THE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICS

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HERBERT SPENCER

Introduction by Tibor R. Machan

In Two Volumes
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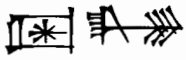

The cuneiform inscription that serves as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word "freedom" (*amagi*), or liberty. It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

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THE ETHICS OF INDIVIDUAL LIFE

Herbert Spencer: A Century Later

By Tibor R. Machan

Classical liberalism, with its focus on individual political and economic liberty, brought millions a better life than they would have had under the influence of other systems of thought. Capitalism, where consistently implemented, has been better for people than all the alternatives known to mankind. History and common sense bear this out, despite relentless allegations to the contrary from left and right.

But the classical liberals never developed a theoretically sound ethical base for their political and economic system. Herbert Spencer is the most formidable among those who have made the effort.

What Spencer did for libertarianism is what Marx did for communism—provide it with what was to be a full-blown scientific justification, on the model of proper science prominent in his day.

Neither thinker succeeded. But while Marx is hailed everywhere as a messiah (in secular garb)—even as his theories are being patched up desperately to fit the facts—Herbert Spencer, a better scientist, and in his moral and political theory far more astute than Marx, is widely dismissed as a foolhardy fellow or crude Darwinian.

Much has occurred since Spencer's time, and the free so-

ciety now enjoys a better theoretical base than ever. It is philosophically well grounded today, and eventually this may come to be recognized and have an impact on concrete political and economic affairs. We can, nevertheless, learn a great deal from Herbert Spencer, which is why the reissue of what he deemed his most important work is such a welcome event.

Triumph and Disappointment: Spencer's Life

Born in Derby, England, on April 27, 1820, Spencer was from the start an unusual individual among intellectuals. Of Quaker parents, Spencer grew up with an undistinguished educational background. He had no formal classical or humanist education, nor did he acquire literary sensitivities as so many of Great Britain's luminaries did. Instead Spencer started his studies in the sciences, mostly technology and mathematics. He even embarked on an engineering career at first, in 1837, in the railway industry. But this merely served to increase his intellectual curiosity within the various scientific fields. The enthusiasm he had for an understanding of nature along scientific paths led him at times to pursue odd roads of inquiry, ones that started off with great optimism only to end in disrepute—for example, phrenology.

Spencer's first intellectually creative work was a series of lectures published in *The Nonconformist,* entitled "The Proper Sphere of Government," in which the seeds of his subsequent thinking are clearly contained. Here Spencer demonstrated his confidence in the all-pervasive character of certain kinds of natural laws, scientific principles the ignorance of which can only spell destruction for us.

Although it is known that Spencer had occasional romantic attachments, including a relatively long-lasting one with the novelist George Eliot (Marian Evans), Spencer's personal life consisted almost exclusively of pursuing his philosophical and scientific studies. During most of his life he suffered from a nervous ailment for which doctors could find no explanation, and what we know of his life testifies to a case of total

dedication, bordering on the obsessive, to the completion of work Spencer set out to accomplish in his thirties.

As for social life, the opportunity always existed. Spencer attained popularity early in his life, shortly after the publication of *Social Statics* in 1850. He soon became world-famous and was read by both professionals and lay people. His influence is still evident throughout the fields of biology and sociology, even when he is not explicitly acknowledged.

Though Spencer's evolutionism is different from and broader than Darwin's, the two theories are often identified in journalistic and polemical treatments of various related topics. In the area of social theory Spencer's thought developed much further than Darwin's, and while Darwin's evolutionism was theoretically superior to Spencer's in the field of biology, Spencer was ahead of his time in some of his extensions of the evolutionist ideas. For example, in the history of the development of scientific concepts, Spencer's principle of evolutionism could be made to apply in ways later alleged by Collingwood and today defended by Thomas S. Kuhn, in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962), and Stephen Toulmin, in his *Human Understanding*, vol. 1 (Princeton, 1972). (Toulmin regards Spencer's view as "providentialist." But the pattern of development, whatever its explanation, is Spencerian throughout Toulmin's discussion of the growth of scientific ideas.) Then also, the famous behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner invokes the evolutionist scheme in his discussion of the survival of different cultures, thus employing an idea, rejected in its individualist application, to make a collectivist point.

Spencer's friends included John Stuart Mill, Thomas Huxley, Beatrice Webb, and others, all of whom discussed Spencer in their works. He was admired by thousands, including the American industrialist Andrew Carnegie; A. E. Taylor, Josiah Royce, and David Duncan wrote books about him. But in the later years of his life Spencer lost not only his stature but also a good deal of his optimism, vigor, and confidence, so that his second edition of *Social Statics* omitted the crucial chapter "The

Right to Ignore the State," and he changed some of his libertarian views. Most striking was his apparent abandonment of the universality of his social and political theory. He could declare late in his life that "the goodness of these or those institutions is purely relative to the nature of the men living under them."

There is not room here to explore why this indefatigable man relented on certain crucial elements of his doctrine late in his life, while at the same time he refused to yield to objections that had the fullest possible scientific backing. Anecdotes abound on Spencer's good-spirited stubbornness. He would at times construct elaborate explanations of minute phenomena and upon finding that his factual assumptions had been mistaken, he would laugh heartily but not readily abandon his stance. Yet on other occasions he would encourage the most detailed, minuscule research experimentation and recording so that scientists far into the twentieth century still relied on the facts his work brought to light.

Beatrice Webb said of Spencer, after the latter's declining last years had become an object of some discussion and speculation, that he had "a nature with so perfect an intellect and little else—save friendliness and the uprightness of a truth-loving mind." It is hardly surprising that such an individual would give up some of his most controversial ideas when the theoretical basis underlying most of what he believed began to receive severe and widespread scientific opposition. It is a pity. Because, if anything, it was Spencer's normative convictions that can still be shown, even better than in his own times, to deserve full confidence. Had Spencer realized this, he might have lived out his life with justifiable pride.

Spencer's Principles of Ethics

During his time Spencer achieved prominence and a degree of influence that prompted Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes to say in one of his opinions that "The 14th Amendment does not enact Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics,*" referring to

Spencer's advocacy of laissez-faire economics. Spencer's ethical writing, however, did not become influential and is today mentioned mainly as part of a certain phase of philosophical explorations in moral theory. Yet Spencer produced some valuable insights in substantive moral theory. It is often pointed out, probably justly, that Spencer's attempt to achieve a fusion between the scientific—in his case, evolutionist—and ethical regard toward human affairs was unsuccessful. In essence the charge is simply that to take a scientific perspective in Spencer's sense implies determinism of the sort that excludes the very possibility of genuine human choices; and without the possibility of genuine human choices, the content of any ethical system must be meaningless. For example, if it be taken as true that each individual should strive to achieve happiness in life, then it must be true that each individual has a genuine choice in the matter of so striving or not so striving. But if individual behavior is governed by the complex lawful relations that govern less-evolved entities, then no choice as to what he will do is possible, so ethics is meaningless.

This criticism was placed before Spencer in some of the letters commenting on his ethical writings, and the Appendix of the present edition includes his replies. Hardly any serious student of ethics could fail to appreciate the significance of the issue being posed, and Spencer's efforts to meet the critics are of much more than academic interest. It is possible that had not the currents of thought in the last century been under the powerful sway of collectivist ideals even before Spencer produced his ethical and social philosophy, it would be the collectivist efforts at fusionism that would have succumbed under the pressures of the type Spencer faced. Marxism contains both claims as to its scientific character and claims of distinctly ethical or moral character. The same can be said of prominent contemporary thinkers like B. F. Skinner and Karl Menninger, to name but two.

What differentiates Spencer from these fusionists, then, is not the fusionism but the specifically ethical content of his

thought. It is no secret that the bulk of ethical commentary, whether from the pulpit, editorials, the campaign trails, or the stages from which the oratory of commencement exercises rings forth, urges upon human beings acts of self-sacrifice. In this respect there is nothing revolutionary about Marxism, for example. Marx also places before us the ideals of self-sacrifice—his condemnation of the Lockean human-rights tradition consisted mainly of dismissing such rights as vehicles of selfishness. Spencer, however, advocated egoism. And his ethics could not be faulted for being of the hedonistic egoist variety, such as those of Jeremy Bentham and even John Stuart Mill. Instead, Spencer developed what he called a *rational* utilitarian moral theory. Omitting from consideration for now the difficulties of Spencer's fusionist efforts, we cannot deny that the substance of Spencer's ethical writings deserves extensive study. We have here a brilliant theory in which the mutually compatible selfish goals of individuals are demonstrated to be the proper end of human conduct. The principles that would further this goal are the principles of *rational* utilitarianism, gleaned through a consideration of the self-consistently enhancing course of conduct possible for human beings to undertake.

In developing his humanistic egoism, Spencer critically evaluates some of the greatest moral philosophers in Western history. His assessment of Aristotle is superb, especially since his own ethical views are probably closest to this great Greek thinker's own moral point of view. Spencer rightly perceives an idealistic tendency in Aristotle's conception of the happiness that is the goal of the moral life for every individual. He points out that Aristotle's ideas are "allied to the Platonic belief that there is an ideal or absolute good, which gives to particular and relative goods their property of goodness." Against this intrinsicist conception of good, Spencer makes the counter proposal that the virtues "are united by their common relation to [happiness]; while they are not united by their inner natures." What with the simplistic renditions of Herbert Spencer's philosophy that we can encounter in the

caricatures of this man's intellectual contributions, hardly anyone is prepared for the complex philosophical explorations that Spencer's *Principles of Ethics* offers in such plentitude.

It should be noted that most moral philosophers either are concerned only with the consequences of conduct or focus exclusively on the purity of motives for action. Yet both the consequences and the grounds of action are of moral significance, and Spencer shows his awareness of this in his advocacy of rational utilitarianism. Actions should reap benefits, but they can do so only if rationally guided, if they are principled.

Spencer's egoism, unlike that of Hobbes, does not begin by conceiving of the ego—the individual—as a bundle of passions purposelessly striking out to sustain itself in motion. This is the type of egoism that is accepted by many economists and promptly ridiculed by most moral philosophers. So it is no wonder that egoism has become not only an absurd moral theory but almost a synonym for "immorality." Its Hobbesian version allows for callous, inconsiderate, or cruel conduct. By focusing on this variety of egoism—which, you will recall, means individualism—critics can throw out the baby with the bathwater. They can reject the importance of the individual for ethical purposes on grounds that the conception of the individual on the Hobbesian model is invalid and leads to absurd consequences. If we are all motivated by drives fixed within us by nature, pushing us toward self-aggrandizement qua purely passionate, unreasoning animals, then we will undoubtedly end in mortal combat with each other just a few steps down the social path. Such an ethics does imply dog-eat-dog, the caricature of the ethical base of laissez-faire capitalism.

Spencer will have none of this, and his discussion is highly illuminating. Unfortunately, it is mostly dismissed as a desperate attempt to rationalize capitalism with Victorian mores. And because of its problematic philosophical base, the charge rings true enough. (Never mind that charges of a similar type

could be made against virtually any other thinker, and that Spencer's own life does not demonstrate the slightest undue loyalty to either capitalism or the customs and etiquette of his times.) What we find in Spencer's egoism is a system ensuring the prospects of compatibility of interests among intelligent, good people, which should indicate why understanding ethics along egoistic lines makes very good sense. This is one reason why, of all of the many volumes Spencer produced, his ethical writings are the most valuable and unorthodox. It is furthermore an advantage in these works that Spencer is concerned, not to defend his ethics via his evolutionary science, but to work out the dynamics of an ethical position.

A note is due here about certain developments in the classical liberal conception of society following Spencer's notable efforts to give that conception a firm base. Why has liberalism changed its colors in our day? How could a term used for a free society in which government had as its proper role the protection and preservation of individual rights, take on a virtually opposite meaning?

Unfortunately Spencer must take part of the blame for this turn of events. Classical liberals accepted, willy-nilly (and deliberately in Locke), that human beings are free and responsible for most of their conduct. This implied that under conditions of political freedom, the suffering people experience can ordinarily be said to be their own fault. This idea made the desirability of government along classical liberal lines quite intelligible.

But in Hegel and Marx, for example, the idea that human beings are free in the sense specified above lost out to a total determinism. After Kant accounted for free will by reference to something fundamentally mysterious—the unknowable thing-in-itself—it was not surprising that those with a scientific bent rejected the idea altogether. But the notion *freedom* was kept in use following the substantive change. And it is easy to understand the sense in which it began to be used by considering such expressions as "free from hunger," "free from ignorance," "free from hardship," and "free from temp-

tation." Liberalism changed, then, because the underlying idea of human nature changed, leaving intact only a distorted idea of human freedom. Since most individualists *and* most collectivists believe that humanity is evolving, gradually or by leaps and bounds, toward a full maturation or the realization of human nature in some final social order, freedom was interpreted as the condition whereby progress toward this end is least impeded—that is, whereby all people can surge toward their final emancipation. The only freedom that makes sense by this account is freedom from our deprived conditions, freedom from our impediments, whether economic, psychological, spiritual, or whatnot. Since the earlier liberals convinced most people that government was established to protect and preserve the liberty or freedom to which we all have either a natural or a utilitarian right, it was consistent now to demand that the "rights" identified by this distorted conception of freedom receive government's equal protection.

Spencer helped this development by flatly rejecting the idea of human freedom of the will and endorsing a variety of progressivism (which he modified, but not sufficiently to escape the charge of being a prophet of eventual utopia). What he failed to realize is that without the fact of human choice clearly demonstrated, the ideal of political and economic liberty makes no sense at all. This ideal means that people *should* act so as not to violate one another's rights. But that implies that they have a choice. Spencer was challenged on this point and his attempts to cope with the issue—for example, in his Appendix C—fell short, because he always thought that any concession would commit him to some form of mysticism, the bane of a scientist.

There is, however, nothing unscientific about accepting the possibility, even the actuality, of freedom of the human will—indeed, it would be antiscientific to preclude it. Not science, but certain philosophical premises that many scientists accepted have led to the idea that science and free will contradict each other.

