions non-moral goods such as honor, reputation, riches, and friendship, and makes no suggestion that these are to be excluded. On the contrary, I say we are to understand *eudaimonia* as including “a number of good things in harmonious combination” (199). This is a clear endorsement of the position earlier labeled *pluralism about eudaimonia*. Why, then, does Vélez suggest that I depart from the view of Aristotle, and restrict the content of *eudaimonia* to the virtues alone?

III. Conceptual Clarification

There seem to be three reasons Vélez believes I hold what might be termed a “thin” theory of the good.

(i) Moral and non-moral good

Vélez objects to my description of the goods he designates as “proximate goals” as “non-moral consequences of ethical action” (126). He notes “Buddhist ethics in practice seems to unanimously consider the proximate goals as part of the Buddhist moral domain” (126). In his view the proximate goals are “moral consequences of moral action,” and he suggests there are no grounds to characterize the consequences of moral actions as “non-moral” because “When they are consequences of moral actions, they are necessarily moral, as moral as the actions that produced them” (126).

The problem here is essentially semantic. The distinction between moral and non-moral goodness has its basis in value theory. As Frankena explains:

The sorts of things that may be morally good or bad are persons, groups of persons, traits of character, dispositions, emotions, motives, and intentions—in short, persons, groups of persons, and elements of personality. All sorts of things, on the other hand, may be nonmorally good or bad, for example: physical objects like cars and paintings; experiences like pleasure, pain, knowledge, and freedom; and forms of government like democracy.

Accordingly, he continues:

When we judge actions or persons to be morally good or bad we always do so because of the motives, intentions, dispositions, or traits of character they manifest. When we make nonmoral judgments it is on very different grounds or reasons, and the grounds or reasons vary from case to case, depending, for example, on whether our

judgment is one of intrinsic, instrumental, or aesthetic value (62).

On this basis, *moral* goodness is a specific form of goodness pertaining to voluntary human action and its motivating psychology. This is the goodness Kant locates in the “good will” and the goodness the Buddha has in mind when he defines karma in terms of intention (AN.iii.415). Clearly, this goodness can only be a property of autonomous moral agents. At the same time, as noted in the earlier discussion, an individual’s *well-being* can be affected (according to the “I” interpretation at least) by goods like wealth and honor. These goods are known as non-moral goods to distinguish them from the goodness that characterizes voluntary human action.

Vélez assumes that by describing the things that make a person well-off as “non-moral” goods, I seek to exclude them from the “moral domain” and thus deny them a role in well-being. That this is simply a misunderstanding should be clear from the discussion in section two.

(ii) *The psychological criterion of the right*

The second reason concerns my emphasis on psychology as a criterion of the right. Expressing what I take to be the orthodox Theravāda view, I stated: “An act is right if it is virtuous, i.e., performed on the basis of Liberality (*arāga*), Benevolence (*adosa*) and Understanding (*amoha*)” (178). I also said “It is the preceding motivation (*cetanā*) which determines the moral quality of the act and not its consequences,” noting that “In terms of Buddhist psychology . . . the locus of good and evil is to be found in the human psyche—not in the consequences of actions in the world at large” (179). In this emphasis on psychology Vélez sees evidence that I deny importance to consequences in moral evaluation, reinforcing his belief that I exclude the “proximate goals” from well-being.

Here I should explain that the above comments occur in a discussion of the dissimilarities between Buddhism and utilitarianism. The reason for introducing psychology in this context was to contrast the utilitarian claim that rightness is a function of consequences *alone*, with the Buddhist view that intention plays a central role in moral evaluation. This was not intended as a claim that Buddhism recognizes *only* psychological criteria. The objective was to highlight a crucial difference with utilitarianism, not to provide a comprehensive formulation of Buddhist moral criteria.

It can readily be admitted—contrary to what is taught in the *Abhidhamma*—that ethics is not simply a branch of psychology. Indeed, I have argued as much myself (“Compassionate”), and Vélez is certainly right that a comprehensive set of Buddhist moral criteria will make reference to more than an agent’s state of mind.⁷ We might say that while virtuous motivation is a *necessary* condition of right action, it is not *sufficient*, and a sound moral evaluation will also take into account relevant circumstances, such as reasonably foreseeable consequences and the morally salient features of the object acted upon.⁸ In stressing the incompatibility between Buddhist and utilitarian criteria of the right, I had no wish to deny an *appropriate* role to consequences or exclude the “proximate goals” from well-being.

⁷ For a discussion of moral criteria in early Buddhism, see also Harvey (1995; 1999).

⁸ Buddhaghosa’s references to size and sanctity (e.g., *Sumāṅgalavilāsinī* 69f) are examples of how the nature of the object acted upon (what Western scholastics termed the *materia circa quam*) plays a role in moral evaluation. However, there appears to be no systematic *Abhidhamma* account of the rationale underlying this criterion. For a fuller critique of the *Abhidhamma*’s “psychological ethics” see Keown (“Compassionate”).

