

CHAPTER 2

BEYOND INSTRUMENTALISATION

At the age of fifty-one the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy entered a crisis. In *My Confessions*, he describes his life before the breakdown, which led him to consider suicide:

All that happened to me when I was on every side surrounded by what is considered to be complete happiness. I had a good, loving and beloved wife, good children and a large estate, which grew and increased without any labour on my part. I was respected by my neighbours and friends, and more than ever before, I was praised by strangers and, without any self-deception could consider my name famous... I was in full command of my mental and physical powers, such as I had rarely met with people of my own age: physically, I could work in a field, mowing, without falling behind a peasant... (Tolstoy 1983)

The passage is striking because Tolstoy characterises his former life in terms of the results he had achieved rather than as a set of valuable activities. For example, he regarded his estate as a cash cow that grew effortlessly as opposed to an opportunity for meaningful work, and this implies that he conceived work as a chore to be avoided. Tolstoy also describes his literary career in terms of the resulting fame and praise rather than as a love. Concerning his health, he emphasises that he can keep up with the peasants. There is even the slight suggestion that his wife and children are like well-behaved possessions that do not cause him any trouble. In short, his description of his former happiness focuses on the end-result of his activities rather than their inherent meaning or value.

Tolstoy depicts this period of his life as hollow. However, the damage may have been self-inflicted, albeit unwittingly. One can eradicate the value or meaning in one's life by treating one's actions purely as instrumental to goals, such as fame and status. This damaging conception of value is implicit in a standard view of rationality that portrays all rationality as instrumental. In short, what's at stake is the way that we conceive of the value of our activities, ourselves and our lives. Any account of well-being must have these relationships right, otherwise our understanding of well-being will dehumanise us. Tolstoy shows us that instrumentalisation, or the lack of it, is an ingredient of well-being.

Consider also the famous *Myth of Sisyphus*. To emphasise the grotesquely absurd nature of human endeavour, the French Existentialist philosopher Albert Camus paints a bleak picture of the life of Sisyphus, which consists in his rolling a huge stone up a steep hill. The gods condemn Sisyphus to repeat his action endlessly. Every time he nears the top, the stone rolls down again (Camus 1991). Sisyphus' fate appears pathetic only because we assume that the point of his existence is to reach the peak of the hill. If, on the contrary, we give up this assumption, and imagine that Sisyphus loves stone rolling, we can paint an entirely different portrait in which he repeats his actions with delight and thanks the gods that the stone never reaches the summit. Sisyphus' destiny appears depressing because we assume that the value of his activity is defined by a goal that he can never achieve.

Seen in this way, strangely enough, the fact that Sisyphus never attains his goal is not strictly relevant to Camus' story. Sisyphus' life would seem valueless even if he reached the crest of the hill because his actions are depicted only as instrumentally valuable to achieve a goal, rather like Tolstoy's despair in the midst of plenty. The two examples share an underlying conception of value; insofar as we define value in terms of the goals of our activities, we treat the activities themselves merely as instrumentally valuable, thereby denying their intrinsic value.¹ In contrast, to recognise the value of an activity is to regard the process of engaging in it as something worthwhile in itself. Of course, this does not mean that results are unimportant, rather it requires us to revise the way we conceive of their value in relation to actions. In a way, the German philosopher Kant has an answer to the problems of Tolstoy and Sisyphus. Kant's notion of dignity and the Categorical Imperative is usually seen as important in ethics (Kant 2003). We will be showing how it is needed to understand well-being.

To develop a conception of value that is required for a framework for well-being, we will show how a commonly-held instrumental conception of rationality is fundamentally mistaken and deeply misleading. We will discuss what should replace it, and how all of this is vital for understanding well-being. As the discussion progresses, we will use real-life stories, collected as part of our research, to illustrate different ways in which ordinary people instrumentalise their activities.

THE INSTRUMENTAL CONCEPTION OF RATIONALITY

We can define the standard instrumental conception of rationality as follows. Given that a person wants X, and given that, to achieve X, she will have to perform actions that are means to X then, according to instrumental rationality, the following theses will be true:

- A) As means, these actions have only instrumental value;
- B) The goal or end X has intrinsic value as such;
- C) Thus, the person rationally ought to choose the most efficient means to the end.

This common view of rationality is concerned exclusively with defining the most efficient means to a given set of goals or ends (Bermudez 2009: 12-14) and it underlies standard economic theories that characterise production and consumption as means for maximising utility. Instrumental rationality has four features, which make it good for solving specific problems, but inappropriate as a framework for conceiving well-being.

1. Given Goals

Instrumental rationality assumes that a goal or a set of goals is given (Nozick 1993). Furthermore, it requires that the alternative means are already defined and ready for selection. They must be a fixed, exclusive and exhaustive set of possibilities, so that there remains only the choice between them on the grounds of their relative efficiency.

These points indicate two well-known limitations of instrumental rationality. First, typically, problems are not neatly pre-packaged in the way such reasoning requires. We have to know what concepts to apply to a problem, which necessitates answering the questions: In what terms should the problem be framed? What is the problem? Once these questions are answered and the relevant goals are clear, much of the work is already completed. Second, instrumental concepts, such as 'efficiency', 'savings', and 'usefulness', are essentially relative to a goal. They presuppose an aim. Instrumental rationality selects the most efficient means to a goal, but it does not help us to choose rationally among a variety of ends, except on the grounds of cost

efficiency. The response to this limitation is to argue that there is only one thing of intrinsic value, namely utility, which enables us to compare the value of different more specific aims.

2. Restricted Relevance

The second feature of instrumental reasoning is that only the features relevant to the attaining of the defined goal are important. What is relevant is defined solely by the achievement of the specified goal. For example, if the objective is to arrive for the appointment by 9.00 a.m., then the only relevant feature of the walk or journey is the time, energy and cost that it takes to arrive on time. This implies that the value of the activity as a living process is irrelevant. However, any activity is also an experience to enjoy, like a stroll. The standard conception of instrumental reasoning can only accommodate this point by assuming that people have an overarching aim to increase their utility. In this way, the enjoyment derived from the walk itself can be factored into the efficiency calculation.

3. Justification

The third feature is that the burden of justification must be borne entirely by the goal. Since what is merely instrumental has no value *per se* at all, its use is a cost, which should be proportionate to the value of the goal. According to the instrumental conception, a long chain of means constitutes an accumulation of costs, and the goal would need to be sufficiently valuable to make incurring these costs worth the while. Behind this point lies what we might call 'means exhaustion.' For instance, Elisabeth, a mother of two teenage sons, assumes that the point of sending her children to an expensive private school is to enable them to get in a good university in order to receive a degree, which is required for a good job, which is necessary for a high salary. Of course, money too has only instrumental value, and so the chain of instrumental justification must continue. At each step, the cost of the whole chain of means gets heavier, until it may *seem* that no goal could be worth all that effort. This phenomenon is a feature of the instrumental conception of rationality.