What is lamentable is that, while Spencer was constantly

challenged on this issue, Marx and his disciples were being honored for philosophical achievements despite their constant conflation of science with values and evaluations. Even today, such European intellectual luminaries as Sartre proclaim themselves to be Marxists, refusing to admit the fatal flaw in Marx, while they and their admirers will not give Spencer their respect.

Fortunately, some of this is changing. One of the best brief eye-openers on Herbert Spencer is Robert L. Carneiro's introduction to his edition of selections from Spencer's *Principles of Sociology: The Evolution of Society* (Chicago, 1974). J. D. Y. Peel's *Herbert Spencer: The Evolution of a Sociologist* (New York, 1971) is another valuable source on this often-forgotten genius. Both authors focus mainly on Spencer's sociology, however, and barely mention the insights he can contribute to the study of ethics.

Many of those who today embrace Spencer's political convictions fail in a different respect from those who ignore Spencer. They omit from consideration the serious inadequacies in Spencer's ethical and political theories. I have mentioned the most significant problem with Spencer's ethics. His politics suffers from yet another crucial difficulty. Spencer believes that although we all have natural rights, these rights do not take effect or come into existence before the emergence of the full development of human nature and society. Here, too, Spencer shares elements of Marxism. Marx rejected moral issues as irrelevant to societies in which human nature has not fully matured. He rejected the idea of natural rights as inapplicable in a precommunist society (and presumably unnecessary in communism). Spencer took a utilitarian perspective on rights, and although he insisted on regarding them as natural rights, he allowed their neglect until the time society would evolve into its most mature manifestation.

It seems to me that no one need humble himself before another to such an extent that the latter's theoretical problems are ignored in the process of paying him homage. Spencer

would be the last one to accept such unqualified, blind compliments. What we need not do, on the other hand, is reject Spencer's numerous insights in the area of substantive ethics. Here his ideas were more independent of his evolutionist system than in other areas. Here he often relied on common sense to shed light on what simply could not be developed from what he regarded as scientific principles. And with his commitment both to the importance of human life and excellence and to political and economic liberty, what Spencer had to offer us in his ethical discussions can enhance our understanding of life in freedom, whatever our own arguments for the value of such a life.

These are some ideas, I believe, that are worth keeping in mind as we encounter Herbert Spencer's ethical writings. It should be added that Spencer was not only a keen systematic thinker but also an uncompromisingly thorough and honest man. He lived only for his ideas, so that even his *Autobiography* consists mainly of an interpretive history of one person's life in terms of the theoretical framework he had developed. For those who value the ideals Spencer defended, it is gratifying that Spencer himself made every effort to live by them, to integrate them into his own concrete existence. There is much in Spencer's thought that is philosophically and scientifically unacceptable; but read critically, as all serious works should be, Spencer provides us with an intellectual adventure rarely matched, especially in our own epoch. The study of Spencer's ethics can shed needed light on some of the intricacies of what is demonstrably the best perspective on the ethical and political aspects of human life, namely, the morality of rational self-interest and the politics of the free society.

Fredonia, New York
January 1978

THE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICS

GENERAL PREFACE

The divisions of which this work consists have been published in an irregular manner. Part I was issued in 1879; Part IV in 1891; Parts II and III, forming along with Part I, the first volume, were issued in 1892; and Parts V and VI, concluding the second volume, have now, along with Part IV, been just issued. The reasons for this seemingly eccentric order of publication, primarily caused by ill health, will be found stated in the respective prefaces; which, by those who care to understand why the succession named has been followed, should be read in the order: Preface to Part I; then that to Part IV; Preface to Vol. I; and then that to Vol. II.

The preservation of these respective prefaces, while intended to account for the anomalous course pursued, serves also to explain some repetitions which, I fancy, have been made requisite by the separate publication of the parts: the independence of each having been a desideratum.

Now that the work is complete, it becomes possible to prefix some general remarks, which could not rightly be prefixed to any one of the installments.

The ethical doctrine set forth is fundamentally a corrected and elaborated version of the doctrine set forth in *Social*

Statics, issued at the end of 1850. The correspondence between the two is shown, in the first place, by the coincidence of their constructive divisions. In *Social Statics* the subject matter of morality is divided into parts which treat respectively of Private Conduct, Justice, Negative Beneficence, and Positive Beneficence; and these severally answer to Part III, Part IV, Part V, and Part VI, constituting the constructive portion of this work: to which there are, however, here prefixed Part I, The Data, and Part II, The Inductions; in conformity with the course I have pursued throughout The Synthetic Philosophy. In *Social Statics* one division only of the ethical system marked out was developed—justice; and I did not, when it was written, suppose that I should ever develop the others.

Besides coinciding in their divisions, the two works agree in their cardinal ideas. As in the one so in the other, man, in common with lower creatures, is held to be capable of indefinite change by adaptation to conditions. In both he is regarded as undergoing transformation from a nature appropriate to his aboriginal wild life, to a nature appropriate to a settled civilized life; and in both this transformation is described as a molding into a form fitted for harmonious cooperation. In both, too, this molding is said to be effected by the repression of certain primitive traits no longer needed, and the development of needful traits. As in the first work, so in this last, the great factor in the progressive modification is shown to be sympathy. It was contended then, as it is contended now, that harmonious social cooperation implies that limitation of individual freedom which results from sympathetic regard for the freedoms of others; and that the law of equal freedom is the law in conformity to which equitable individual conduct and equitable social arrangements consist. Morality, truly so called, was described in the original work as formulating the law of the "straight man"; and this conception corresponds with the conception of absolute ethics, set forth in this work. The theory then was, as the theory still is, that those mental products of sympathy constituting what is called the "moral sense," arise as fast as men are disciplined into social life; and

that along with them arise intellectual perceptions of right human relations, which become clearer as the form of social life becomes better. Further, it was inferred at that time as at this, that there is being effected a conciliation of individual natures with social requirements; so that there will eventually be achieved the greatest individuation along with the greatest mutual dependence—an equilibrium of such kind that each, in fulfilling the wants of his own life, will spontaneously aid in fulfilling the wants of all other lives. Finally, in the first work there were drawn essentially the same corollaries respecting the rights of individuals and their relations to the state, that are drawn in this last work.

Of course it yields me no small satisfaction to find that these ideas which fell dead in 1850, have now become generally diffused; and, more especially since the publication of the *Data of Ethics* in 1879, have met with so wide an acceptance that the majority of recent works on ethics take cognizance of them, and, in many cases, tacitly assume them, or some of them. Sundry of these works convey either the impression that the evolutionary view of ethics has long been familiar, or else that it dates from 1859, when the doctrine of "natural selection" was promulgated. In this connection I may name Mr. S. Alexander's *Moral Order and Progress,* and still more the *Review of the Systems of Ethics Founded on Evolution* by Mr. C. M. Williams. Alike in the introductory remarks of this last volume, and in the paragraph closing the account given of the views of Darwin, Wallace, and Haeckel, it is alleged that these "great original authorities paved the way for a system of evolutionary ethics." Though in the exposition of my own views, which immediately succeeds, there is a recognition of the fact that they date back to 1851, yet the collocation, as well as the express statements, practically cancel this inconsistent admission; and leave the impression that they are sequences of those of Mr. Darwin. And this, indeed, is the established general belief; as is sufficiently shown by the phrase "Darwinism in ethics," frequently to be met with, and which I now have before me in a review of Mr. Williams' book.

Rectification of this misbelief is of course hopeless. The world resents any attempt to show that it has fallen into an error; so that I should perhaps best consult my personal interests by saying nothing. But it seems to me proper to point out, as a matter of historical truth, that in this case, as in other cases, the genesis of ideas does not always follow the order of logical sequence; and that the doctrine of organic evolution in its application to human character and intelligence, and, by implication, to society, is of earlier date than *The Origin of Species*.

Without entering at length upon the prolegomena of ethics, it may be well here to state briefly one of them. The tacit assumption made in this work, as more or less consistently in all modern works on ethics, is that the conduct dealt with is the conduct of and between like-natured individuals—individuals whose likenesses of nature are so great in comparison with their differences as to constitute them of the same kind.

The possibility of another assumption, and consequently of another ethics, may be best shown by an analogy. The several kinds of social insects, though they do not form societies proper (since a nest of them is one large family descended from the same parents) yet show us that there may exist a body of cooperators among which a marked inequality is an essential trait; and they illustrate the possibility of a social organization such that the normal conduct of class to class is guided by rules appropriate to each class, and not common to all classes. They suggest that dissimilar members of a community may work together harmoniously on principles adapted to inequalities of nature. And they draw attention to the fact that there have been, and are, human societies constituted in a way which is analogous, to the extent that its classes of units, clearly marked off from one another, and devoted to different kinds of activities, either have, or tend to acquire, contrasted characters proper to their relative positions, and reciprocal codes of conduct which are thought obligatory.

Societies formed of dominant and enslaved races obviously answer to this description. In the United States in slavery days, it was common for slaves to jeer at free Negroes as having no white man to take care of them. To such an extent may the sentiments become molded to relations of inequality that, as in South Africa, the servants of a mild master will speak contemptuously of him because he does not thrash them. With extreme cases such as these to give the clue, we may perceive that wherever there are ruling classes and servile classes, as throughout Europe in early days, there comes to be an adjustment of natures such that command on the one side and obedience on the other are the natural concomitants of the social type. By continuous breeding of each class within itself, there tends to arise a differentiation into two varieties, such that the one becomes organically adapted to supremacy and the other to subordination. And it needs but to recall the ancient feudal loyalty, running down through all grades, or the fealty shown by an ancient Highlander to his chief, to see that there grew up ethical conceptions adjusted to the conditions.

But systems of ethics appropriate to social systems characterized by these organized inequalities of *status* cannot be the highest systems of ethics. Manifestly they presuppose imperfect natures—natures which are not self-sufficing. On the one side there is the need for control from without for the proper regulation of conduct; and on the other side there is the need for exercise of control, which, in an opposite way, implies lack of self-sufficingness. Further, external regulation is less economical of energy than internal regulation. When classes of inferiors are governed by classes of superiors, there is a waste of action which does not occur when all are self-governed. But chiefly the imperfection of ethical systems appropriate to societies characterized by organized inequality, is that sympathy and all those emotions into which sympathy enters, and all that happiness of which sympathy is the root, remain incomplete. Alien natures cannot sympathize in full measure—can sympathize only in respect of those feelings

which they have in common. Hence the unlikenesses presupposed between permanently ruling classes and permanently subject classes, negative that highest happiness which a rational ethics takes for its end.

Throughout this work, therefore, the tacit assumption will be that the beings spoken of have that substantial unity of nature which characterizes the same variety of man; and the work will not, save incidentally or by contrast, take account of mixed societies, such as that which we have established in India, and still less of slave societies.

H.S.

June 1893

PREFACE TO VOLUME I

Misapprehensions would probably arise in the absence of explanations respecting the order in which the several parts of *The Principles of Ethics* have been, and are to be, published; for the production of the work, and its appearance in print, have proceeded in an unusual manner.

As explained in the original preface fixed to Part I (which is reproduced on the pages which follow), that part was written, and issued by itself in 1879, under the impression that ill health might wholly prevent me from treating the subject of ethics, if I waited till it was reached in the prescribed course of my work. More than ten years followed, partly occupied in further elaboration of *The Principles of Sociology,* and partly passed in a state of prostration which prevented all serious work. Along with partial recovery there came the decision to write at once the most important of the further divisions of *The Principles of Ethics*—Part IV: Justice. This was issued separately in June 1891. As stated in the preface to it, I proposed thereafter to write, if possible, Parts II and III, completing the first volume. This purpose has fortunately now been compassed; and Parts II and III are herewith issued in conjunction with Part I, as proposed in the original program.

One object I have in describing this irregular course of

publication, is the excuse it affords for some small repetitions, and perhaps minor incongruities, which I suspect exist. The endeavor to make certain of the divisions comprehensible by themselves, has prompted inclusion in them of explanations belonging to other divisions, which publication of the work as a whole would have rendered superfluous.

There have still to be written and published the concluding parts of the second volume: Part V, "The Ethics of Social Life—Negative Beneficence"; and Part VI, "The Ethics of Social Life—Positive Beneficence." The writing of these parts I hope to complete before ability ends: being especially anxious to do this because, in the absence of them, the divisions at present published will leave, on nearly all minds, a very erroneous impression respecting the general tone of evolutionary ethics. In its full scope, the moral system to be set forth unites sternness with kindness; but thus far attention has been drawn almost wholly to the sternness. Extreme misapprehensions and gross misstatements have hence resulted.

London
June 1892

PREFACE TO PART I

When First Issued Separately

A reference to the program of the "System of Synthetic Philosophy" will show that the chapters herewith issued constitute the first division of the work on the *Principles of Morality,* with which the system ends. As the second and third volumes of the *Principles of Sociology* are as yet unpublished, this installment of the succeeding work appears out of its place.

I have been led thus to deviate from the order originally set down, by the fear that persistence in conforming to it might result in leaving the final work of the series unexecuted. Hints, repeated of late years with increasing frequency and distinctness, have shown me that health may permanently fail, even if life does not end, before I reach the last part of the task I have marked out for myself. This last part of the task it is, to which I regard all the preceding parts as subsidiary. Written as far back as 1842, my first essay, consisting of letters on *The Proper Sphere of Government,* vaguely indicated what I conceived to be certain general principles of right and wrong in political conduct; and from that time onwards my ultimate purpose, lying behind all proximate purposes, has been that of finding for the principles of right and wrong in conduct at large, a scientific basis. To leave this purpose unfulfilled after making so extensive a preparation for fulfilling it, would be a

failure the probability of which I do not like to contemplate; and I am anxious to preclude it, if not wholly, still partially. Hence the step I now take. Though this first division of the work terminating the Synthetic Philosophy cannot, of course, contain the specific conclusions to be set forth in the entire work; yet it implies them in such wise that, definitely to formulate them requires nothing beyond logical deduction.