(iii) The right and the good

The final reason is related to the previous one, and concerns the conceptual implications of the psychological criterion of the right for the understanding of the good. In a discussion of formal considerations as to why Buddhism cannot be utilitarian, I stated: “Unlike utilitarian theories Buddhism does not define the right independently from the good,” noting that “the right and the good in Buddhism are inseparably intertwined” (177). I also said “*Nirvāṇa* is the good, and rightness is predicated of acts and intentions to the extent which they participate in nirvanic goodness.”⁹ The corollary of this, which I also affirmed, is that “If an action does not display nirvanic qualities then it cannot be right in terms of Buddhist ethics” (177).

I think that taken alongside the psychological criterion of the right stated earlier, these statements lead Vélez to see a problem that might be formulated in the following manner: if the right is specified in terms of virtuous motivation, and the right and the good are “inseparably intertwined,” surely it follows that the good consists of the virtues alone?

The conclusion, however, does not follow. The reason the right and the good are “inseparably intertwined” in virtue ethics is that the right has a constitutive or part/whole relation to the good such that only virtuous acts can promote eudaimonia/*nirvāṇa*. Thus the means and the end are the same: what one does to *become* a Buddha is the same as what one does *as* a Buddha.¹⁰

For utilitarianism, however, the means and the end are *not* the same because the right has an instrumental relation to the good. This

⁹ Here and throughout all references to *nirvāṇa* are to *nirvāṇa* “with remainder.”

¹⁰ I take this observation from Engelmajer (“Perfect” 46).

means that immoral acts can be right if they promote an overall net balance of good (for example, greater happiness or pleasure). For utilitarianism, an act does not need to partake of the good to be right: an act can promote the good of pleasure without being pleasurable, for instance, whereas for virtue ethics an act cannot promote eudaimonia unless it is at the same time virtuous.

The virtues, then, are a constitutive rather than instrumental means to the good. The important point, however, is that it does not follow that because the *right* is defined in psychological terms (such as the absence of greed, hatred and delusion), the *good* must be restricted to psychological states. It remains an open question whether happiness involves more than the possession of a virtuous character. It follows that when *nirvāṇa* is defined as the end of greed, hatred, and delusion (SN.38.2) we must understand this in the manner of Aristotle's initial characterization of eudaimonia, as a concise rather than exclusive definition. Understood in this way, the assertion that "*Nirvāṇa* is the good" does not entail a commitment to *monism about eudaimonia*.

IV. Buddhism and Non-moral Goods

The discussion so far has aimed at clearing up misunderstandings. This final section offers some observations on the relationship between moral and non-moral good in Buddhism.

As noted, Vélez speaks of the goods that flow from moral conduct as "proximate goals," but this has the disadvantage of depicting moral conduct as an instrumental means to securing goods.¹¹ I think Buddhism

¹¹ I suspect only a minority of Buddhists practice morality primarily to achieve worldly or otherworldly rewards. Buddhists may well aspire to the five things "wished for and

teaches that the higher motivation is to pursue the good selflessly, and that for one who does so, non-moral goods arise spontaneously.¹² As Peter Harvey notes, “doing a good action simply because it is seen to have pleasant results is not the highest of motives—it is better to value goodness in itself, and the peace and wisdom that it facilitates” (*Introduction* 19). For this reason, someone who gives with a mind fixed on a good rebirth is said to be “resolved on what is inferior” (*tassa taṃ cittaṃ hīne vimuttaṃ*) (AN.iv.239). Buddhaghosa reiterates the point, and confirms that the highest motivation for moral action is deontological:

That undertaken just out of desire for fame is inferior; that undertaken just out desire for the fruits of karmically fruitful actions is medium; that undertaken for the sake of the Noble state thus, ‘This is to be done’, is superior’ (*Vism.* 13).

Perhaps, then, Aristotle’s characterization of external goods as “embellishments” is more helpful in understanding the place of non-

rarely gained in the world” (a long life, beauty, happiness, fame, and rebirth in heaven) (AN.iii.47), and have a confident expectation that good deeds will bring such rewards in this life or the next. This does not mean, however, that such expectations constitute the *motivation* for their moral conduct. The five things mentioned are to be gained, according to the wise, by “heedfulness in doing deeds of merit” (*appamādaṃ pasamsanti, puññakiriyāsu paṇḍitā*), which I take to mean by the performance of virtuous actions motivated by an appreciation of their intrinsic moral worth. Vélez, however, apparently sees nothing wrong in “Aiming at *nirvāṇa* out of spiritual greed and observing the five precepts out of craving for some worldly reward or fear of punishment after death” (125). It is hard to see how actions motivated by greed and craving could bring benefits of any kind. Even when the motivation is mixed, as is not uncommonly the case, it is only the virtuous element that produces good results. Heaven, furthermore, is not so much a “proximate goal” on the road to *nirvāṇa* as a lengthy detour.