4. Minimising Costs

The essence of instrumental rationality is that we should be efficient. This means that we should cut or minimise costs. This view of rationality is concerned exclusively with the most efficient means to a given set of goals.

THE ARGUMENT

We shall argue that the instrumental conception of rationality is flawed because it does not allow us to articulate what is valuable. Rejecting it will transform our understanding of the relationship between our activities and their goals in a way that is significantly important for well-being (Thomson, 2002a)

Let's state the argument in three steps. The instrumental conception commits us to the disastrous view that all our goal-directed actions as such have only instrumental value. By definition, goal-directed actions are means to goals, and if all means *as such* have only instrumental value then actions *as means* cannot be intrinsically valuable. In other words, the instrumental conception implies that all goal-seeking activities as such have only instrumental value. Thus, it contradicts the possibility that the activities themselves can have intrinsic or non-instrumental value.

Second, the claim that all such activities have only instrumental value implies that the person herself is only instrumentally valuable. This is because one's goal-directed activities constitute part of one's life, and in some sense, one's life constitutes oneself. Thus, to regard all one's goal-directed actions as merely instrumental implies treating oneself as merely instrumentally valuable. It is like saying 'what is valuable about me and my life are only the results that I achieve.' Indeed, one of our participants, Stanley (see his story below), enumerated some desirable achievements, claiming that, without them, his life would have been wasted. This kind of thinking and mentality is not uncommon amongst the people we spoke to.

Third, such a claim would defeat the very idea of anything being valuable. If it were true of everyone that they have no intrinsic value, then nothing could have value. If anything has non-instrumental value, then persons do. If persons don't, then nothing has non-instrumental value; in which case, nothing can have instrumental value.

In brief the argument can be summarised as follows:

1. If the claims of the instrumental conception of rationality were true, then all of one's goal-directed actions as such would have only instrumental value.
2. If all of a person's goal-directed actions as such have only instrumental value then the person has only instrumental value.
3. It is not true that persons have only instrumental value.
4. Therefore, the claims of the instrumental conception of rationality are not true.

In short, the instrumental conception of rationality instrumentalises our actions and hence dehumanises our lives, which makes value impossible. Crudely, it turns us into machines for achieving results. Let us review these premises one by one.

Premise 1

The principle that things that are only instrumentally valuable should be used efficiently is true. For example, all other things being equal, it is irrational to pay more rather than less for the same product or to use more energy than one needs. This same principle *seems* to apply to our goal-directed actions because, by definition, such actions are means to some end. Additionally, the instrumental conception of rationality entails that means as such have only instrumental value. Because of A) above, it implies that if an action is essentially a means then, as such, it has only instrumental value. This, in turn, denies the non-instrumental value of the goal-directed activity, as such.²

We can also view this argument from the backdoor, the other side. In accordance with B above, the instrumental conception of rationality claims that all intrinsic values are goals and only goals have intrinsic value. Given this, then all goal-seeking activity necessarily has only instrumental value (because the activity itself isn't the goal).³

Premise 2

Let us assume that premise 1) is true and briefly examine some of its counter-intuitive implications. To utilise a means is to incur a cost, and an action that is merely instrumentally valuable is a cost that we pay to achieve a goal. Efficiency requires that we should achieve our goals at minimal cost. Thus, we should always minimise the time and energy spent to achieve the desired results. To do otherwise would be irrational. Hence, the use of instrumentally valuable actions should be minimised in so far as possible. The ideal of efficiency would be to

achieve all of one's goals without the need for expending any means at all, i.e. at no cost. To make this point vivid, imagine that one can achieve one's aims instantly just by snapping one's fingers. This is the finger-click test: it provides a way to judge whether one is treating something as only instrumentally valuable. If one is willing to click one's fingers to attain a goal, then what one dispenses with is considered as a cost. What we dispense with in such a case is not considered a loss of something valuable, but as a gain in efficiency.

The sting in the tail is that the instrumental conception of rationality would require one to treat all goal-directed actions as subject to the finger click test. Something that is merely instrumentally valuable is a cost, and the ideal of efficiency would be to achieve our goals without any cost. Thus, premise 1 claims that the instrumental conception of rationality implies that all our goal-directed actions are only costs. The error of choosing our activities only for the sake of an external goal, as we shall see, is clearly reflected in some of our participants' stories, such as that of Adrian.

Adrian is 62. After 38 years in the public sector, he took early retirement. Yet he still attributes most of his life-long misery to what he calls 'that horrible job'. The slide into ill-being began at 22, when he accepted his first post with a good salary. He disliked the stressful work from the outset and tried to leave within two years. It was money that tightened its grip. He needed a car to commute, a spacious flat to live comfortably, and enough to cover bills, daily expenses, plus the holidays. Within a few years, he realised he was no longer choosing the job so much as being held by it: his life had been organised around the income it provided.

Now retired on a generous pension, Adrian appeared to have the freedom he once imagined would restore him. Yet he cannot shake the sense that something has been permanently damaged. He describes his life as 'spoilt', as though well-being were no longer available to him, even after the job has ended.

The second premise asks us to take this counter-intuitive result to its logical conclusion. When we think of a person, we are apt to imagine a body frozen in time, and this allows us to conceive of a person and her life as distinct. However, in some sense, a person consists of her life. A life is a person in time; a person is a dynamic and historical life, a body in action. In a sense, I am constituted by my life. Next step: a person's life consists (at least in part) of the actions, activities, experiences and processes that he or she performs and lives through. The actions that I perform, the activities I engage in, and the experiences and processes that I live through are all parts of my life, which comprises me. Given this, if all activities were merely of instrumental value, then so is the life of the person. In short, the claim that actions as means have only instrumental value entails that a person only matters instrumentally as means to what she achieves.

Premise 3

It is patently absurd to claim a person is only instrumentally valuable to the achievement of a set of goals. Such a supposition defeats the very idea of anything having value at all because for things to have value implies that there is a reason for beings to choose them; values are essentially in part reasons for action or choice for persons. They are supposed to guide choice. This implies that if anything has value then a person has. More specifically, if anything has instrumental value then there must be something that also has intrinsic value, and if anything has intrinsic value then so do persons.