I am the more anxious to indicate in outline, if I cannot complete, this final work, because the establishment of rules of right conduct on a scientific basis is a pressing need. Now that moral injunctions are losing the authority given by their supposed sacred origin, the secularization of morals is becoming imperative. Few things can happen more disastrous than the decay and death of a regulative system no longer fit, before another and fitter regulative system has grown up to replace it. Most of those who reject the current creed, appear to assume that the controlling agency furnished by it may safely be thrown aside, and the vacancy left unfilled by any other controlling agency. Meanwhile, those who defend the current creed allege that in the absence of the guidance it yields, no guidance can exist: divine commandments they think the only possible guides. Thus between these extreme opponents there is a certain community. The one holds that the gap left by disappearance of the code of supernatural ethics, need not be filled by a code of natural ethics; and the other holds that it cannot be so filled. Both contemplate a vacuum, which the one wishes and the other fears. As the change which promises or threatens to bring about this state, desired or dreaded, is rapidly progressing, those who believe that the vacuum can be filled, and that it must be filled, are called on to do something in pursuance of their belief.

To this more special reason I may add a more general reason. Great mischief has been done by the repellent aspect habitually given to moral rule by its expositors; and immense benefits are to be anticipated from presenting moral rule under that attractive aspect which it has when undistorted by superstition and asceticism. If a father, sternly enforcing

numerous commands, some needful and some needless, adds to his severe control a behavior wholly unsympathetic—if his children have to take their pleasures by stealth, or, when timidly looking up from their play, ever meet a cold glance or more frequently a frown; his government will inevitably be disliked, if not hated; and the aim will be to evade it as much as possible. Contrariwise, a father who, equally firm in maintaining restraints needful for the well-being of his children or the well-being of other persons, not only avoids needless restraints, but, giving his sanction to all legitimate gratifications and providing the means for them, looks on at their gambols with an approving smile, can scarcely fail to gain an influence which, no less efficient for the time being, will also be permanently efficient. The controls of such two fathers symbolize the controls of morality as it is and morality as it should be.

Nor does mischief result only from this undue severity of the ethical doctrine bequeathed us by the harsh past. Further mischief results from the impracticability of its ideal. In violent reaction against the utter selfishness of life as carried on in barbarous societies, it has insisted on a life utterly unselfish. But just as the rampant egoism of a brutal militancy, was not to be remedied by attempts at the absolute subjection of the ego in convents and monasteries; so neither is the misconduct of ordinary humanity as now existing, to be remedied by upholding a standard of abnegation beyond human achievement. Rather the effect is to produce a despairing abandonment of all attempts at a higher life. And not only does an effort to achieve the impossible, end in this way, but it simultaneously discredits the possible. By association with rules that cannot be obeyed, rules that can be obeyed lose their authority.

Much adverse comment will, I doubt not, be passed on the theory of right conduct which the following pages shadow forth. Critics of a certain class, far from rejoicing that ethical principles otherwise derived by them, coincide with ethical principles scientifically derived, are offended by the coinci-

dence. Instead of recognizing essential likeness they enlarge on superficial difference. Since the days of persecution, a curious change has taken place in the behavior of so-called orthodoxy towards so-called heterodoxy. The time was when a heretic, forced by torture to recant, satisfied authority by external conformity: apparent agreement sufficed, however profound continued to be the real disagreement. But now that the heretic can no longer be coerced into professing the ordinary belief, his belief is made to appear as much opposed to the ordinary as possible. Does he diverge from established theological dogma? Then he shall be an atheist; however inadmissible he considers the term. Does he think spiritualistic interpretations of phenomena not valid? Then he shall be classed as a materialist; indignantly though he repudiates the name. And in like manner, what differences exist between natural morality and supernatural morality, it has become the policy to exaggerate into fundamental antagonisms. In pursuance of this policy, there will probably be singled out for reprobation from this volume, doctrines which, taken by themselves, may readily be made to seem utterly wrong. With a view to clearness, I have treated separately some correlative aspects of conduct, drawing conclusions either of which becomes untrue if divorced from the other; and have thus given abundant opportunity for misrepresentation.

The relations of this work to works preceding it in the series, are such as to involve frequent reference. Containing, as it does, the outcome of principles set forth in each of them, I have found it impracticable to dispense with restatements of those principles. Further, the presentation of them in their relations to different ethical theories, has made it needful, in every case, briefly to remind the reader what they are, and how they are derived. Hence an amount of repetition which to some will probably appear tedious. I do not, however, much regret this almost unavoidable result; for only by varied iteration can alien conceptions be forced on reluctant minds.

June 1879

PART I
THE DATA OF ETHICS

CHAPTER 1

Conduct in General

1. The doctrine that correlatives imply one another—that a father cannot be thought of without thinking of a child, and that there can be no consciousness of superior without a consciousness of inferior—has for one of its common examples the necessary connection between the conceptions of whole and part. Beyond the primary truth that no idea of a whole can be framed without a nascent idea of parts constituting it, and that no idea of a part can be framed without a nascent idea of some whole to which it belongs, there is the secondary truth that there can be no correct idea of a part without a correct idea of the correlative whole. There are several ways in which inadequate knowledge of the one involves inadequate knowledge of the other.

If the part is conceived without any reference to the whole, it becomes itself a whole—an independent entity; and its relations to existence in general are misapprehended. Further, the size of the part as compared with the size of the whole, must be misapprehended unless the whole is not only recognized as including it, but is figured in its total extent. And again, the position which the part occupies in relation to other parts, cannot be rightly conceived unless there is some conception of the whole in its distribution as well as in its amount.

Still more when part and whole, instead of being statically related only, are dynamically related, must there be a general understanding of the whole before the part can be understood. By a savage who has never seen a vehicle, no idea can be formed of the use and action of a wheel. To the unsymmetrically pierced disk of an eccentric, no place or purpose can be ascribed by a rustic unacquainted with machinery. Even a mechanician, if he has never looked into a piano, will, if shown a damper, be unable to conceive its function or relative value.

Most of all, however, where the whole is organic, does complete comprehension of a part imply extensive comprehension of the whole. Suppose a being ignorant of the human body to find a detached arm. If not misconceived by him as a supposed whole, instead of being conceived as a part, still its relations to other parts, and its structure, would be wholly inexplicable. Admitting that the cooperation of its bones and muscles might be divined, yet no thought could be framed of the share taken by the arm in the actions of the unknown whole it belonged to; nor could any interpretation be put upon the nerves and vessels ramifying through it, which severally refer to certain central organs. A theory of the structure of the arm implies a theory of the structure of the body at large.

And this truth holds not of material aggregates only, but of immaterial aggregates—aggregated motions, deeds, thoughts, words. The moon's movements cannot be fully interpreted without taking into account the movements of the solar system at large. The process of loading a gun is meaningless until the subsequent actions performed with the gun are known. A fragment of a sentence, if not unintelligible, is wrongly interpreted in the absence of the remainder. Cut off its beginning and end, and the rest of a demonstration proves nothing. Evidence given by a plaintiff often misleads until the evidence which the defendant produces is joined with it.

2. Conduct is a whole; and, in a sense, it is an organic whole—an aggregate of interdependent actions performed by

an organism. That division or aspect of conduct with which ethics deals, is a part of this organic whole—a part having its components inextricably bound up with the rest. As currently conceived, stirring the fire, or reading a newspaper, or eating a meal, are acts with which morality has no concern. Opening the window to air the room, putting on an overcoat when the weather is cold, are thought of as having no ethical significance. These, however, are all portions of conduct. The behavior we call good and the behavior we call bad, are included, along with the behavior we call indifferent, under the conception of behavior at large. The whole of which ethics forms a part, is the whole constituted by the theory of conduct in general; and this whole must be understood before the part can be understood. Let us consider this proposition more closely.

And first, how shall we define conduct? It is not coextensive with the aggregate of actions, though it is nearly so. Such actions as those of an epileptic in a fit, are not included in our conception of conduct: the conception excludes purposeless actions. And in recognizing this exclusion, we simultaneously recognize all that is included. The definition of conduct which emerges is either—acts adjusted to ends, or else—the adjustment of acts to ends; according as we contemplate the formed body of acts, or think of the form alone. And conduct in its full acceptation must be taken as comprehending all adjustments of acts to ends, from the simplest to the most complex, whatever their special natures and whether considered separately or in their totality.

Conduct in general being thus distinguished from the somewhat larger whole constituted by actions in general, let us next ask what distinction is habitually made between the conduct on which ethical judgments are passed and the remainder of conduct. As already said, a large part of ordinary conduct is indifferent. Shall I walk to the waterfall today? Or shall I ramble along the seashore? Here the ends are ethically indifferent. If I go to the waterfall, shall I go over the moor or take the path through the wood? Here the means are ethically indifferent. And from hour to hour most of the things we do

are not to be judged as either good or bad in respect of either ends or means. No less clear is it that the transition from indifferent acts to acts which are good or bad is gradual. If a friend who is with me has explored the seashore but has not seen the waterfall, the choice of one or other end is no longer ethically indifferent. And if, the waterfall being fixed on as our goal, the way over the moor is too long for his strength, while the shorter way through the wood is not, the choice of means is no longer ethically indifferent. Again, if a probable result of making the one excursion rather than the other, is that I shall not be back in time to keep an appointment, or if taking the longer route entails this risk while taking the shorter does not, the decision in favor of one or other end or means acquires in another way an ethical character; and if the appointment is one of some importance, or one of great importance, or one of life-and-death importance, to self or others, the ethical character becomes pronounced. These instances will sufficiently suggest the truth that conduct with which morality is not concerned, passes into conduct which is moral or immoral, by small degrees and in countless ways.

But the conduct that has to be conceived scientifically before we can scientifically conceive those modes of conduct which are the objects of ethical judgments, is a conduct immensely wider in range than that just indicated. Complete comprehension of conduct is not to be obtained by contemplating the conduct of human beings only: we have to regard this as a part of universal conduct—conduct as exhibited by all living creatures. For evidently this comes within our definition—acts adjusted to ends. The conduct of the higher animals as compared with that of man, and the conduct of the lower animals as compared with that of the higher, mainly differ in this, that the adjustments of acts to ends are relatively simple and relatively incomplete. And as in other cases, so in this case, we must interpret the more developed by the less developed. Just as, fully to understand the part of conduct which ethics deals with, we must study human conduct as a whole; so, fully to understand human conduct as a whole, we must study it as a

part of that large whole constituted by the conduct of animate beings in general.

Nor is even this whole conceived with the needful fullness, so long as we think only of the conduct at present displayed around us. We have to include in our conception the less-developed conduct out of which this has arisen in course of time. We have to regard the conduct now shown us by creatures of all orders, as an outcome of the conduct which has brought life of every kind to its present height. And this is tantamount to saying that our preparatory step must be to study the evolution of conduct.

CHAPTER 2

The Evolution of Conduct

3. We have become quite familiar with the idea of an evolution of structures throughout the ascending types of animals. To a considerable degree we have become familiar with the thought that an evolution of functions has gone on *pari passu* with the evolution of structures. Now advancing a step, we have to frame a conception of the evolution of conduct, as correlated with this evolution of structures and functions.

These three subjects are to be definitely distinguished. Obviously the facts comparative morphology sets forth, form a whole which, though it cannot be treated in general or in detail without taking into account facts belonging to comparative physiology, is essentially independent. No less clear is it that we may devote our attention exclusively to that progressive differentiation of functions, and combination of functions, which accompanies the development of structures—may say no more about the characters and connections of organs than is implied in describing their separate and joint actions. And the subject of conduct lies outside the subject of functions, if not as far as this lies outside the subject of structures, still, far enough to make it substantially separate. For those functions which are already variously compounded

to achieve what we regard as single bodily acts, are endlessly recompounded to achieve that coordination of bodily acts which is known as conduct.

We are concerned with functions in the true sense, while we think of them as processes carried on within the body; and, without exceeding the limits of physiology, we may treat of their adjusted combinations, so long as these are regarded as parts of the vital *consensus*. If we observe how the lungs aerate the blood which the heart sends to them; how heart and lungs together supply aerated blood to the stomach, and so enable it to do its work; how these cooperate with sundry secreting and excreting glands to further digestion and to remove waste matter; and how all of them join to keep the brain in a fit condition for carrying on those actions which indirectly conduce to maintenance of the life at large; we are dealing with functions. Even when considering how parts that act directly on the environment—legs, arms, wings—perform their duties, we are still concerned with functions in that aspect of them constituting physiology, so long as we restrict our attention to internal processes, and to internal combinations of them. But we enter on the subject of conduct when we begin to study such combinations among the actions of sensory and motor organs as are externally manifested. Suppose that instead of observing those contractions of muscles by which the optic axes are converged and the foci of the eyes adjusted (which is a portion of physiology), and that instead of observing the cooperation of other nerves, muscles, and bones, by which a hand is moved to a particular place and the fingers closed (which is also a portion of physiology), we observe a weapon being seized by a hand under guidance of the eyes. We now pass from the thought of combined internal functions to the thought of combined external motions. Doubtless if we could trace the cerebral processes which accompany these, we should find an inner physiological coordination corresponding with the outer coordination of actions. But this admission is consistent with the assertion, that when we ignore the internal combination and attend only to the external combina-

tion, we pass from a portion of physiology to a portion of conduct. For though it may be objected that the external combination instanced, is too simple to be rightly included under the name conduct, yet a moment's thought shows that it is joined with what we call conduct by insensible gradations. Suppose the weapon seized is used to ward off a blow. Suppose a counterblow is given. Suppose the aggressor runs and is chased. Suppose there comes a struggle and a handing him over to the police. Suppose there follow the many and varied acts constituting a prosecution. Obviously the initial adjustment of an act to an end, inseparable from the rest, must be included with them under the same general head; and obviously from this initial simple adjustment, having intrinsically no moral character, we pass by degrees to the most complex adjustments and to those on which moral judgments are passed.

Hence, excluding all internal coordinations, our subject here is the aggregate of all external coordinations; and this aggregate includes not only the simplest as well as the most complex performed by human beings, but also those performed by all inferior beings considered as less or more evolved.

4. Already the question—What constitutes advance in the evolution of conduct, as we trace it up from the lowest types of living creatures to the highest? has been answered by implication. A few examples will now bring the answer into conspicuous relief.