¹² In Kantian terms, this is the person who acts autonomously as opposed to heteronomously. In virtue ethics, of course, the truly virtuous agent acts spontaneously out of a desire for the good rather than contrary to natural inclination.

moral goods in Buddhism.¹³ The Pāli term for the benefits of *sīla* is *ānisaṃsa*, a word that connotes gain, advantage, or reward. The *Dictionary of the Pali Text Society* (s.v. *ānisaṃsa*) describes the benefits of morality as “blessings which accrue to the virtuous.” The non-moral goods that arise as the fruit of moral practice, accordingly, may be more appropriately characterized not as “proximate goals” but as “blessings” or “adornments.” Such things enhance the well-being of their virtuous possessor in the way that fine clothes or jewelry enhance the beauty of their wearer. *Sīla* is itself often described using the language of aesthetics as an adornment (*alaṃkāra*), and likened to perfume (*gandha*) and other precious objects (NBE 54).

Do non-moral goods enhance the well-being of both laity and monastics? It may be thought not, since non-moral goods like pleasure, wealth, political power, and good children, reflect worldly concerns that seems inappropriate for the renunciate.¹⁴ It seems accepted, however, that certain non-moral goods also contribute to the well-being of the renouncer. Earlier I noted that friendship is an important external good for Buddhism. This is evident from Sāriputta’s description of the holy life (*brahmacariya*) as one of “good friendship, good companionship, and good comradeship” (SN.v.3f). Elsewhere, sources like the *Ākankheyya Sutta* (MN 6) describe the many benefits that accrue to a monk who fulfills *sīla*, including being “held in respect and esteem by his fellows.”¹⁵

¹³ One difference between Buddhism and Aristotle is that in Buddhism possession of the external goods is karmically guaranteed, whereas for Aristotle it is a matter of fortune.

¹⁴ According to AN.i.115, a monk should be “repelled, humiliated and disgusted” at the prospect of a heavenly rebirth. Layfolk, by contrast, conventionally aspire to a heavenly rebirth in the hope of enjoying non-moral goods in greater abundance than kings on earth (AN.i.213).

¹⁵ *Sabrahmacārīnaṃ piyo ca assaṃ manāpo ca garu ca bhāvanīyo ca* (MN.i.33).

Friendship and reputation are non-moral goods repeatedly associated with monks.¹⁶

When the sources eulogize the Buddha, moreover, they do so by referring—as in the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (DN 4)—not only to his good reputation but also to his noble birth, family wealth, good looks, and bodily perfection (as seen in the thirty-two marks). Mere possession of these goods, of course, does not make one a “Brahmin” any more than possession of a lyre makes one a musician. The irreducible core of well-being, as the *sutta* makes clear, is moral and intellectual virtue (*sīla* and *paññā*). Nevertheless, it would seem even the Buddha’s well-being is enhanced by non-moral goods of the kind mentioned, otherwise there would be little point in drawing attention to them. The difference between laity and monks, then, is not that the former are benefitted by non-moral goods while the latter are not, but that certain non-moral goods are incompatible with the monastic vocation.

I conclude with a suggestion relating to Premasiri’s early paper mentioned at the outset. As is well known, the early sources employ two terms of moral commendation—*kusala* and *puñña*—and the preceding discussion may shed light on why this is. I suggest the nature of the relationship between *kusala* and *puñña* is best understood as the relationship of moral to non-moral goodness.¹⁷ It follows that theories that seek to distinguish *kusala* and *puñña* on psychological grounds—such as by reference to quality of motivation—overlook a more fundamental ontological distinction.

¹⁶ On friendship: AN i.14; iv.31; iv.282. On reputation (one of the “eight worldly conditions”): AN.ii.66; iii.147; iv.156.

¹⁷ I have previously made a similar suggestion (*NBE* 123-7). Various opinions have been expressed on the meaning of *kusala* and *puñña* by Premasiri, Vélez, and Adam, and—in a commendable clarification of the issues with which I am in substantial agreement—Evans.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this article was to show that I do not hold the “thin” theory of the good attributed to me by Vélez. I offered clarification on three points that may underlie this attribution. Two views on the relation of the external goods to eudaimonia were also considered, and if the “proximate goals” are thought of simply as stepping stones towards virtue, it would seem to be Vélez, rather than myself, who follows the narrower “E” interpretation.¹⁸ My preference is for the “I” interpretation, which sees eudaimonia/*nirvāṇa* as comprising both moral and non-moral goods. Non-moral goods, when rightly acquired and used, can be conceptualized as the “embellishment” or “adornment” of virtue, and in appropriate configurations directly enhance the well-being of both laity and monks.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
DN	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
MN	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
NE	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
NBE	<i>The Nature of Buddhist Ethics</i>
SN	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

¹⁸ Vélez writes, “one can consider *puñña* and the proximate goals as stepping stones towards *kusala* and the ultimate goal of *nirvāṇa*” (131).

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