To make this absurdity vivid, we can apply the finger-click test. The instrumental conception of rationality requires that all one's goal-directed actions pass the test. So universalised, it implies the ludicrous result that a person's life would be subject to the finger-click test. In short, identifying value with goals entails that a person is only valuable as an instrument to what she could achieve. It requires regarding oneself as a machine for the realisation of one's own goals. The finger-click test makes clear that this is rather like suicide without actual death because it is effectively the same as wishing one's life away. It is like proclaiming: 'I am no more than a cost'. From this, we can appreciate the poignancy of Tolstoy's portrayal of his early life. In effect, he inadvertently or implicitly wished for his own death by treating all his actions as having only instrumental value. He finger-clicked himself to death.

THE SOLUTION

We have a problem: a commonly accepted and apparently plausible view of rationality leads to absurd consequences, and it does not permit us logically to even articulate the notion of valuable activities that we need to describe well-being.

The solution is the deceptively simple claim: 'actions are intrinsically valuable means'. This ought to sound strange: custom associates the word 'means' with 'instrumentally valuable' as if they were Siamese twins. This is precisely what we need to deny. To escape the traditional conception of rationality, we must separate two distinctions: on the one hand, instrumental and intrinsic value, and on the other means and ends. This frees us to reject the gruesome assumption of instrumental rationality that all means as such have only instrumental value (A above), and that the only things that have intrinsic value are ends as such (B above).

The first distinction is instrumental versus non-instrumental value. Something is instrumentally valuable insofar as it has value not for what it is but because of what it leads to or facilitates. For example, money has purely instrumental value; it is only good because of what it can buy. On the other hand, happiness is said to have non-instrumental value. It is good in itself because of what it is. Of course, some things such as health can have both kinds of value. The second distinction is means versus ends. An end is a goal. Typically, our actions are directed towards goals or ends and, as such, they are means. A means is something that is causally relevant or necessary to achieving a goal. An end is such a goal.

The instrumental conception of rationality conjoins these two pairs of distinctions. Because of theses A) & B), it implies that all means as such have only instrumental value and that only ends as such have intrinsic value. This failure has two related disastrous consequences: means as means have only instrumental value, and only goals as goals can have non-instrumental value. In other words:

1. Goal-directed actions as means cannot be intrinsically valuable.
2. Anything of non-instrumental value must be a goal or an end as such.

In summary, by failing to distinguish instrumental/non-instrumental value and means/ends, instrumental rationality implies that a person's life is a dispensable cost to his/her goals. It denies the value of persons. The remedy is simple; by separating the two distinctions, we can claim that actions as means can have intrinsic value, and deny that only goals have non-instrumental value.

The need for this point can be illustrated with a story.

There was once a fisherman living in the South Sea Islands, who caught a fish a day. Once he had caught his fish, he went home and rested. A foreigner came to the fisherman and entreated him to give up his laziness and be more active. "Imagine," said the foreigner, "you could catch at least four fish a day." The fisherman was silent in thought for a moment; "what would I do with the extra three fish?" he asked. "You could sell them in the market." The fisherman pondered this idea, "But what would I do with the money?" The foreigner replied, "Why, you could buy a stall in the market and make more money." But now the fisherman was puzzled. "But what would I do with this money?" he asked. The foreigner answered: "You could buy the whole market and make even more money." Now the fisherman was bewildered: "What would I do with yet more money?" The answer came without pause for thought: "Why, you could retire and go fishing!"

THE RELEVANCE TO WELL-BEING

The double distinction that we have just drawn is relevant to well-being in three inter-related ways, which we will elaborate in subsequent sections.

First, it is relevant because it transforms the way that we should think about our goals and their relationship to our activities, including for instance work. We are accustomed to the idea that the value of what we are doing consists in the results that we attain. We have now seen this idea cannot be correct. The point isn't simply to reaffirm that activities such as work are *also* intrinsically valuable. It is rather that this simple truth cannot be recognised by the standard instrumental conception of rationality. Insofar as we are under the spell of this conception, we have core value relationships the wrong way around. The value isn't in the end; it is in the means when those are activities.

Second, the distinction suggests that persons are the primary bearers of non-instrumental value (Downie and Telfer 1969). The traditional conception entails that a person has value only because his or her goals have value. According to this view, ends make persons valuable rather than the other way around. Consequently, the instrumentalist view of rationality cannot recognise the value of persons. We can turn this negative conclusion into a positive guiding principle for our thinking about well-being.

Third, the distinction is important for the composition of well-being. One significant way of having ill-being is to instrumentalise: either one treats things that have only instrumental value as if they had intrinsic value or the other way around, one treats things of intrinsic value as if they were only instrumentally valuable. So, for instance, a person who is obsessive about money might fall into the first category, and a person who uses his friends as tools might fall into the second. Of primary importance is the idea that a person can instrumentalise himself and/or parts of his own life, and that this constitutes a form of ill-being.

In a sense, something that is merely instrumentally valuable is not valuable at all; it's worth is entirely derivative. Consequently, whereas something intrinsically valuable should be promoted and appreciated, the use of things of merely instrumental value should be cut insofar as possible. The term 'instrumental value' hides the point that such things are costs. The finger-click test brings this out. The hidden point implies that insofar as we characterise the value of our actions instrumentally, we cannot appreciate the intrinsic value of the activity. Thus, insofar as one instrumentalises an activity, its value cannot become part of one's well-being because

one cannot connect appreciatively to its intrinsic value. As we shall illustrate with Stanley's life, instrumentalising is a form of ill-being.

Stanley regards himself an entrepreneur. An enthusiastic man in his early 30s, he loves French cheese and the Pyrenean mountains, and he has an interest and talent in renovating old houses and restoring them to their former glory. At the time of the interview, Stanley's preoccupation was to develop his own company - a building and decoration business that focuses on renovating houses. To make this start-up business profitable, Stanley worked very hard, to the extent of exhausting himself. He hired more people, borrowed more money to pay his growing team, sought more projects to generate more income, and dealt with more clients. However, increasingly customers became dissatisfied because Stanley and his team were over-stretched by an unmanageable workload. The concern for making money soon took control over all else. When Stanley met with us, he was nearing breaking point because of the pressure of his work. When asked why he was working like this, Stanley went quiet and thought for a moment, and then replied slowly: "So that I could make enough money and eventually buy an old house in Southern France where I would enjoy nice French cheese and restore the house to its former glory."

According to the traditional conception of rationality, insofar as an action is a means, it has only instrumental value; accordingly, the hard work of Stanley and his team would be merely a cost to be minimised, and not something to be appreciated as intrinsically valuable. Like the earlier story of the fisherman, this is ironic because renovating and decorating houses is precisely the kind of activity that Stanley enjoys. But, by instrumentalising them, he was unable to appreciate them.