We saw that conduct is distinguished from the totality of actions by excluding purposeless actions; but during evolution this distinction arises by degrees. In the very lowest creatures most of the movements from moment to moment made, have not more recognizable aims than have the struggles of an epileptic. An infusorium swims randomly about, determined in its course not by a perceived object to be pursued or escaped, but, apparently, by varying stimuli in its medium; and its acts, unadjusted in any appreciable way to

ends, lead it now into contact with some nutritive substance which it absorbs, and now into the neighborhood of some creature by which it is swallowed and digested. Lacking those developed senses and motor powers which higher animals possess, ninety-nine in the hundred of these minute animals, severally living but for a few hours, disappear either by innutrition or by destruction. The conduct is constituted of actions so little adjusted to ends, that life continues only as long as the accidents of the environment are favorable. But when, among aquatic creatures, we observe one which, though still low in type, is much higher than the infusorium—say a rotifer—we see how, along with larger size, more developed structures, and greater power of combining functions, there goes an advance in conduct. We see how by its whirling cilia it sucks in as food these small animals moving around; how by its prehensile tail it fixes itself to some object; how by withdrawing its outer organs and contracting its body, it preserves itself from this or that injury from time to time threatened; and how thus, by better adjusting its own actions, it becomes less dependent on the actions going on around, and so preserves itself for a longer period.

A superior subkingdom, as the Mollusca, still better exemplifies this contrast. When we compare a low mollusc, such as a floating ascidian, with a high mollusc, such as a cephalopod, we are again shown that greater organic evolution is accompanied by more evolved conduct. At the mercy of every marine creature large enough to swallow it, and drifted about by currents which may chance to keep it at sea or may chance to leave it fatally stranded, the ascidian displays but little adjustment of acts to ends in comparison with the cephalopod; which, now crawling over the beach, now exploring the rocky crevices, now swimming through the open water, now darting after a fish, now hiding itself from some larger animal in a cloud of ink, and using its suckered arms at one time for anchoring itself and at another for holding fast its prey; selects, and combines, and proportions, its movements from minute to minute, so as to evade dangers

which threaten, while utilizing chances of food which offer; so showing us varied activities which, in achieving special ends, achieve the general end of securing continuance of the activities.

Among vertebrate animals we similarly trace up, along with advance in structures and functions, this advance in conduct. A fish roaming about at hazard in search of something to eat, able to detect it by smell or sight only within short distances, and now and again rushing away in alarm on the approach of a bigger fish, makes adjustments of acts to ends that are relatively few and simple in their kinds; and shows us, as a consequence, how small is the average duration of life. So few survive to maturity that, to make up for destruction of unhatched young and small fry and half-grown individuals, a million ova have to be spawned by a codfish that two may reach the spawning age. Conversely, by a highly evolved mammal, such as an elephant, those general actions performed in common with the fish are far better adjusted to their ends. By sight as well, probably, as by odor, it detects food at relatively great distances; and when, at intervals, there arises a need for escape, relatively great speed is attained. But the chief difference arises from the addition of new sets of adjustments. We have combined actions which facilitate nutrition—the breaking off of succulent and fruit-bearing branches, the selecting of edible growths throughout a comparatively wide reach; and, in case of danger, safety can be achieved not by flight only, but, if necessary, by defense or attack: bringing into combined use tusks, trunk, and ponderous feet. Further, we see various subsidiary acts adjusted to subsidiary ends—now the going into a river for coolness, and using the trunk as a means of projecting water over the body; now the employment of a bough for sweeping away flies from the back; now the making of signal sounds to alarm the herd, and adapting the actions to such sounds when made by others. Evidently, the effect of this more highly evolved conduct is to secure the balance of the organic actions throughout far longer periods.

And now, on studying the doings of the highest of mammals, mankind, we not only find that the adjustments of acts to ends are both more numerous and better than among lower mammals; but we find the same thing on comparing the doings of higher races of men with those of lower races. If we take any one of the major ends achieved, we see greater completeness of achievement by civilized than by savage; and we also see an achievement of relatively numerous minor ends subserving major ends. Is it in nutrition? The food is obtained more regularly in response to appetite; it is far higher in quality; it is free from dirt; it is greater in variety; it is better prepared. Is it in warmth? The characters of the fabrics and forms of the articles used for clothing, and the adaptations of them to requirements from day to day and hour to hour, are much superior. Is it in dwelling? Between the shelter of boughs and grass which the lowest savage builds, and the mansion of the civilized man, the contrast in aspect is not more extreme than is the contrast in number and efficiency of the adjustments of acts to ends betrayed in their respective constructions. And when with the ordinary activities of the savage we compare the ordinary civilized activities—as the business of the trader, which involves multiplied and complex transactions extending over long periods, or as professional avocations, prepared for by elaborate studies and daily carried on in endlessly varied forms, or as political discussions and agitations, directed now to the carrying of this measure and now to the defeating of that—we see sets of adjustments of acts to ends, not only immensely exceeding those seen among lower races of men in variety and intricacy, but sets to which lower races of men present nothing analogous. And along with this greater elaboration of life produced by the pursuit of more numerous ends, there goes that increased duration of life which constitutes the supreme end.

And here is suggested the need for supplementing this conception of evolving conduct. For besides being an improving adjustment of acts to ends, such as furthers prolongation of life, it is such as furthers increased amount of life. Recon-

sideration of the examples above given, will show that length of life is not by itself a measure of evolution of conduct; but that quantity of life must be taken into account. An oyster, adapted by its structure to the diffused food contained in the water it draws in, and shielded by its shell from nearly all dangers, may live longer than a cuttlefish, which has such superior powers of dealing with numerous contingencies; but then, the sum of vital activities during any given interval is far less in the oyster than in the cuttlefish. So a worm, ordinarily sheltered from most enemies by the earth it burrows through, which also supplies a sufficiency of its poor food, may have greater longevity than many of its annulose relatives, the insects; but one of these during its existence as larva and imago, may experience a greater quantity of the changes which constitute life. Nor is it otherwise when we compare the more evolved with the less evolved among mankind. The difference between the average lengths of the lives of savage and civilized, is no true measure of the difference between the totalities of their two lives, considered as aggregates of thought, feeling, and action. Hence, estimating life by multiplying its length into its breadth, we must say that the augmentation of it which accompanies evolution of conduct, results from increase of both factors. The more multiplied and varied adjustments of acts to ends, by which the more developed creature from hour to hour fulfills more numerous requirements, severally add to the activities that are carried on abreast, and severally help to make greater the period through which such simultaneous activities endure. Each further evolution of conduct widens the aggregate of actions while conducing to elongation of it.

5. Turn we now to a further aspect of the phenomena, separate from, but necessarily associated with, the last. Thus far we have considered only those adjustments of acts to ends which have for their final purpose complete individual life. Now we have to consider those adjustments which have for their final purpose the life of the species.

Self-preservation in each generation has all along de-

pended on the preservation of offspring by preceding generations. And in proportion as evolution of the conduct subserving individual life is high, implying high organization, there must previously have been a highly evolved conduct subserving nurture of the young. Throughout the ascending grades of the animal kingdom, this second kind of conduct presents stages of advance like those which we have observed in the first. Low down, where structures and functions are little developed, and the power of adjusting acts to ends but slight, there is no conduct, properly so named, furthering salvation of the species. Race-maintaining conduct, like self-maintaining conduct, arises gradually out of that which cannot be called conduct: adjusted actions are preceded by unadjusted ones. Protozoa spontaneously divide and subdivide, in consequence of physical changes over which they have no control; or, at other times, after a period of quiescence, break up into minute portions which severally grow into new individuals. In neither case can conduct be alleged. Higher up, the process is that of ripening, at intervals, germ cells and sperm cells, which, on occasion, are sent forth into the surrounding water and left to their fate: perhaps one in ten thousand surviving to maturity. Here, again, we see only development and dispersion going on apart from parental care. Types above these, as fish which choose fit places in which to deposit their ova, or as the higher crustaceans which carry masses of ova about until they are hatched, exhibit adjustments of acts to ends which we may properly call conduct; though it is of the simplest kind. Where, as among certain fish, the male keeps guard over the eggs, driving away intruders, there is an additional adjustment of acts to ends; and the applicability of the name conduct is more decided. Passing at once to creatures far superior, such as birds which, building nests and sitting on their eggs, feed their broods for considerable periods, and give them aid after they can fly; or such as mammals which, suckling their young for a time, continue afterwards to bring them food or protect them while they feed, until they reach ages at which they can provide for

themselves; we are shown how this conduct which furthers race maintenance evolves hand-in-hand with the conduct which furthers self-maintenance. That better organization which makes possible the last, makes possible the first also. Mankind exhibit a great progress of like nature. Compared with brutes, the savage, higher in his self-maintaining conduct, is higher too in his race-maintaining conduct. A larger number of the wants of offspring are provided for; and parental care, enduring longer, extends to the disciplining of offspring in arts and habits which fit them for their conditions of existence. Conduct of this order, equally with conduct of the first order, we see becoming evolved in a still greater degree as we ascend from savage to civilized. The adjustments of acts to ends in the rearing of children become far more elaborate, alike in number of ends met, variety of means used, and efficiency of their adaptations; and the aid and oversight are continued throughout a much greater part of early life.

In tracing up the evolution of conduct, so that we may frame a true conception of conduct in general, we have thus to recognize these two kinds as mutually dependent. Speaking generally, neither can evolve without evolution of the other; and the highest evolutions of the two must be reached simultaneously.

6. To conclude, however, that on reaching a perfect adjustment of acts to ends subserving individual life and the rearing of offspring, the evolution of conduct becomes complete, is to conclude erroneously. Or rather, I should say, it is an error to suppose that either of these kinds of conduct can assume its highest form, without its highest form being assumed by a third kind of conduct yet to be named.

The multitudinous creatures of all kinds which fill the earth, cannot live wholly apart from one another, but are more or less in presence of one another—are interfered with by one another. In large measure the adjustments of acts to ends which we have been considering, are components of that "struggle for existence" carried on both between members of

the same species and between members of different species; and, very generally, a successful adjustment made by one creature involves an unsuccessful adjustment made by another creature, either of the same kind or of a different kind. That the carnivore may live herbivores must die; and that its young may be reared the young of weaker creatures must be orphaned. Maintenance of the hawk and its brood involves the deaths of many small birds; and that small birds may multiply, their progeny must be fed with innumerable sacrificed worms and larvae. Competition among members of the same species has allied, though less conspicuous, results. The stronger often carries off by force the prey which the weaker has caught. Monopolizing certain hunting grounds, the more ferocious drive others of their kind into less favorable places. With plant-eating animals, too, the like holds: the better food is secured by the more vigorous individuals, while the less vigorous and worse fed, succumb either directly from innutrition or indirectly from resulting inability to escape enemies. That is to say, among creatures whose lives are carried on antagonistically, each of the two kinds of conduct delineated above, must remain imperfectly evolved. Even in such few kinds of them as have little to fear from enemies or competitors, as lions or tigers, there is still inevitable failure in the adjustments of acts to ends towards the close of life. Death by starvation from inability to catch prey, shows a falling short of conduct from its ideal.

This imperfectly evolved conduct introduces us to antithesis to conduct that is perfectly evolved. Contemplating these adjustments of acts to ends which miss completeness because they cannot be made by one creature without other creatures being prevented from making them, raises the thought of adjustments such that each creature may make them without preventing them from being made by other creatures. That the highest form of conduct must be so distinguished, is an inevitable implication; for while the form of conduct is such that adjustments of acts to ends by some necessitate non-adjustments by others, there remains room

for modifications which bring conduct into a form avoiding this, and so making the totality of life greater.

From the abstract let us pass to the concrete. Recognizing men as the beings whose conduct is most evolved, let us ask under what conditions their conduct, in all three aspects of its evolution, reaches its limit. Clearly while the lives led are entirely predatory, as those of savages, the adjustments of acts to ends fall short of this highest form of conduct in every way. Individual life, ill carried on from hour to hour, is prematurely cut short; the fostering of offspring often fails, and is incomplete when it does not fail; and in so far as the ends of self-maintenance and race maintenance are met, they are met by destruction of other beings, of different kind or of like kind. In social groups formed by compounding and recompounding primitive hordes, conduct remains imperfectly evolved in proportion as there continue antagonisms between the groups and antagonisms between members of the same group—two traits necessarily associated; since the nature which prompts international aggression prompts aggression of individuals on one another. Hence the limit of evolution can be reached by conduct only in permanently peaceful societies. That perfect adjustment of acts to ends in maintaining individual life and rearing new individuals, which is effected by each without hindering others from effecting like perfect adjustments, is, in its very definition, shown to constitute a kind of conduct that can be approached only as war decreases and dies out.

A gap in this outline must now be filled up. There remains a further advance not yet even hinted. For beyond so behaving that each achieves his ends without preventing others from achieving their ends, the members of a society may give mutual help in the achievement of ends. And if, either indirectly by industrial cooperation, or directly by volunteered aid, fellow citizens can make easier for one another the adjustments of acts to ends, then their conduct assumes a still higher phase of evolution; since whatever facilitates the making of adjustments by each, increases the totality of the ad-

justments made, and serves to render the lives of all more complete.

7. The reader who recalls certain passages in *First Principles,* in the *Principles of Biology,* and in the *Principles of Psychology,* will perceive above a restatement, in another form, of generalizations set forth in those works. Especially will he be reminded of the proposition that life is "the definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external coexistences and sequences"; and still more of that abridged and less specific formula, in which life is said to be "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations."

The presentation of the facts here made, differs from the presentations before made, mainly by ignoring the inner part of the correspondence and attending exclusively to that outer part constituted of visible actions. But the two are in harmony; and the reader who wishes further to prepare himself for dealing with our present topic from the evolution point of view, may advantageously join to the foregoing more special aspect of the phenomena, the more general aspects before delineated.

