

## 'Good' Defined in Terms of 'Better'

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**Abstract** A parable is presented. Three attempts to define the positive notion 'good' in terms of the comparative 'better' are discussed and shown inadequate in light of it.

This paper has three sections. In Section 1 I draw attention to some general features of the positive term 'good' as against its comparative 'better', and I give three examples. In Section 2 these are seen as counterexamples to three attempts to define the positive term 'good' in terms of the comparative 'better'. In Section 3 I draw conclusions about 'good', 'better', and 'best'.

*I* Just as we have the positive trios: left—middle—right, beautiful—plain—ugly, light—middling—heavy, black—gray—white, hot—middling—cold, and pleasurable—indifferent—painful, so we have the positive trio good—indifferent—bad. And for the comparatives: more left—more right, more beautiful—uglier, heavier—lighter, blacker—whiter, hotter—colder, and more pleasurable—more painful, we have better—worse.

For some comparatives there are limits on one or both sides. For others, if limits do exist, they are not obvious. Scientists tell us that nothing can be colder than absolute zero. Yet when we face one way, it is hard to imagine someone directing our attention to a leftmost limit point beyond which nothing is more to the left. Whether a "bettermost" or "worsemost" limit point exists, beyond which nothing could be better or worse are questions that have received no definitive answers.

Furthermore, things in front of us which are neither to our left nor to our right are in the middle, although because of the breadth of the middle (in my case substantial) and absence of an exact midpoint, two things may both be in the middle, one to the left of the other. Among things that are neither good nor bad but indifferent, that no better or worse exists has received no definitive proof either.

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