In identifying means and instrumental value, the traditional conception of rationality implies that *no* action can be appreciated as something of intrinsic value, and so the struggle to accumulate more means of only instrumental value will appear to be ultimately without any value. In short, the conception renders all activities valueless and converts our lives into that of Sisyphus. It is the contemporary version of the Midas touch: a little tap and everything turns instrumental. We can never actually chew the grass; we can only keep making it greener on the other side.⁴ Stanley's case illustrates this: the activities of renovating and restoring buildings have intrinsic value for him, but by treating them instrumentally, the valuable nature of the activities eludes him, as if with a finger click.

The following sections will explore each of the three points in turn.

THE MEANING OF GOALS

The earlier discussion shows the urgency of rethinking the relationship between activities and their goals. When we think that a set of actions is *for the sake of* some goal, the fact that the action is a means to a goal doesn't imply that as such it is only instrumentally valuable. In this sense, it is *not* for the sake of the goal. On the contrary, the activity is a part of a person's life and as such it has non-instrumental value, which the person him or herself can appreciate or enjoy.

The critique of the instrumental conception of rationality does not mean that goals should not be an important aspect of our lives. The idea is rather that traditional means-ends thinking should be turned on its head. Such reasoning is sometimes expressed with the saying 'The ends justifies the means.' Our discussion shows that such reasoning fundamentally misrepresents

the value relationships between actions and goals. The activity which is a means to a goal is non-instrumentally valuable, and it is the end that is instrumentally valuable. We might express the non-instrumental value of lived processes with paradoxical saying: 'The ends are means to more means.' In other words, the achieving of a goal is valuable often because it facilitates other non-instrumentally valuable activities, which themselves are means to other goals. Ends are valuable insofar as they are instrumental for performing other activities. In other words, the importance of goals is that they can enrich activities or the processes of life.

This idea can be amplified in three ways.

First, for instance, we run to win in order to improve the running. We write to a deadline, not because having the work finished by the deadline is intrinsically valuable, but rather for the sake of the process of writing itself. In other words, goals define, give direction to and improve processes. Having an end to attain can improve an activity, make it more valuable. Metaphorically, we run to win but the intrinsic value isn't in the winning, it is in the running. In that sense, we win to run. In this manner, *having* goals can be instrumentally valuable.

This first point becomes even more important in the context of doing things with others, trying to achieve goals in a group or a community. We have just seen that the non-instrumental value is in the activity and not the goal or end. As it were, the end provides a direction to the activity, and it is performing the activity as such that is non-instrumentally valuable. This point can be amplified to include being-with others and being-in a community. In other words, one aspect of the non-instrumentally valuable nature of performing an activity is that this is a way of doing things with others and of being with others. The nature of this non-instrumental value will be explained in Chapter 5.

Second, as means, activities have non-instrumental value, and *achieving* the goals can be instrumentally valuable because it can further these activities or lead to more of them. For example, if one wins a race, one will have the opportunity to run again. Winning allows us to run more often in competitive races. Likewise, if the work process is profitable, then this enables one to carry on working. In this process of activity generating more activity, achieved goals are instrumentally valuable because they enable more, and hopefully better, activities. In this way, attained goals are instrumentally valuable for the person. In this way, ends are means to more means; the end-state is instrumentally valuable because it enables one to engage in further activity.

Third, the achieved goal of an end-guided process provides products such as cars that are instrumentally valuable for other people in the living of their lives. In this case, the attaining of the goal is valuable instrumentally because of what it allows others to do (i.e. more intrinsically valuable activities of other people). In other words, the goal achieved has instrumental value. In this manner, attaining goals is instrumentally valuable because of what it leads to (i.e. more intrinsically valuable activities for others).

The point is that objectives or end-states, such as a constructed or finished building, the achieving of a certain volume of production, the capturing of a market, are not intrinsically valuable. We should value those goals because they will have a certain role in facilitating, accentuating and permitting other activities for other persons. For Stanley as a builder, a completely restored house may appear as something of intrinsic value. However, its importance really resides in what it enables other people to do: it permits a family to live in a beautiful and comfortable environment. Furthermore, for Stanley himself, the work of renovating is

intrinsically valuable as a lived process, and the attainment of the goal, namely the finished building, has instrumental value because of the valuable activities of other people. To add a twist, suppose that the finished building is an office that houses a construction company. In such a case, the importance of the completed edifice is that permits more building, as an activity. It is instrumentally valuable, even if during the construction process, it was the goal. In this specific case, it is instrumentally valuable because it allows further constructing.

Analysis shows that our normal supposition is back to front. We uncritically assumed that the activity of constructing is only instrumentally valuable as a means to having a finished building. However, with a little reflection, we discover that the finished edifice is instrumentally valuable because it permits more construction. It is the activity of constructing that has intrinsic value; not the resulting building.

Likewise, although work is defined by its goals, this doesn't mean that the goals have intrinsic value and that the work is merely instrumentally valuable. On the contrary: having separated means/ends and instrumental/intrinsic value, we can affirm that although work is a means to an end, it has intrinsic value. Furthermore, as we have just seen, the goals of work have instrumental value in three ways. In conclusion, among other things, the results of working enable more and better working because the intrinsic value is in the lived activities, which include working. From the point of view of the person's well-being, the value of the goals is derivative on how they enter the lived activities in question.

Instrumental rationality implies that the ends justify the means, but we have argued that the truth is closer to the opposite, the means justify the ends. More exactly, ends are instrumentally valuable either because they improve the quality of processes or because the achieving of a goal permits more and better activities and processes later on. Having a destination improves the running, and winning the race enables you to run again. The value is in the running, and not in the arriving. The same value is demonstrated in Merriam's love for cooking.

Merriam is a travel writer. Among the many cultural wonders she captures in her work is local food. She not only loves tasting and savouring different cuisines, she especially enjoys cooking, particularly for family and friends. Feeding them delicious, nutritious food matters to her, but she also approaches preparation and cooking with relish. She searches out unusual dishes, thrilled by the novelty of unfamiliar flavours. She shops around for the freshest ingredients, attentive to the ethics as well as the aesthetics of eating. She prepares each dish with care, and other people's enjoyment is her foremost concern. The aim of entertaining her guests, indeed, deepens her own delight in cooking.

There is an objection to this general line of argumentation. One might claim that goals don't have to be external to the action. Usually, we think of goals as states of affairs that are distinct from the action itself. My goal is that the apple tree is picked or that the television is fixed. In each case, the required actions are distinct from the goal itself. But, so goes the objection, this needn't be the case. For instance, Merriam's goal might be to live her dream of traveling, or to enjoy learning about new cultures. According to the objection, in such cases, the goal is the activity itself, and the goal is intrinsically valuable (Aristotle 2000). In sum, whether a goal has intrinsic or instrumental value depends on what the goal is and how it is described.