After this passing remark, I recur to the main proposition set forth in these two chapters, which has, I think, been fully justified. Guided by the truth that as the conduct with which ethics deals is part of conduct at large, conduct at large must be generally understood before this part can be specially understood; and guided by the further truth that to understand conduct at large we must understand the evolution of conduct; we have been led to see that ethics has for its subject matter, that form which universal conduct assumes during the last stages of its evolution. We have also concluded that these last stages in the evolution of conduct are those displayed by the highest type of being, when he is forced, by increase of numbers, to live more and more in presence of his fellows. And there has followed the corollary that conduct

gains ethical sanction in proportion as the activities, becoming less and less militant and more and more industrial, are such as do not necessitate mutual injury or hindrance, but consist with, and are furthered by, cooperation and mutual aid.

These implications of the evolution hypothesis, we shall now see harmonize with the leading moral ideas men have otherwise reached.

CHAPTER 3

Good and Bad Conduct

8. By comparing its meanings in different connections and observing what they have in common, we learn the essential meaning of a word; and the essential meaning of a word that is variously applied, may best be learnt by comparing with one another those applications of it which diverge most widely. Let us thus ascertain what good and bad mean.

In which cases do we distinguish as good, a knife, a gun, a house? And what trait leads us to speak of a bad umbrella or a bad pair of boots? The characters here predicated by the words good and bad, are not intrinsic characters; for apart from human wants, such things have neither merits nor demerits. We call these articles good or bad according as they are well or ill adapted to achieve prescribed ends. The good knife is one which will cut; the good gun is one which carries far and true; the good house is one which duly yields the shelter, comfort, and accommodation sought for. Conversely, the badness alleged of the umbrella or the pair of boots, refers to their failures in fulfilling the ends of keeping off the rain and comfortably protecting the feet, with due regard to appearances. So is it when we pass from inanimate objects to inanimate actions. We call a day bad in which storms prevent us from satisfying certain of our desires. A good season is the expres-

sion used when the weather has favored the production of valuable crops. If from lifeless things and actions we pass to living ones, we similarly find that these words in their current applications refer to efficient subservience. The goodness or badness of a pointer or a hunter, of a sheep or an ox, ignoring all other attributes of these creatures, refers in the one case to the fitness of their actions for effecting the ends men use them for, and in the other case to the qualities of their flesh as adapting it to support human life. And those doings of men which, morally considered, are indifferent, we class as good or bad according to their success or failure. A good jump is a jump which, remoter ends ignored, well achieves the immediate purpose of a jump; and a stroke at billiards is called good when the movements are skillfully adjusted to the requirements. Oppositely, the badness of a walk that is shuffling and an utterance that is indistinct, is alleged because of the relative nonadaptations of the acts to the ends.

Thus recognizing the meanings of good and bad as otherwise used, we shall understand better their meanings as used in characterizing conduct under its ethical aspects. Here, too, observation shows that we apply them according as the adjustments of acts to ends are, or are not, efficient. This truth is somewhat disguised. The entanglement of social relations is such, that men's actions often simultaneously affect the welfares of self, of offspring, and of fellow citizens. Hence results confusion in judging of actions as good or bad; since actions well fitted to achieve ends of one order, may prevent ends of the other orders from being achieved. Nevertheless, when we disentangle the three orders of ends, and consider each separately, it becomes clear that the conduct which achieves each kind of end is regarded as relatively good; and is regarded as relatively bad if it fails to achieve it.

Take first the primary set of adjustments—those subserving individual life. Apart from approval or disapproval of his ulterior aims, a man who fights is said to make a good defense, if his defense is well adapted for self-preservation; and, the judgments on other aspects of his conduct remaining the

same, he brings down on himself an unfavorable verdict, in so far as his immediate acts are concerned, if these are futile. The goodness ascribed to a man of business, as such, is measured by the activity and ability with which he buys and sells to advantage; and may coexist with a hard treatment of dependents which is reprobated. Though in repeatedly lending money to a friend who sinks one loan after another, a man is doing that which, considered in itself is held praiseworthy; yet, if he does it to the extent of bringing on his own ruin, he is held blameworthy for a self-sacrifice carried too far. And thus is it with the opinions we express from hour to hour on those acts of people around which bear on their health and personal welfare. "You should not have done that," is the reproof given to one who crosses the street amid a dangerous rush of vehicles. "You ought to have changed your clothes," is said to another who has taken cold after getting wet. "You were right to take a receipt"; "you were wrong to invest without advice"; are common criticisms. All such approving and disapproving utterances make the tacit assertion that, other things equal, conduct is right or wrong according as its special acts, well or ill adjusted to special ends, do or do not further the general end of self-preservation.

These ethical judgments we pass on self-regarding acts are ordinarily little emphasized; partly because the promptings of the self-regarding desires, generally strong enough, do not need moral enforcement, and partly because the promptings of the other-regarding desires, less strong, and often overridden, do need moral enforcement. Hence results a contrast. On turning to that second class of adjustments of acts to ends which subserve the rearing of offspring, we no longer find any obscurity in the application of the words good and bad to them, according as they are efficient or inefficient. The expressions good nursing and bad nursing, whether they refer to the supply of food, the quality and amount of clothing, or the due ministration to infantine wants from hour to hour, tacitly recognize as special ends which ought to be fulfilled, the furthering of the vital functions, with a view to the general

end of continued life and growth. A mother is called good who, ministering to all the physical needs of her children, also adjusts her behavior in ways conducive to their mental health; and a bad father is one who either does not provide the necessaries of life for his family, or otherwise acts in a manner injurious to their bodies or minds. Similarly of the education given to them, or provided for them. Goodness or badness is affirmed of it (often with little consistency, however) according as its methods are so adapted to physical and psychical requirements, as to further the children's lives for the time being, while preparing them for carrying on complete and prolonged adult life.

Most emphatic, however, are the applications of the words good and bad to conduct throughout that third division of it comprising the deeds by which men affect one another. In maintaining their own lives and fostering their offspring, men's adjustments of acts to ends are so apt to hinder the kindred adjustments of other men, that insistence on the needful limitations has to be perpetual; and the mischiefs caused by men's interferences with one another's life-subserving actions are so great, that the interdicts have to be peremptory. Hence the fact that the words good and bad have come to be specially associated with acts which further the complete living of others and acts which obstruct their complete living. Goodness, standing by itself, suggests, above all other things, the conduct of one who aids the sick in reacquiring normal vitality, assists the unfortunate to recover the means of maintaining themselves, defends those who are threatened with harm in person, property, or reputation, and aids whatever promises to improve the living of all his fellows. Contrariwise, badness brings to mind, as its leading correlative, the conduct of one who, in carrying on his own life, damages the lives of others by injuring their bodies, destroying their possessions, defrauding them, calumniating them.

Always, then, acts are called good or bad, according as they are well or ill adjusted to ends; and whatever inconsistency there is in our uses of the words, arises from inconsistency of

the ends. Here, however, the study of conduct in general, and of the evolution of conduct, have prepared us to harmonize these interpretations. The foregoing exposition shows that the conduct to which we apply the name good, is the relatively more evolved conduct; and that bad is the name we apply to conduct which is relatively less evolved. We saw that evolution, tending ever towards self-preservation, reaches its limit when individual life is the greatest, both in length and breadth; and now we see that, leaving other ends aside, we regard as good the conduct furthering self-preservation, and as bad the conduct tending to self-destruction. It was shown that along with increasing power of maintaining individual life, which evolution brings, there goes increasing power of perpetuating the species by fostering progeny, and that in this direction evolution reaches its limit when the needful number of young, preserved to maturity, are then fit for a life that is complete in fullness and duration; and here it turns out that parental conduct is called good or bad as it approaches or falls short of this ideal result. Lastly, we inferred that establishment of an associated state, both makes possible and requires a form of conduct such that life may be completed in each and in his offspring, not only without preventing completion of it in others, but with furtherance of it in others; and we have found above, that this is the form of conduct most emphatically termed good. Moreover, just as we there saw that evolution becomes the highest possible when the conduct simultaneously achieves the greatest totality of life in self, in offspring, and in fellow men; so here we see that the conduct called good rises to the conduct conceived as best, when it fulfills all three classes of ends at the same time.

9. Is there any postulate involved in these judgments on conduct? Is there any assumption made in calling good the acts conducive to life, in self or others, and bad those which directly or indirectly tend towards death, special or general? Yes; an assumption of extreme significance has been made—an assumption underlying all moral estimates.

The question to be definitely raised and answered before entering on any ethical discussion, is the question of late much agitated—Is life worth living? Shall we take the pessimist view? or shall we take the optimist view? or shall we, after weighing pessimistic and optimistic arguments, conclude that the balance is in favor of a qualified optimism?

On the answer to this question depends entirely every decision concerning the goodness or badness of conduct. By those who think life is not a benefit but a misfortune, conduct which prolongs it is to be blamed rather than praised: the ending of an undesirable existence being the thing to be wished, that which causes the ending of it must be applauded; while actions furthering its continuance, either in self or others, must be reprobated. Those who, on the other hand, take an optimistic view, or who, if not pure optimists, yet hold that in life the good exceeds the evil, are committed to opposite estimates; and must regard as conduct to be approved that which fosters life in self and others, and as conduct to be disapproved that which injures or endangers life in self or others.

The ultimate question, therefore, is—Has evolution been a mistake; and especially that evolution which improves the adjustment of acts to ends in ascending stages of organization? If it is held that there had better not have been any animate existence at all, and that the sooner it comes to an end the better; then one set of conclusions with respect to conduct emerges. If, contrariwise, it is held that there is a balance in favor of animate existence, and if, still further, it is held that in the future this balance may be increased; then the opposite set of conclusions emerges. Even should it be alleged that the worth of life is not to be judged by its intrinsic character, but rather by its extrinsic sequences—by certain results to be anticipated when life has passed—the ultimate issue reappears in a new shape. For though the accompanying creed may negative a deliberate shortening of life that is miserable, it cannot justify a gratuitous lengthening of such life. Legislation conducive to increased longevity would, on the pessimis-

tic view, remain blamable; while it would be praiseworthy on the optimistic view.

But now, have these irreconcilable opinions anything in common? Men being divisible into two schools differing on this ultimate question, the inquiry arises—Is there anything which their radically opposed views alike take for granted? In the optimistic proposition, tacitly made when using the words good and bad after the ordinary manner; and in the pessimistic proposition overtly made, which implies that the words good and bad should be used in the reverse senses; does examination disclose any joint proposition—any proposition which, contained in both of them, may be held more certain than either—any universally asserted proposition?

10. Yes, there is one postulate in which pessimists and optimists agree. Both their arguments assume it to be self-evident that life is good or bad, according as it does, or does not, bring a surplus of agreeable feeling. The pessimist says he condemns life because it results in more pain than pleasure. The optimist defends life in the belief that it brings more pleasure than pain. Each makes the kind of sentiency which accompanies life the test. They agree that the justification for life as a state of being, turns on this issue—whether the average consciousness rises above indifference-point into pleasurable feeling or falls below it into painful feeling. The implication common to their antagonist views is, that conduct should conduce to preservation of the individual, of the family, and of the society, only supposing that life brings more happiness than misery.

Changing the venue cannot alter the verdict. If either the pessimist, while saying that the pains of life predominate, or the optimist, while saying that the pleasures predominate, urges that the pains borne here are to be compensated by pleasures received hereafter; and that so life, whether or not justified in its immediate results, is justified in its ultimate results; the implication remains the same. The decision is still reached by balancing pleasures against pains. Animate exis-

tence would be judged by both a curse, if to a surplus of misery borne here, were added a surplus of misery to be borne hereafter. And for either to regard animate existence as a blessing, if here its pains were held to exceed its pleasures, he must hold that hereafter its pleasures will exceed its pains. Thus there is no escape from the admission that in calling good the conduct which subserves life, and bad the conduct which hinders or destroys it, and in so implying that life is a blessing and not a curse, we are inevitably asserting that conduct is good or bad according as its total effects are pleasurable or painful.

One theory only is imaginable in pursuance of which other interpretations of good and bad can be given. This theory is that men were created with the intention that they should be sources of misery to themselves; and that they are bound to continue living that their creator may have the satisfaction of contemplating their misery. Though this is not a theory avowedly entertained by many—though it is not formulated by any in this distinct way; yet not a few do accept it under a disguised form. Inferior creeds are pervaded by the belief that the sight of suffering is pleasing to the gods. Derived from bloodthirsty ancestors, such gods are naturally conceived as gratified by the infliction of pain: when living they delighted in torturing other beings; and witnessing torture is supposed still to give them delight. The implied conceptions long survive. It needs but to name Indian fakirs who hang on hooks and Eastern dervishes who gash themselves, to show that in societies considerably advanced, are still to be found many who think that submission to anguish brings divine favor. And without enlarging on fasts and penances, it will be clear that there has existed, and still exists, among Christian peoples, the belief that the Deity whom Jephthah thought to propitiate by sacrificing his daughter, may be propitiated by self-inflicted pains. Further, the conception accompanying this, that acts pleasing to self are offensive to God, has survived along with it, and still widely prevails; if not in formulated dogmas, yet in beliefs that are manifestly operative.

Doubtless, in modern days such beliefs have assumed qualified forms. The satisfaction which ferocious gods were supposed to feel in contemplating tortures, has been, in large measure, transformed into the satisfaction felt by a deity in contemplating that self-infliction of pain which is held to further eventual happiness. But clearly those who entertain this modified view, are excluded from the class whose position we are here considering. Restricting ourselves to this class—supposing that from the savage who immolates victims to a cannibal god, there are descendants among the civilized, who hold that mankind were made for suffering, and that it is their duty to continue living in misery for the delight of their maker, we can only recognize the fact that devil-worshippers are not yet extinct.

Omitting people of this class, if there are any, as beyond or beneath argument, we find that all others avowedly or tacitly hold that the final justification for maintaining life, can only be the reception from it of a surplus of pleasurable feeling over painful feeling; and that goodness or badness can be ascribed to acts which subserve life or hinder life, only on this supposition.

And here we are brought round to those primary meanings of the words good and bad, which we passed over when considering their secondary meanings. For on remembering that we call good and bad the things which immediately produce agreeable and disagreeable sensations, and also the sensations themselves—a good wine, a good appetite, a bad smell, a bad headache—we see that by referring directly to pleasures and pains, these meanings harmonize with those which indirectly refer to pleasures and pains. If we call good the enjoyable state itself, as a good laugh—if we call good the proximate cause of an enjoyable state, as good music—if we call good any agent which conduces immediately or remotely to an enjoyable state, as a good shop, a good teacher—if we call good considered intrinsically, each act so adjusted to its end as to further self-preservation and that surplus of enjoyment which makes self-preservation desirable—if we call

good every kind of conduct which aids the lives of others, and do this under the belief that life brings more happiness than misery; then it becomes undeniable that, taking into account immediate and remote effects on all persons, the good is universally the pleasurable.

11. Sundry influences—moral, theological, and political—conspire to make people disguise from themselves this truth. As in narrower cases so in this widest case, they become so preoccupied with the means by which an end is achieved, as eventually to mistake it for the end. Just as money, which is a means of satisfying wants, comes to be regarded by a miser as the sole thing to be worked for, leaving the wants unsatisfied; so the conduct men have found preferable because most conducive to happiness, has come to be thought of as intrinsically preferable: not only to be made a proximate end (which it should be) but to be made an ultimate end, to the exclusion of the true ultimate end. And yet cross-examination quickly compels everyone to confess the true ultimate end. Just as the miser, asked to justify himself, is obliged to allege the power of money to purchase desirable things, as his reason for prizing it; so the moralist who thinks this conduct intrinsically good and that intrinsically bad, if pushed home, has no choice but to fall back on their pleasure-giving and pain-giving effects. To prove this it needs but to observe how impossible it would be to think of them as we do, if their effects were reversed.

Suppose that gashes and bruises caused agreeable sensations, and brought in their train increased power of doing work and receiving enjoyment; should we regard assault in the same manner as at present? Or suppose that self-mutilation, say by cutting off a hand, was both intrinsically pleasant and furthered performance of the processes by which personal welfare and the welfare of dependents is achieved; should we hold as now, that deliberate injury to one's own body is to be reprobated? Or again, suppose that picking a man's pocket excited in him joyful emotions, by

brightening his prospects; would theft be counted among crimes, as in existing lawbooks and moral codes? In these extreme cases, no one can deny that what we call the badness of actions is ascribed to them solely for the reason that they entail pain, immediate or remote, and would not be so ascribed did they entail pleasure.

If we examine our conceptions on their obverse side, this general fact forces itself on our attention with equal distinctness. Imagine that ministering to a sick person always increased the pains of illness. Imagine that an orphan's relatives who took charge of it, thereby necessarily brought miseries upon it. Imagine that liquidating another man's pecuniary claims on you redounded to his disadvantage. Imagine that crediting a man with noble behavior hindered his social welfare and consequent gratification. What should we say to these acts which now fall into the class we call praiseworthy? Should we not contrariwise class them as blameworthy?

Using, then, as our tests, these most pronounced forms of good and bad conduct, we find it unquestionable that our ideas of their goodness and badness really originate from our consciousness of the certainty or probability that they will produce pleasures or pains somewhere. And this truth is brought out with equal clearness by examining the standards of different moral schools; for analysis shows that every one of them derives its authority from this ultimate standard. Ethical systems are roughly distinguishable according as they take for their cardinal ideas (1) the character of the agent; (2) the nature of his motive; (3) the quality of his deeds; and (4) the results. Each of these may be characterized as good or bad; and those who do not estimate a mode of life by its effects on happiness, estimate it by the implied goodness or badness in the agent, in his motive, or in his deeds. We have perfection in the agent set up as a test by which conduct is to be judged. Apart from the agent we have his feeling considered as moral. And apart from the feeling we have his action considered as virtuous.

Though the distinctions thus indicated have so little definiteness that the words marking them are used interchange-

ably, yet there correspond to them doctrines partially unlike one another; which we may here conveniently examine separately, with the view of showing that all their tests of goodness are derivative.

12. It is strange that a notion so abstract as that of perfection, or a certain ideal completeness of nature, should ever have been thought one from which a system of guidance can be evolved; as it was in a general way by Plato and more distinctly by Jonathan Edwards. Perfection is synonymous with goodness in the highest degree; and hence to define good conduct in terms of perfection, is indirectly to define good conduct in terms of itself. Naturally, therefore, it happens that the notion of perfection like the notion of goodness can be framed only in relation to ends.

We allege imperfection of any inanimate thing, as a tool, if it lacks some part needful for effectual action, or if some part is so shaped as not to fulfill its purpose in the best manner. Perfection is alleged of a watch if it keeps exact time, however plain its case; and imperfection is alleged of it because of inaccurate timekeeping, however beautifully it is ornamented. Though we call things imperfect if we detect in them any injuries or flaws, even when these do not detract from efficiency; yet we do this because they imply that inferior workmanship, or that wear and tear, with which inefficiency is commonly joined in experience: absence of minor imperfections being habitually associated with absence of major imperfections.

As applied to living things, the word perfection has the same meaning. The idea of perfect shape in a race horse is derived by generalization from those observed traits of race horses which have usually gone along with attainment of the highest speed; and the idea of perfect constitution in a race horse similarly refers to the endurance which enables him to continue that speed for the longest time. With men, physically considered, it is the same: we are able to furnish no other test of perfection, than that of complete power in all the organs to

fulfill their respective functions. That our conception of perfect balance among the internal parts, and of perfect proportion among the external parts, originates thus, is made clear by observing that imperfection of any viscus, as lungs, heart, or liver, is ascribed for no other reason than inability to meet in full the demands which the activities of the organism make on it; and on observing that the conception of insufficient size, or of too great size, in a limb, is derived from accumulated experiences respecting that ratio among the limbs which furthers in the highest degree the performance of all needful actions.

And of perfection in mental nature we have no other measure. If imperfection of memory, of judgment, of temper, is alleged, it is alleged because of inadequacy to the requirements of life; and to imagine a perfect balance of the intellectual powers and of the emotions, is to imagine that proportion among them which ensures an entire discharge of each and every obligation as the occasion calls for it.

So that the perfection of man considered as an agent, means the being constituted for effecting complete adjustment of acts to ends of every kind. And since, as shown above, the complete adjustment of acts to ends is that which both secures and constitutes the life that is most evolved, alike in breadth and length; while, as also shown, the justification for whatever increases life is the reception from life of more happiness than misery; it follows that conduciveness to happiness is the ultimate test of perfection in a man's nature. To be fully convinced of this it needs but to observe how the proposition looks when inverted. It needs but to suppose that every approach towards perfection involved greater misery to self, or others, or both, to show by opposition that approach to perfection really means approach to that which secures greater happiness.

13. Pass we now from the view of those who make excellence of being the standard, to the view of those who make virtuousness of action the standard. I do not here refer to moralists who, having decided empirically or rationally, in-

ductively or deductively, that acts of certain kinds have the character we call virtuous, argue that such acts are to be performed without regard to proximate consequences: these have ample justification. But I refer to moralists who suppose themselves to have conceptions of virtue as an end, underived from any other end—who think that the idea of virtue is not resolvable into simpler ideas.

This is the doctrine which appears to have been entertained by Aristotle. I say, appears to have been, because his statements are far from consistent with one another. Recognizing happiness as the supreme end of human endeavor, it would at first sight seem that he cannot be taken as typical of those who make virtue the supreme end. Yet he puts himself in this category by seeking to define happiness in terms of virtue, instead of defining virtue in terms of happiness. The imperfect separation of words from things, which characterizes Greek speculation in general, seems to have been the cause of this. In primitive thought the name and the object named, are associated in such wise that the one is regarded as a part of the other—so much so, that knowing a savage's name is considered by him as having some of his being, and a consequent power to work evil on him. This belief in a real connection between word and thing, continuing through lower stages of progress, and long surviving in the tacit assumption that the meanings of words are intrinsic, pervades the dialogues of Plato, and is traceable even in Aristotle. For otherwise it is not easy to see why he should have so incompletely dissociated the abstract idea of happiness from particular forms of happiness. Naturally where the divorcing of words as symbols, from things as symbolized, is imperfect, there must be difficulty in giving to abstract words a sufficiently abstract meaning. If in the first stages of language the concrete name cannot be separated in thought from the concrete object it belongs to, it is inferable that in the course of forming successively higher grades of abstract names, there will have to be resisted the tendency to interpret each more abstract name in terms of some one class of the less abstract names it covers. Hence, I

think, the fact that Aristotle supposes happiness to be associated with some one order of human activities, rather than with all orders of human activities. Instead of including in it the pleasurable feelings accompanying actions that constitute mere living, which actions he says man has in common with vegetables; and instead of making it include the mental states which the life of external perception yields, which he says man has in common with animals at large; he excludes these from his idea of happiness, and includes in it only the modes of consciousness accompanying rational life. Asserting that the proper work of man "consists in the active exercise of the mental capacities conformably to reason," he concludes that "the supreme good of man will consist in performing this work with excellence or virtue: herein he will obtain happiness." And he finds confirmation for his view in its correspondence with views previously enunciated, saying—"our notion nearly agrees with theirs who place happiness in virtue; for we say that it consists in the action of virtue; that is, not merely in the possession, but in the use."

Now the implied belief that virtue can be defined otherwise than in terms of happiness (for else the proposition is that happiness is to be obtained by actions conducive to happiness) is allied to the Platonic belief that there is an ideal or absolute good, which gives to particular and relative goods their property of goodness; and an argument analogous to that which Aristotle uses against Plato's conception of good, may be used against his own conception of virtue. As with good so with virtue—it is not singular but plural: in Aristotle's own classification, virtue, when treated of at large, is transformed into virtues. Those which he calls virtues, must be so called in consequence of some common character that is either intrinsic or extrinsic. We may class things together either because they are made alike by all having in themselves some peculiarity, as we do vertebrate animals because they all have vertebral columns; or we may class them together because of some community in their outer relations, as when we group saws, knives, mallets, harrows, under the head of tools. Are

the virtues classed as such because of some intrinsic community of nature? Then there must be identifiable a common trait in all the cardinal virtues which Aristotle specifies—"Courage, Temperance, Liberality, Magnanimity, Magnificence, Meekness, Amiability or Friendliness, Truthfulness, Justice." What now is the trait possessed in common by magnificence and meekness? and if any such common trait can be disentangled, is it that which also constitutes the essential trait in truthfulness? The answer must be—no. The virtues, then, not being classed as such because of an intrinsic community of character, must be classed as such because of something extrinsic; and this something can be nothing else than the happiness which Aristotle says consists in the practice of them. They are united by their common relation to this result; while they are not united by their inner natures.

Perhaps still more clearly may the inference be drawn thus: If virtue is primordial and independent, no reason can be given why there should be any correspondence between virtuous conduct and conduct that is pleasure-giving in its total effects on self, or others, or both; and if there is not a necessary correspondence, it is conceivable that the conduct classed as virtuous should be pain-giving in its total effects. That we may see the consequence of so conceiving it, let us take the two virtues considered as typically such in ancient times and in modern times—courage and chastity. By the hypothesis, then, courage, displayed alike in self-defense and in defense of country, is to be conceived as not only entailing pains incidentally, but as being necessarily a cause of misery to the individual and to the state; while, by implication, the absence of it redounds to personal and general well-being. Similarly, by the hypothesis, we have to conceive that irregular sexual relations are directly and indirectly beneficial—that adultery is conducive to domestic harmony and the careful rearing of children; while marital relations in proportion as they are persistent, generate discord between husband and wife and entail on their offspring, suffering, disease, and death. Unless it is asserted that courage and chastity could still be thought of

as virtues though thus productive of misery, it must be admitted that the conceptions of virtue cannot be separated from the conception of happiness producing conduct; and that as this holds of all the virtues, however otherwise unlike, it is from their conduciveness to happiness that they come to be classed as virtues.

14. When from those ethical estimates which take perfection of nature, or virtuousness of action, as tests, we pass to those which take for test rectitude of motive, we approach the intuitional theory of morals; and we may conveniently deal with such estimates by a criticism on this theory.

By the intuitional theory I here mean, not that which recognizes as produced by the inherited effects of continued experiences, the feelings of liking and aversion we have to acts of certain kinds; but I mean the theory which regards such feelings as divinely given, and as independent of results experienced by self or ancestors. "There is therefore," says Hutcheson, "as each one by close attention and reflection may convince himself, a natural and immediate determination to approve certain affections, and actions consequent upon them"; and since, in common with others of his time, he believes in the special creation of man, and all other beings, this "natural sense of immediate excellence" he considers as a supernaturally derived guide. Though he says that the feelings and acts thus intuitively recognized as good, "all agree in one general character, of tending to the happiness of others"; yet he is obliged to conceive this as a preordained correspondence. Nevertheless, it may be shown that conduciveness to happiness, here represented as an incidental trait of the acts which receive these innate moral approvals, is really the test by which these approvals are recognized as moral. The intuitionists place confidence in these verdicts of conscience, simply because they vaguely, if not distinctly, perceive them to be consonant with the disclosures of that ultimate test. Observe the proof.

By the hypothesis, the wrongness of murder is known by a

moral intuition which the human mind was originally constituted to yield; and the hypothesis therefore negatives the admission that this sense of its wrongness arises, immediately or remotely, from the consciousness that murder involves deduction from happiness, directly and indirectly. But if you ask an adherent of this doctrine to contrast his intuition with that of the Fijian, who, considering murder an honorable action, is restless until he has distinguished himself by killing someone; and if you inquire of him in what way the civilized intuition is to be justified in opposition to the intuition of the savage; no course is open save that of showing how conformity to the one conduces to well-being, while conformity to the other entails suffering, individual and general. When asked why the moral sense which tells him that it is wrong to take another man's goods, should be obeyed rather than the moral sense of a Turcoman, who proves how meritorious he considers theft to be by making pilgrimages to the tombs of noted robbers to make offerings; the intuitionist can do nothing but urge that, certainly under conditions like ours, if not also under conditions like those of the Turkomans, disregard of men's claims to their property not only inflicts immediate misery, but involves a social state inconsistent with happiness. Or if, again, there is required from him a justification for his feeling of repugnance to lying, in contrast with the feeling of an Egyptian, who prides himself on skill in lying (even thinking it praiseworthy to deceive without any further end than that of practicing deception); he can do no more than point to the social prosperity furthered by entire trust between man and man, and the social disorganization that follows universal untruthfulness—consequences that are necessarily conducive to agreeable feelings and disagreeable feelings respectively.