In reply to this objection, clearly the object of a goal can be a state of affairs that has non-instrumental value. However, this doesn't get to the issue at hand because that state of affairs would be valuable independently of its being someone's goal. It's being a goal isn't what makes it valuable. The assumptions of the instrumental conception of rationality are:

1. Goal-directed actions *as means* cannot be intrinsically valuable.
2. Anything of non-instrumental value *as such* must be a goal or an end.

Thus, the dispute is whether means *as such* can have intrinsic value and whether only goals *as such* have non-instrumental value. The standard conception of instrumental rationality conflates goals or ends with intrinsic valuable. To counter this, we have separated the two and described the role of goals without assuming the conflation.

In summary, although having aims or goals is an important aspect of life, it is a mistake to confuse those goals with non-instrumental value because that would imply that activities are merely instrumentally valuable. It is the goals of our activities that are instrumentally valuable; they are instrumental to further worthwhile activities and improve the quality of lived processes. These conclusions are important because instrumental rationality states that the criteria for the selection of means should be the efficient completion of goals. In contrast, we urged that one should select goals that will require means that have desirability characterisations that we can appreciate. In other words, we select the goals for the sake of the means rather than simply choosing means for the sake of the goals.

THE PRIMARY BEARERS OF VALUE

Instrumental reasoning presupposes a false dichotomy: means or ends. It presents no alternative, to identifying intrinsic value with goals and means with instrumental value. To avoid the dichotomy, we rejected these identifications. To begin to develop a positive alternative to the instrumentalist conception, we shall present a principle important for well-being. The principle is that the primary bearers of non-derivative prudential value are persons and other conscious beings, such as non-human animals. This principle is required to avoid the view of value inherent in the conception of instrumental rationality that places the values of goals prior to that of persons, and which we criticised earlier.

Persons have primary non-instrumental value and, because of this, their lives are intrinsically valuable. This implies that the experiences, activities and processes that constitute their lives also have such value. The activities and experiences that comprise parts of a life have value because the person has value. This reverses the thesis that persons and their activities have value because their ends do. It places persons first and, in so doing, it negates the instrumentalism inherent in goal-based conceptions of value.

In order to matter, goals must be relevant to some aspect of the intrinsic value of living a life. Without such a condition, the process of achieving a goal to attain another goal in order to achieve yet another goal, and so on, would be without value. This is because ends or goals *as such* don't have intrinsic value. Whether they do depends on what the end is, and how it is relevant to the intrinsic value of living a life.

The principle may be contentious for various reasons. First, some thinkers argue for a non-realist view of value, which denies that anything is a bearer of value. Such writers would deny that persons are truly non-instrumentally valuable. Second, it might be argued that the principle

ignores non-conscious living beings such as plants and ecosystems, which also have a non-derivative value. Third, it might be contended that some states of affairs have non-derivative or primary value without relation to the living of a life.

We shall concentrate on the third of these opposing views, the main argument for which is that the only alternative is to reduce other values to well-being. Thus, the objection is something like this: *values such as beauty and truth aren't reducible to well-being, and given this, the claim that goals must be relevant to some aspect of the living of a life to be valuable is false. Goals pertaining to truth and beauty can have value independently of persons' living in a valuable way. Consequently, the idea that persons have primary value is false. There are other things that have primary value.*

The strength of this objection is that not all evaluative claims are reducible to ones pertaining to the quality of persons' lives. For example, those regarding truth and beauty would be candidates for such non-reducible values; it is not plausible to make evaluative claims about the importance of truth in research (and hence about the methodologies of research) instrumental to claims about the quality of people's lived lives. Sometimes, the truth hurts and what makes it good isn't simply that it benefits us. It is valuable and worth seeking independently of our self-interest. The weakness of the argument is that, for example, the concept of 'is true' only has value insofar as it functions as a guide for our activities of finding out, acquiring knowledge and revising beliefs. The evaluative aspect of concept indicates that it is better to know than to be ignorant, and to believe true rather than false claims.

This shows that the principle that persons are the primary bearer of value doesn't require that all evaluative claims are reducible to those pertaining to well-being. Two claims need separating. First, truth is valuable only in relation to human activities, which it can potentially guide, and insofar as those kinds of activities form part of our lives and are intrinsically valuable, they are a constituent of well-being. Second, truth is valuable is reducible to evaluative claims regarding well-being. The first doesn't entail the second. Truth is a concept whose essential function is to evaluate activities that form a part of our well-being doesn't mean that truth is reducible to well-being. A similar reflection could be applied to other guiding values that do not pertain directly to well-being. This might include, for example, aesthetic values such as beauty.

This illustrates that something can have derivative value other than by being an instrument. An example of this might be truth. While truth has instrumental value because knowing is useful, this doesn't exhaust why it is better to believe true claims. In this regard, truth is also non-instrumentally valuable (Lynch 2004). However, with regard to this non-instrumental aspect, it is still derivative. It is valuable only in relationship to human activities such as talking, sharing, investigation, thinking, understanding and cooperating. Thus, truth is a non-instrumental value that is nevertheless derivative.

Margaret is deeply concerned that her life be useful to others. As we will see in Chapter 5, serving others is a valuable form of activity, insofar as it connects to the value of other people. However, Margaret's story is more ambiguous. She seems to be obsessed with the need to be useful to the extent that she not only instrumentalises herself and her life, but also she misses out on valuable aspects of life and seems to be unaware of this.

Margaret was 86 at the time of the interview and had been widowed for three years. A recent fall had left her with a broken hip that was slow to mend, resulting in mobility difficulties and considerable frustration.

Coming from a large working-class Baptist family and growing up during the Second World War, Margaret was encouraged to be 'useful' from an early age. This became a defining thread running through her life. During her working life as a teacher, Margaret and her husband volunteered in West Africa during every school holiday, where they set up community schools for the poor and supported orphaned children. Back in the UK, in their local village, they dedicated any spare time they had to serving others. They organised fetes and Women's Institute events, and baked and sold cakes for charities.

Her insistence on being useful also made her critical of how others spent their time. For example, she saw listening to music, going to the cinema, walking in the countryside, and spending time with friends as a waste of time. Margaret tended to eliminate 'non-useful' activities from her life. She regarded reading and education as important only insofar as they helped people become useful.

Now that she is house-bound, she experiences her greatest frustration: she can no longer live a useful life for others. "What is the point of my life now?" She asks.

To return to the main theme, persons have primary value, and because of this, the activities and experiences that comprise parts of a life have non-instrumental value. This suggests that the value of a person's life for the person is in the living of it. This second principle is suggested by the first given the additional claim that a life is a person in time. Of course, this second principle does not mean that our lives can't be useful. Rather, it signifies that the value of a life for the individual who lives it is in the processes of living it instead of in its use-values. Furthermore, the second principle doesn't exclude the importance of trying to achieve goals because goal-directed activities are part of the process of living. Nevertheless, it does preclude the instrumentalist claim that only goals as such are intrinsically valuable.

INSTRUMENTALISING

One important way of having ill-being is to instrumentalise. Consider the way Stanley instrumentalises his activities and his life. This constitutes a form of ill-being, quite apart from the anxiety and feelings of alienation that it caused him. In fact, Stanley did suffer a total breakdown after his company's finances went downhill. To instrumentalise means either that one treats things that have only instrumental value as if they had intrinsic value or the other way around, that one treats things of intrinsic value as if they were only instrumentally valuable. For example, in the first case, we are addicted to money or good reputation or to success, and in the second, we treat our activities and our friends as instrumental to our goals. We can treat ourselves in such a way too. How can we do that to ourselves? How is this relevant for human well-being?

As an example of the first category, Quintin admitted to being obsessed with money in his first job; in contrast, Adrian (whose story we read earlier), who felt himself on a treadmill throughout his working life, would fall into the second category insofar as his work and he himself had become no more than a tool for paying bills

Quintin is 26. He is a law graduate, but he is now self-employed, running a small antique furniture business. He also takes on part-time work, such as gardening and dog-walking, to supplement his income. Quintin enjoys this way of working because it leaves him more time for the activities he is passionate about, including being outdoors with animals and caring for antiques.

His current work contrasts sharply with his previous employment at a large insurance company in London. There, he worked very long hours on repetitive, uninteresting, and 'fairly futile' tasks. Yet he persisted because of the money he could earn at the end of the year. He was also troubled by how the company treated other people. After three years, Quintin found himself in 'an existential crisis': he was working so much that he almost 'forgot' what it was like to be alive. At that point, his fiancée gave him an ultimatum: "Are you going to be married to money or to me? Make up your mind." Shaken into clarity, Quintin realised that his fixation on money had been distancing him from the people and things he loved, and that he had been tolerating unethical practices.

There are some appetisers that motivate the idea that self-instrumentalising is a form of ill-being. First, people tend to associate the term 'well-being' with feeling well or feeling happy. A little thought helps to dispel this association: there is more to living a flourishing life than feeling happy. For instance, often when we feel miserable, this is a sign that something else is amiss. The fact that something is wrong with the way that one is living isn't constituted by the misery; the bad feeling is a sign. Consider the relation between a feeling of loneliness and being friendless. Having friends isn't merely instrumental to curing the feeling, for if it were then one wouldn't have friends at all. Thus, the lack is being with friends; the resulting feeling of loneliness is a sign of that lack (even though it is also bad). Such considerations indicate that there is more to well-being than simply feeling good. Thus, the idea that instrumentalising can be a component of ill-being cannot be ruled out on hedonistic grounds.

Second, treating something of merely instrumental value as if it were intrinsically valuable is akin to an illness. If someone likes money too much, we call him 'miserly'. Beyond that it can be an unhealthy infatuation or obsession, such as the extreme desire to hoard goods. Sometimes, we call these tendencies 'fetishes' or even 'pathologies'. Much the same applies to treating something of intrinsic value as if it were only instrumental. We call someone 'mercenary' or the treatment as 'dehumanising'. For example, a person who is racked by ambition can treat himself inhumanely by regarding much of his life merely instrumentally. The point is that such states are illnesses or afflictions, and this is because, in such modes of being, we have fundamental value relationships the wrong way around. It is akin to falling in love with a doorpost or not being able to distinguish emotionally between a cell-phone and one's mother. When such mistakes characterise the way one lives, or important sectors of one's way of living, then the person herself is ipso facto subject to a form of ill-being. The contrary state is one aspect of well-being.

In sum, once we reject the hedonistic assumption that that the only ways in which a person can have ill-being is by feeling bad, then we face the question: what more is there? How does the concept of well-being extend beyond feeling well? Part of the answer is that ill-being can consist in getting fundamental evaluative relationships the wrong way around. A person who consistently puts the cart before the horse cannot be well. Such a behaviour is irrational, but without necessarily being immoral.

a) What it means

How do we treat things of intrinsic value as if they had merely instrumental value? Why is it a mistake? Fundamentally, the point is that something of merely instrumental value is replaceable and subject to the four features of instrumental rationality outlined earlier. Basically, such a thing is a cost. This means that it is to be used efficiently, and that, by definition, its only value is relative to the relevant goals. Therefore, rationality demands that we minimise it. In contrast, insofar as something has intrinsic value, it is not something that we treat as a replaceable cost that must be minimised. On the contrary, it is to be appreciated and enjoyed. Given this simple explanation, we can see why hoarding and miserliness are considered as being akin to illnesses. It is as if the person has made a fundamental evaluative or emotional category error: treating objects as people.

The same kind of consideration applies to the treating of things that have intrinsic value as if they had merely instrumental value, i.e. people (and their temporal parts) as if they were objects. Something of intrinsic value is valuable because of what it is and not simply because of what it leads to, facilitates or prevents. The difference is important because, on the one hand, the four features of instrumental rationality define exclusively the value of something purely instrumentally valuable and, on the other hand, insofar as something has non-instrumental value, it is not subject to the features of instrumental rationality. It is to be respected, appreciated and cherished for what it is.

If we want a more specific reply to the question ‘what more?’ then we need to return to the first chapter. We outlined four necessary structural features of human life with regard to which a life can be evaluated as non-morally better or worse. The first part of this work is dedicated to explaining the idea that well-being can be based on such characteristics. In each case, the four aspects define features of well-being that cannot be reduced to feeling good. Not instrumentalising is relevant to all four features.

b) Positive Applications to Well-Being

Given that instrumentalising is a form of ill-being, we need to examine positively how such instrumentalising can be an aspect of well-being. There are at least four ways in which instrumentalising can be directly relevant to well-being. They pertain to the four structural features of well-being argued for in Chapter 1.

a) The first is when one instrumentalises one’s activities. This occurs when one treats one’s activities as if they were merely an instrument to one’s own ends. We have seen an instance of this in Stanley’s enslaving himself to his business goals. This kind of behaviour is common amongst people that are over-ambitious. Their goals (e.g. for Stanley, making his business highly profitable) become treated as if they had intrinsic value and the person’s activities or their life tends to become an instrument to their achieving those goals. In other words, as shown in Stanley’s case, one treats parts of one’s life as having merely instrumental value.

b) In such cases, instrumentalising implies that one is not able to appreciate the value of one’s activities as a lived process of intrinsic value. For example, when I just want to get the job done, such a feeling implies that I am treating the time I spend on the job as merely instrumental to the result, which entails that I am not appreciating that time for what it is. We saw this with Adrian who was unable to enjoy aspects of his work that otherwise would have delighted him, such as meeting clients, and seeking ways to meet their needs. These non-instrumentally valuable aspects of his work were erased by the fact that he treated the job instrumentally. In other words, instrumentalisation implies the incapacity to appreciate the non-instrumental

value of the activity. It constitutes unappreciative forms of awareness. We will return to the importance of instrumentalising for appreciation and awareness in Chapter 4.

c) Much the same points apply to one's relationships with others. Insofar as a person treats others as mere instrument to his own ends, he cannot have friends. Worse, he cannot have other people as a part of his life. In other words, insofar as we instrumentalise others, those persons cannot become part of our own well-being. This is a theme of Chapter 5.

d) People can also instrumentalise themselves. One way of so doing is seen in the example of Margaret whose sense of her own worth lies entirely in what she does for other people and who is willing to instrumentalise herself in service to others.