The unavoidable conclusion is, then, that the intuitionist does not, and cannot, ignore the ultimate derivations of right and wrong from pleasure and pain. However much he may be guided, and rightly guided, by the decisions of conscience respecting the characters of acts; he has come to have confidence in these decisions because he perceives, vaguely but

positively, that conformity to them furthers the welfare of himself and others, and that disregard of them entails in the long-run suffering on all. Require him to name any moral-sense judgment by which he knows as right, some kind of act that will bring a surplus of pain, taking into account the totals in this life and in any assumed other life, and you find him unable to name one: a fact proving that underneath all these intuitions respecting the goodness or badness of acts, there lies the fundamental assumption that acts are good or bad according as their aggregate effects increase men's happiness or increase their misery.

15. It is curious to see how the devil worship of the savage, surviving in various disguises among the civilized, and leaving as one of its products that asceticism which in many forms and degrees still prevails widely, is to be found influencing in marked ways, men who have apparently emancipated themselves, not only from primitive superstitions but from more developed superstitions. Views of life and conduct which originated with those who propitiated deified ancestors by self-tortures, enter even still into the ethical theories of many persons who have years since cast away the theology of the past, and suppose themselves to be no longer influenced by it.

In the writings of one who rejects dogmatic Christianity together with the Hebrew cult which preceded it, a career of conquest costing tens of thousands of lives, is narrated with a sympathy comparable to that rejoicing which the Hebrew traditions show us over destruction of enemies in the name of God. You may find, too, a delight in contemplating the exercise of despotic power, joined with insistence on the salutariness of a state in which the wills of slaves and citizens, are humbly subject to the wills of masters and rules—a sentiment also reminding us of that ancient Oriental life which biblical narratives portray. Along with this worship of the strong man—along with this justification of whatever force may be needed for carrying out his ambition—along with this yearning for a form of society in which supremacy of the few is

unrestrained and the virtue of the many consists in obedience to them; we not unnaturally find repudiation of the ethical theory which takes, in some shape or other, the greatest happiness as the end of conduct: we not unnaturally find this utilitarian philosophy designated by the contemptuous title of "pig-philosophy." And then, serving to show what comprehension there has been of the philosophy so nicknamed, we are told that not happiness but blessedness must be the end.

Obviously, the implication is that blessedness is not a kind of happiness; and this implication at once suggests the question—What mode of feeling is it? If it is a state of consciousness at all, it is necessarily one of three states—painful, indifferent, or pleasurable. Does it leave the possessor at the zero point of sentiency? Then it leaves him just as he would be if he had not got it. Does it not leave him at the zero point? Then it must leave him below zero or above zero.

Each of these possibilities may be conceived under two forms. That to which the term blessedness is applied, may be a particular state of consciousness—one among the many states that occur; and on this supposition we have to recognize it as a pleasurable state, an indifferent state, or a painful state. Otherwise, blessedness is a word not applicable to a particular state of consciousness, but characterizes the aggregate of its states; and in this case the average of the aggregate is to be conceived as one in which the pleasurable predominates, or one in which the painful predominates, or one in which pleasures and pains exactly cancel one another. Let us take in turn these two imaginable applications of the word.

"Blessed are the merciful"; "Blessed are the peacemakers"; "Blessed is he that considereth the poor"; are sayings which we may fairly take as conveying the accepted meaning of blessedness. What now shall we say of one who is, for the time being, blessed in performing an act of mercy? Is his mental state pleasurable? If so the hypothesis is abandoned: blessedness is a particular form of happiness. Is the state indifferent or painful? In that case the blessed man is so

devoid of sympathy that relieving another from pain, or the fear of pain, leaves him either wholly unmoved, or gives him an unpleasant emotion. Again, if one who is blessed in making peace receives no gratification from the act, then seeing men injure each other does not affect him at all, or gives him a pleasure which is changed into a pain when he prevents the injury. Once more, to say that the blessedness of one who "considereth the poor" implies no agreeable feeling, is to say that his consideration for the poor leaves him without feeling or entails on him a disagreeable feeling. So that if blessedness is a particular mode of consciousness temporarily existing as a concomitant of each kind of beneficent action, those who deny that it is a pleasure, or constituent of happiness, confess themselves either not pleased by the welfare of others or displeased by it.

Otherwise understood, blessedness must, as we have seen, refer to the totality of feelings experienced during the life of one who occupies himself with the actions the word connotes. This also presents the three possibilities—surplus of pleasures, surplus of pains, equality of the two. If the pleasurable states are in excess, then the blessed life can be distinguished from any other pleasurable life only by the relative amount, or the quality, of its pleasures: it is a life which makes happiness of a certain kind and degree its end; and the assumption that blessedness is not a form of happiness, lapses. If the blessed life is one in which the pleasures and pains received balance one another, so producing an average that is indifferent; or if it is one in which the pleasures are outbalanced by the pains; then the blessed life has the character which the pessimist alleges of life at large, and therefore regards it as cursed. Annihilation is best, he will argue; since if an average that is indifferent is the outcome of the blessed life, annihilation at once achieves it; and if a surplus of suffering is the outcome of this highest kind of life called blessed, still more should life in general be ended.

A possible rejoinder must be named and disposed of. While it is admitted that the particular kind of consciousness accom-

panying conduct that is blessed, is pleasurable; it may be contended that pursuance of this conduct and receipt of the pleasure, brings by the implied self-denial, and persistent effort, and perhaps bodily injury, a suffering that exceeds it in amount. And it may then be urged that blessedness, characterized by this excess of aggregate pains over aggregate pleasures, should nevertheless be pursued as an end, rather than the happiness constituted by excess of pleasures over pains. But now, defensible though this conception of blessedness may be when limited to one individual, or some individuals, it becomes indefensible when extended to all individuals; as it must be if blessedness is taken for the end of conduct. To see this we need but ask for what purpose are these pains in excess of pleasures to be borne. Blessedness being the ideal state for all persons; and the self-sacrifices made by each person in pursuance of this ideal state, having for their end to help all other persons in achieving the like ideal state; it results that the blessed though painful state of each, is to be acquired by furthering the like blessed though painful states of others: the blessed consciousness is to be constituted by the contemplation of their consciousness in a condition of average suffering. Does any one accept this inference? If not, his rejection of it involves the admission that the motive for bearing pains in performing acts called blessed, is not the obtaining for others like pains of blessedness, but the obtaining of pleasures for others; and that thus pleasure somewhere is the tacitly implied ultimate end.

In brief, then, blessedness has for its necessary condition of existence, increased happiness, positive or negative, in some consciousness or other; and disappears utterly if we assume that the actions called blessed, are known to cause decrease of happiness in others as well as in the actor.

16. To make clear the meaning of the general argument set forth in this chapter, its successive parts must be briefly summarized.

That which in the last chapter we found to be highly evolved conduct, is that which, in this chapter, we find to be

what is called good conduct; and the ideal goal to the natural evolution of conduct there recognized, we here recognize as the ideal standard of conduct ethically considered.

The acts adjusted to ends, which while constituting the outer visible life from moment to moment further the continuance of life, we saw become, as evolution progresses, better adjusted; until finally they make the life of each individual entire in length and breadth, at the same time that they efficiently subserve the rearing of young, and do both these not only without hindering other individuals from doing the like, but while giving aid to them in doing the like. And here we see that goodness is asserted of such conduct under each of these three aspects. Other things equal, well-adjusted self-conserving acts we call good; other things equal, we call good the acts that are well adjusted for bringing up progeny capable of complete living; and other things equal, we ascribe goodness to acts which further the complete living of others.

This judging as good, conduct which conduces to life in each and all, we found to involve the assumption that animate existence is desirable. By the pessimist, conduct which subserves life cannot consistently be called good: to call it good implies some form of optimism. We saw, however, that pessimists and optimists both start with the postulate that life is a blessing or a curse, according as the average consciousness accompanying it is pleasurable or painful. And since avowed or implied pessimists, and optimists of one or other shade, taken together constitute all men, it results that this postulate is universally accepted. Whence it follows that if we call good the conduct conducive to life, we can do so only with the implication that it is conducive to a surplus of pleasures over pains.

The truth that conduct is considered by us as good or bad, according as its aggregate results, to self or others or both, are pleasurable or painful, we found on examination to be involved in all the current judgments on conduct: the proof being that reversing the applications of the words creates absurdities. And we found that every other proposed standard of conduct derives its authority from this standard.

Whether perfection of nature is the assigned proper aim, or vituousness of action, or rectitude of motive, we saw that definition of the perfection, the virtue, the rectitude, inevitably brings us down to happiness experienced in some form, at some time, by some person, as the fundamental idea. Nor could we discover any intelligible conception of blessedness, save one which implies a raising of consciousness, individual or general, to a happier state; either by mitigating pains or increasing pleasures.

Even with those who judge of conduct from the religious point of view, rather than from the ethical point of view, it is the same. Men who seek to propitiate God by inflicting pains on themselves, or refrain from pleasures to avoid offending him, do so to escape greater ultimate pains or to get greater ultimate pleasures. If by positive or negative suffering here, they expected to achieve more suffering hereafter, they would not do as they do. That which they now think duty they would not think duty if it promised eternal misery instead of eternal happiness. Nay, if there be any who believe that human beings were created to be unhappy, and that they ought to continue living to display their unhappiness for the satisfaction of their creator, such believers are obliged to use this standard of judgment; for the pleasure of their diabolical god is the end to be achieved.

So that no school can avoid taking for the ultimate moral aim a desirable state of feeling called by whatever name—gratification, enjoyment, happiness. Pleasure somewhere, at some time, to some being or beings, is an inexpugnable element of the conception. It is as much a necessary form of moral intuition as space is a necessary form of intellectual intuition.*

* It has been remarked, quite truly, that this is a somewhat inconsistent comparison to be made by me; remembering my partial denial of the doctrine that space is a form of intellectual intuition (see *Principles of Psychology*, § 399). Contending, as I do, that space is a form of the intuitions yielded by touch and vision only, and is not a form of the intuitions which we know as sounds and odors, I ought to have said that happiness is *more* truly a form of moral intuition than space is a form of intellectual intuition: being, as we see, a universal form of it.

CHAPTER 4

Ways of Judging Conduct

17. Intellectual progress is by no one trait so adequately characterized, as by development of the idea of causation; since development of this idea involves development of so many other ideas. Before any way can be made, thought and language must have advanced far enough to render properties or attributes thinkable as such, apart from objects; which, in low stages of human intelligence, they are not. Again, even the simplest notion of cause, as we understand it, can be reached only after many like instances have been grouped into a simple generalization; and through all ascending steps, higher notions of causation imply wider notions of generality. Further, as there must be clustered in the mind, concrete causes of many kinds before there can emerge the conception of cause, apart from particular causes; it follows that progress in abstractness of thought is implied. Concomitantly, there is implied the recognition of constant relations among phenomena, generating ideas of uniformity of sequence and of coexistence—the idea of natural law. These advances can go on only as fast as perceptions and resulting thoughts, are made definite by the use of measures; serving to familiarize the mind with exact correspondence, truth, certainty. And only when growing science accumulates examples

of quantitative relations, foreseen and verified, throughout a widening range of phenomena, does causation come to be conceived as necessary and universal. So that though all these cardinal conceptions aid one another in developing, we may properly say that the conception of causation especially depends for its development on the developments of the rest; and therefore is the best measure of intellectual development at large.

How slowly, as a consequence of its dependence, the conception of causation evolves, a glance at the evidence shows. We hear with surprise of the savage who, falling down a precipice, ascribes the failure of his foothold to a malicious demon; and we smile at the kindred notion of the ancient Greek, that his death was prevented by a goddess who unfastened for him the thong of the helmet by which his enemy was dragging him. But daily, without surprise, we hear men who describe themselves as saved from shipwreck by "divine interposition," who speak of having "providentially" missed a train which met with a fatal disaster, and who call it a "mercy" to have escaped injury from a falling chimney pot—men who, in such cases, recognize physical causation no more than do the uncivilized or semicivilized. The Veddah who thinks that failure to hit an animal with his arrow, resulted from inadequate invocation of an ancestral spirit, and the Christian priest who says prayers over a sick man in the expectation that the course of his disease will so be stayed, differ only in respect of the agent from whom they expect supernatural aid and the phenomena to be altered by him: the necessary relations among causes and effects are tacitly ignored by the last as much as by the first. Deficient belief in causation is, indeed, exemplified even in those whose discipline has been specially fitted to generate this belief—even in men of science. For a generation after geologists had become uniformitarians in geology, they remained catastrophists in biology: while recognizing none but natural agencies in the genesis of the earth's crust, they ascribed to supernatural agency the genesis of the organisms on its surface. Nay

more—among those who are convinced that living things in genera have been evolved by the continued interaction of forces everywhere operating, there are some who make an exception of man; or who, if they admit that his body has been evolved in the same manner as the bodies of other creatures, allege that his mind has been not evolved but specially created. If, then, universal and necessary causation is only now approaching full recognition, even by those whose investigations are daily reillustrating it, we may expect to find it very little recognized among men at large, whose culture has not been calculated to impress them with it; and we may expect to find it least recognized by them in respect of those classes of phenomena amid which, in consequence of their complexity, causation is most difficult to trace—the psychical, the social, the moral.

Why do I here make these reflections on what seems an irrelevant subject? I do it because on studying the various ethical theories, I am struck with the fact that they are all characterized either by entire absence of the idea of causation, or by inadequate presence of it. Whether theological, political, intuitional, or utilitarian, they all display, if not in the same degree, still, each in a large degree, the defects which result from this lack. We will consider them in the order named.

18. The school of morals properly to be considered as the still-extant representative of the most ancient school, is that which recognizes no other rule of conduct than the alleged will of God. It originates with the savage whose only restraint beyond fear of his fellow man, is fear of an ancestral spirit; and whose notion of moral duty as distinguished from his notion of social prudence, arises from this fear. Here the ethical doctrine and the religious doctrine are identical—have in no degree differentiated.