Another way of instrumentalising oneself is by making one's sense of one's own worth dependent on the opinions of others. In effect, I can treat myself as an object (implicitly) insofar as I treat my self-worth dependent on how others perceive me. For example, this occurs when a person commodifies himself to gain the approval of others. This seems to be true of Adrian in his youth. In such a case, the person has the fundamental value relationships back to front in application to himself or embodied in his self-awareness (Hill 1991). This feature of well-being will be discussed later in Chapter 6.

OBJECTIONS AND COMPLICATIONS

Readers might be surprised by the idea that instrumentalisation is a concern relevant for well-being; after all, Kant's claim that it is the basis of morality. However, perhaps, the idea shouldn't be a shock because Kant's fundamental point is that it is irrational to treat ends as mere means. He claims that such actions are immoral because they are contrary to reason, which suggests that they can also constitute a form of ill-being. Furthermore, Kant himself states that the immoral is not restricted to instrumentalising others. It also covers the cases in which we instrumentalise ourselves.

Part of the issue is that Kant has a traditional conception of happiness, as feeling pleasure and not pain. This is a limitation not only because well-being cannot be defined merely as a state of feeling, but also it marks an underlying important asymmetry between the first and third person cases. In the third person case, part of what makes an action immoral is that one treats another person instrumentally *for the sake of one's self-interest*. However, one cannot characterise the first-person case in the same way. It is *not* that one fails to respect one's own dignity *for the sake of one's own self-interest*. Rather, the issue is that one has mischaracterised one's self-interest. For example, the overly ambitious person doesn't treat himself as an instrument to his own self-interest. Rather the overly ambitious person has made a fundamental mistake about what her self-interest consists in. For instance, she assumes that it consists in achieving self-defined goals even when this undermines her self-interest as defined by her dignity. In other words, in the case of treating oneself instrumentally, it isn't a case of denigrating the dignity of a person for the sake of self-interest.

According to Kantian theory, such an action is, nevertheless, fundamentally irrational: there is something wrong with it, just as much as there is with instrumentalising others. Consequently, one argument in favour of the claim that instrumentalising oneself can count as a form of ill-being is that what is wrong with it isn't completely captured solely with the idea that it is immoral. Thus, if we think that morality is fundamentally concerned with how we treat others,

then what's problematic about instrumentalising oneself isn't a moral issue. It is more an issue of how one conceives of one's well-being.

Objections

An objector might insist that non-instrumentalising is necessary for morality but not for well-being: the injunction to not treat persons as objects is specifically moral and does not pertain to well-being. In reply, there are forms of instrumentalisation that not immoral. For instance, a person who hoards rubbish would not *ipso facto* be acting immorally. Nor is a person who works too hard or is over-ambitious. However, there is a problem with such behaviour patterns; there is something deeply irrational or problematic about them. This problem is non-moral, and it pertains to the muddling up of instrumental and non-instrumental values, and it concerns the well-being of persons.

This same problem applies to actions that are immoral because they instrumentalise. For example, suppose that I use a person in a way that is immoral. This supposition does not deny that such an action also constitutes or expresses a state of being of mine that is ill. The moral claim doesn't exclude the idea that instrumentalising can also constitute or express ill-being. For instance, if I do this regularly, it means that I cannot have friendships, and as such, it pertains to the composition of well-being.

A third objection is that the central theses of this chapter deny the obviously true claim that we should be efficient. The critique of the instrumental conception of rationality given goes too far because it denies that it is better to be efficient, all other things being equal. For example, I am seeking an inexpensive second-hand car. Instrumental rationality implies that I should be efficient in attaining this end. The objection is that the critique implies that we shouldn't; instead, we should try to "be in the present moment and appreciate the experience as such". The objection argues that this attitude is mistaken because the actions of finding a good second-hand car are purely instrumental.

The reply to this objection is simply that the position outlined here doesn't deny that we should try to be efficient. The instrumental conception of rationality implies that the only relevant criterion of evaluation is the efficiency of an action in pursuing a given set of goals. The critique is that we should deny this. This claim is never true of an action because any action is part of a human life. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to be efficient. Efficiency is an instrumental value and not a non-instrumental value.

Notice that the issue here is what comprises well-being and not what causes it. So, the question isn't for instance, 'Does treating oneself as an object cause a person to feel unhappy?' Nor is it 'Does such treatment cause psychological ill-health?' The question is 'Does such treatment constitute ill-being?'

Complications

These points are made more complex by several factors. First, the term 'treat' is intentional or description-relative or aspectual. We should be careful about regarding instrumentalising as a black and white issue, or an all or nothing affair. It is description-relative or intentional. In other words, a person will typically treat himself or his activities or other persons as only instrumentally valuable in some respects or under some descriptions, but not in others.

Recognising the intentionality of treating and of instrumentalising is necessary because, for example, treating a person as a slave isn't equivalent to treating her as an object. To treat a

person as a slave requires recognising her subjectivity and reality as a person in some limited regards. For instance, it requires recognising that the slave is a person who can serve one and hence understand what one wants. But to treat a person as a slave is also at the same time to fail to recognise the subjectivity and the reality of the other as a person in other regards. For instance, it is to regard her subjectivity and agency as unimportant except insofar as it serves one's own ends. In this manner, the slave owner knows perfectly well that the slave is a person with a subjective point of view on the universe who can understand orders, can be punished, humiliated and harmed. In other ways, or with respect to other descriptions, the slave-owner doesn't recognise the slave as a person but rather as property that can be traded. He treats him or her as a mere instrument to the achievement of his ends. In this sense, what the person wills is inconsistent. Similar points can be made about other kinds of instrumentalisation. In very general terms, all actions are intentional in the sense that their individuation is relative to a set of descriptions. In this sense, they are aspectual. Therefore, how one should characterise an action is never a black or white affair. This means that when we talk about actions, our language must be nuanced in ways that make measurement and quantitative approaches difficult, though not impossible, as we shall see in chapter 7.

Second, as a result, what counts as treating someone as if he or she were of only instrumental value can take different cultural forms. This shouldn't be a surprise. Politeness is a value shared between all peoples. However, saying this doesn't deny that politeness can be constituted in different way in different social contexts. Sometimes it is rude to burp; in other cultures, it is rude not to. Such differences don't present fundamental conceptual problems. However, they do present difficult problems for measurement. If I want to measure how rude people are, then I need to assume that rudeness will take certain social shapes. I can make measurements only given this assumption; I can't measure rudeness in abstract. To measure it, it needs to have specifiable behavioural forms. However, if I want to measure rudeness across cultures, then these forms cannot be taken as a given. Burping isn't a sign or expression of rudeness in all cultures. Comparable points apply to some forms of instrumentalisation. For example, there are different ways to address people, and we can insult people by addressing them consistently as if they were objects. We can imagine cultures in which such forms of address don't constitute treating the person as an object, although in others it does.

It might be urged that we need a conception of well-being that is readily operationalised for only such a conception can be useful for social policy-making. We aren't so sure that this is always true, and we will return to it in chapter 7. However, given that it is true, it might be objected that the points about instrumental rationality raised in this chapter are difficult to apply in a theory of well-being. In reply, despite the difficulties, we can operationalise the idea that we shouldn't instrumentalise ourselves, or our lives and our activities. There are several ways that we could measure the degree to which and the different ways in which a person treats himself instrumentally. Furthermore, such measures could be incorporated in principle into an overall measure of well-being, as we shall show in chapter 7. However, such an affirmation is only plausible insofar as we are willing to take specific cultural assumed forms of instrumentalisation as a given. This implies that insofar as we can operationalise and measure well-being, it is less relevant as a key concept in social critique. Operationalising the concept means accepting some cultural norms with regard to its constitution, which a social critique might need to challenge. This is an important concept for chapter 7.

The simple idea that we can dehumanise ourselves can become complicated. A third complication factor is that, sometimes, it seems as if we are right to treat mere objects as if they were more than mere objects. For example, I treasure the gift that my mother gave me, or I care

deeply for the book that my grandmother received as a prize. Here I am treating an object as if it were non-instrumentally valuable. According to what we said before, this should look like a contradiction: to treat a person as an object is *ipso facto* to treat something of dignity as if it merely an instrument to be used efficiently. Despite this, it seems justified to treat objects *as if* they are more than objects when the object has expressive value. It would be heartless to throw the book away because one is never going to read it. Its value is more than its instrumental value because the book is an expression of my love for my mother. I treasure the book, and this seems quite different from the miser who hoards money.

This reinforces an important lesson from earlier in the chapter. On the one hand, we do not want to assert that the book has intrinsic value in the way that a person does. On the other hand, we don't want to affirm that the book has only instrumental value. In terms of the kind of value it has, it seems to sit between the two cases. The book has non-instrumental derivative value. It has expressive value. In other words, insofar as it has expressive value, the book has non-instrumental value: it isn't something that should be minimised efficiently for the sake of a goal. Nevertheless, this expressive value that it has is still derivative. It isn't basic, in the way that the value of persons is. The value of the book depends on the value of the relationship that it expresses.

One might make similar points about works of art. Having a Matisse in one's living room isn't the same as having a friendship with the artist Matisse, but the painting means more than its mere status as an object indicates. The owner of the painting might say that the work of art has expressive value. According to what we just argued such value is derivative without being instrumental. It isn't instrumental because the work of art isn't used efficiently; it is to be appreciated for what it is. However, it is derivative because it doesn't have value independently of persons.

However, all this poses an epistemological problem. Are the previous examples very different from the person who lavishes loving care on his expensive car? Does this latter count as instrumentalisation? How are we to distinguish the person who treats his car as a fetish from the person who treats his car as having expressive value? This is epistemologically difficult. The fact that it is so, however, doesn't mean that we cannot distinguish the two cases in principle. In brief, there is an important difference between the two kinds of cases. On the one side, there is the paradigm of the miser who treats X as having intrinsic value when it is merely instrumentally valuable. On the other side, there is the case of the gift: when something that doesn't have non-derivative or intrinsic value has expressive value and because of this isn't purely instrumentally valuable. In principle, these two cases are fundamentally different. In practice, we may have severe epistemological difficulties in knowing which of the two paradigms is applicable to any particular case. This epistemological difficulty is enhanced by the assertion that such distinctions are ones of degree. Such considerations mean that the distinctions are difficult to apply in practice but this doesn't deny the relevance of the distinction *per se*.

Because of this, we regard these points as complications rather than objections. It is similar with any complex concept: sometimes the concept is difficult to apply. For example, we can imagine case of persons who are on the borderline between being depressed or not. Such grey cases do not invalidate the concept of depression. They show that the application of the concept is nuanced. The concept does not determine its own application. (Wittgenstein, 2009 and Kolak and Thomson 2005). Depression is still an important concept. It isn't invalidated by the putative critique. The critique only means that its application is difficult.

CONCLUSIONS

The central point of this chapter is that a commonly held (and purely instrumental) conception of rationality does not permit us logically to articulate the intrinsic or non-instrumental value of the lived processes of a person's life. To formulate this point, we need to distinguish between means/ends and intrinsic/instrumental. We need the idea that means *as such* can have non-instrumental value. Without the distinction, this crucial point is impossible.

Furthermore, the idea that we can instrumentalise ourselves only makes sense given this distinction. The idea that we can dehumanise ourselves is directly relevant to well-being. The idea of not instrumentalising ourselves is an important component of well-being in each of its four structural dimensions: activities, awareness, relationships and self-consciousness. We will detail these in turn in the relevant chapters of the work.

¹ We employ the term ‘intrinsic values’ without implying that they are non-relational. The term ‘intrinsic’ indicates that something is valuable non-instrumentally, because of what it is and not because of what it promotes or causes. This does not rule out the idea that things that are intrinsically valuable are so because of their relations to other things.

² The argument for premise 1 is:

- i. All goal-directed actions as such are means
- ii. If the claims of the instrumental conception of rationality were true then if X is a means, then X has only instrumental value as such

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1. Thus, if the claims of the instrumental conception of rationality were true then all of one’s goal-directed actions as such would have only instrumental value.

³ When Aristotle defines the good as what all things aim at, he commits the fallacy. See *N. Ethics* 1094a1-3 (Aristotle, 2000). Making the activity itself the goal doesn’t solve the difficulty: one is still defining the good as a goal. Thus, for Aristotle, what makes an intrinsically valuable activity valuable is that it is a goal.

⁴ To see this point at work in education, please refer to Gill and Thomson 2013 and 2017