This primitive form of ethical doctrine, changed only by the gradual dying out multitudinous minor supernatural agents and accompanying development of one universal supernatural agent, survives in great strength down to our own day.

Religious creeds, established and dissenting, all embody the belief that right and wrong are right and wrong simply in virtue of divine enactment. And this tacit assumption has passed from systems of theology into systems of morality; or rather, let us say that moral systems in early stages of development, little differentiated from the accompanying theological systems, have participated in this assumption. We see this in the works of the Stoics, as well as in the works of certain Christian moralists. Among recent ones I may instance the *Essays on the Principles of Morality,* by Jonathan Dymond, a Quaker, which makes "the authority of the Deity the sole ground of duty, and His communicated will the only ultimate standard of right and wrong." Nor is it by writers belonging to so relatively unphilosophical a sect only, that this view is held; it is held with a difference by writers belonging to sects contrariwise distinguished. For these assert that in the absence of belief in a deity, there would be no moral guidance; and this amounts to asserting that moral truths have no other origin than the will of God, which, if not considered as revealed in sacred writings, must be considered as revealed in conscience.

This assumption when examined, proves to be suicidal. If there are no other origins for right and wrong than this enunciated or intuited divine will, then, as alleged, were there no knowledge of the divine will, the acts now known as wrong would not be known as wrong. But if men did not know such acts to be wrong because contrary to the divine will, and so, in committing them, did not offend by disobedience; and if they could not otherwise know them to be wrong; then they might commit them indifferently with the acts now classed as right: the results, practically considered, would be the same. In so far as secular matters are concerned, there would be no difference between the two; for to say that in the affairs of life, any evils would arise from continuing to do the acts called wrong and ceasing to do the acts called right, is to say that these produce in themselves certain mischievous consequences and certain beneficial consequences; which is to say there is another source for moral rules than the revealed or

inferred divine will: they may be established by induction from these observed consequences.

From this implication I see no escape. It must be either admitted or denied that the acts called good and the acts called bad, naturally conduce, the one to human well-being and the other to human ill-being. Is it admitted? Then the admission amounts to an assertion that the conduciveness is shown by experience; and this involves abandonment of the doctrine that there is no origin for morals apart from divine injunctions. Is it denied, that acts classed as good and bad differ in their effects? Then it is tacitly affirmed that human affairs would go on just as well in ignorance of the distinction; and the alleged need for commandments from God disappears.

And here we see how entirely wanting is the conception of cause. This notion that such and such actions are made respectively good and bad simply by divine injunction, is tantamount to the notion that such and such actions have not in the nature of things such and such kinds of effects. If there is not an unconsciousness of causation there is an ignoring of it.

19. Following Plato and Aristotle, who make state enactments the sources of right and wrong; and following Hobbes, who holds that there can be neither justice nor injustice till a regularly constituted coercive power exists to issue and enforce commands; not a few modern thinkers hold that there is no other origin for good and bad in conduct than law. And this implies the belief that moral obligation originates with acts of Parliament, and can be changed this way or that way by majorities. They ridicule the idea that men have any natural rights, and allege that rights are wholly results of convention: the necessary implication being that duties are so too. Before considering whether this theory coheres with outside truths, let us observe how far it is coherent within itself.

In pursuance of his argument that rights and duties originate with established social arrangements, Hobbes says—

> Where no covenant hath preceded, there hath no right been transferred, and every man has right to every thing; and consequently, no

> action can be unjust. But when a covenant is made, then to break it is *unjust;* and the definition of *injustice,* is no other than *the not performance of covenant.* And whatsoever is not unjust, is *just.* . . . Therefore before the names of just and unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power, to compel men equally to the performance of their covenants, by the terror of some punishment, greater than the benefit they expect by the breach of their covenant.*

In this paragraph the essential propositions are: justice is fulfillment of covenant; fulfillment of covenant implies a power enforcing it: "just and unjust *can* have no place" unless men are compelled to perform their covenants. But this is to say that men *cannot* perform their covenants without compulsion. Grant that justice is performance of covenant. Now suppose it to be performed voluntarily: there is justice. In such case, however, there is justice in the absence of coercion; which is contrary to the hypothesis. The only conceivable rejoinder is an absurd one: voluntary performance of covenant is impossible. Assert this, and the doctrine that right and wrong come into existence with the establishment of sovereignty is defensible. Decline to assert it, and the doctrine vanishes.

From inner incongruities pass now to outer ones. The justification for his doctrine of absolute civil authority as the source of rules of conduct, Hobbes seeks in the miseries entailed by the chronic war between man and man which must exist in the absence of society; holding that under any kind of government a better life is possible than in the state of nature. Now whether we accept the gratuitous and baseless theory that men surrendered their liberties to a sovereign power of some kind, with a view to the promised increase of satisfactions; or whether we accept the rational theory, inductively based, that a state of political subordination gradually became established through experience of the increased satisfactions derived under it; it equally remains obvious that the acts of the

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* *Leviathan,* chap. 15.

sovereign power have no other warrant than their subservience to the purpose for which it came into existence. The necessities which initiate government, themselves prescribe the actions of government. If its actions do not respond to the necessities, they are unwarranted. The authority of law is, then, by the hypothesis, derived; and can never transcend the authority of that from which it is derived. If general good, or welfare, or utility, is the supreme end; and if state enactments are justified as means to this supreme end; then, state enactments have such authority only as arises from conduciveness to this supreme end. When they are right, it is only because the original authority endorses them; and they are wrong if they do not bear its endorsement. That is to say, conduct cannot be made good or bad by law; but its goodness or badness is to the last determined by its effects as naturally furthering, or not furthering, the lives of citizens.

Still more when considered in the concrete, than when considered in the abstract, do the views of Hobbes and his disciples prove to be inconsistent. Joining in the general belief that without such security for life as enables men to go fearlessly about their business, there can be neither happiness nor prosperity, individual or general, they agree that measures for preventing murder, manslaughter, assault, &c., are requisite; and they advocate this or that penal system as furnishing the best deterrents: so arguing, both in respect of the evils and the remedies, that such and such causes will, by the nature of things, produce such and such effects. They recognize as inferable *a priori*, the truth that men will not lay by property unless they can count with great probability on reaping advantages from it; that consequently where robbery is unchecked, or where a rapacious ruler appropriates whatever earnings his subjects do not effectually hide, production will scarcely exceed immediate consumption; and that necessarily there will be none of that accumulation of capital required for social development, with all its aids to welfare. In neither case, however, do they perceive that they are tacitly asserting

the need of certain restraints on conduct as deducible from the necessary conditions to complete life in the social state; and are so making the authority of law derivative and not original.

If it be said by any belonging to this school, that certain moral obligations to be distinguished as cardinal, must be admitted to have a basis deeper than legislation, and that it is for legislation not to create but merely to enforce them—if, I say, admitting this, they go on to allege a legislative origin for minor claims and duties; then we have the implication that whereas some kinds of conduct do, in the nature of things, tend to work out certain kinds of results, other kinds of conduct do not, in the nature of things, tend to work out certain kinds of results. While of these acts the natural good or bad consequences must be allowed, it may be denied of those acts that they have naturally good or bad consequences. Only after asserting this can it be consistently asserted that acts of the last class are made right or wrong by law. For if such acts have any intrinsic tendencies to produce beneficial or mischievous effects, then these intrinsic tendencies furnish the warrant for legislative requirements or interdicts; and to say that the requirements or interdicts make them right or wrong, is to say that they have no intrinsic tendencies to produce beneficial or mischievous effects.

Here, then, we have another theory betraying deficient consciousness of causation. An adequate consciousness of causation yields the irresistible belief that from the most serious to the most trivial actions of men in society, there must flow consequences which, quite apart from legal agency, conduce to well-being or ill-being in greater or smaller degrees. If murders are socially injurious whether forbidden by law or not—if one man's appropriation of another's gains by force, brings special and general evils, whether it is or is not contrary to a ruler's edicts—if nonfulfillment of contract, if cheating, if adulteration, work mischiefs on a community in proportion as they are common, quite irrespective of prohibitions; then, is it not manifest that the like holds throughout all the details of men's behavior? Is it not clear that when legislation insists on

certain acts which have naturally beneficial effects, and forbids others that have naturally injurious effects, the acts are not made good or bad by legislation; but the legislation derived its authority from the natural effects of the acts? Nonrecognition of this implies nonrecognition of natural causation.

20. Nor is it otherwise with the pure intuitionists, who hold that moral perceptions are innate in the original sense—thinkers whose view is that men have been divinely endowed with moral faculties; not that these have resulted from inherited modifications caused by accumulated experiences.

To affirm that we know some things to be right and other things to be wrong, by virtue of a supernaturally given conscience; and thus tacitly to affirm that we do not otherwise know right from wrong; is tacitly to deny any natural relations between acts and results. For if there exist any such relations, then we may ascertain by induction, or deduction, or both, what these are. And if it be admitted that because of such natural relations, happiness is produced by this kind of conduct, which is therefore to be approved, while misery is produced by that kind of conduct, which is therefore to be condemned; then it is admitted that the rightness or wrongness of actions is determinable, and must finally be determined, by the goodness or badness of the effects that flow from them; which is contrary to the hypothesis.

It may, indeed, be rejoined that effects are deliberately ignored by this school; which teaches that courses recognized by moral intuition as right, must be pursued without regard to consequences. But on inquiry it turns out that the consequences to be disregarded are particular consequences and not general consequences. When, for example, it is said that property lost by another ought to be restored irrespective of evil to the finder, who possibly may, by restoring it, lose that which would have preserved him from starvation; it is meant that in pursuance of the principle, the immediate and special consequences must be disregarded, not the diffused and re-

mote consequences. By which we are shown that though the theory forbids overt recognition of causation, there is an unavowed recognition of it.

And this implies the trait to which I am drawing attention. The conception of natural causation is so imperfectly developed, that there is only an indistinct consciousness that throughout the whole of human conduct, necessary relations of causes and effects prevail; and that from them are ultimately derived all moral rules, however much these may be proximately derived from moral intuitions.

21. Strange to say, even the utilitarian school, which, at first sight, appears to be distinguished from the rest by recognizing natural causation, is, if not so far from complete recognition of it, yet very far.

Conduct, according to its theory, is to be estimated by observation of results. When, in sufficiently numerous cases, it has been found that behavior of this kind works evil while behavior of that kind works good, these kinds of behavior are to be judged as wrong and right respectively. Now though it seems that the origin of moral rules in natural causes, is thus asserted by implication, it is but partially asserted. The implication is simply that we are to ascertain by induction that such and such mischiefs or benefits *do* go along with such and such acts; and are then to infer that the like relations will hold in future. But acceptance of these generalizations and the inferences from them, does not amount to recognition of causation in the full sense of the word. So long as only *some* relation between cause and effect in conduct is recognized, and not *the* relation, a completely scientific form of knowledge has not been reached. At present, utilitarians pay no attention to this distinction. Even when it is pointed out, they disregard the fact that empirical utilitarianism is but a transitional form to be passed through on the way to rational utilitarianism.

In a letter to Mr. Mill, written some sixteen years ago, repudiating the title anti-utilitarian which he had applied to me (a letter subsequently published in Mr. Bain's work on

Mental and Moral Science), I endeavored to make clear the difference above indicated; and I must here quote certain passages from that letter.

> The view for which I contend is, that morality properly so-called—the science of right conduct—has for its object to determine *how* and *why* certain modes of conduct are detrimental, and certain other modes beneficial. These good and bad results cannot be accidental, but must be necessary consequences of the constitution of things; and I conceive it to be the business of moral science to deduce, from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness. Having done this, its deductions are to be recognized as laws of conduct; and are to be conformed to irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness or misery.
>
> Perhaps an analogy will most clearly show my meaning. During its early stages, planetary astronomy consisted of nothing more than accumulated observations respecting the positions and motions of the sun and planets; from which accumulated observations it came by and by to be empirically predicted, with an approach to truth, that certain of the heavenly bodies would have certain positions at certain times. But the modern science of planetary astronomy consists of deductions from the law of gravitation—deductions showing why the celestial bodies *necessarily* occupy certain places at certain times. Now, the kind of relation which thus exists between ancient and modern astronomy, is analogous to the kind of relation which, I conceive, exists between the expediency morality and moral science properly so-called. And the objection which I have to the current utilitarianism is, that it recognizes no more developed form of morality—does not see that it has reached but the initial stage of moral science.

Doubtless if utilitarians are asked whether it can be by mere chance that this kind of action works evil and that works good, they will answer no; they will admit that such sequences are parts of a necessary order among phenomena. But though this truth is beyond question; and though if there are causal relations between acts and their results, rules of conduct can become scientific only when they are deduced from these causal relations; there continues to be entire satisfaction with that form of utilitarianism in which these causal relations are practically ignored. It is supposed that in future,

as now, utility is to be determined only by observation of results; and that there is no possibility of knowing by deduction from fundamental principles, what conduct *must* be detrimental and what conduct *must* be beneficial.

22. To make more specific that conception of ethical science here indicated, let me present it under a concrete aspect; beginning with a simple illustration and complicating this illustration by successive steps.

If, by tying its main artery, we stop most of the blood going to a limb, then, for as long as the limb performs its function, those parts which are called into play must be wasted faster than they are repaired: whence eventual disablement. The relation between due receipt of nutritive matters through its arteries, and due discharge of its duties by the limb, is a part of the physical order. If, instead of cutting off the supply to a particular limb, we bleed the patient largely, so drafting away the materials needed for repairing not one limb but all limbs, and not limbs only but viscera, there results both a muscular debility and an enfeeblement of the vital functions. Here, again, cause and effect are necessarily related. The mischief that results from great depletion, results apart from any divine command, or political enactment, or moral intuition. Now advance a step. Suppose the man to be prevented from taking in enough of the solid and liquid food containing those substances continually abstracted from his blood in repairing his tissues: suppose he has cancer of the esophagus and cannot swallow—what happens? By this indirect depletion, as by direct depletion, he is inevitably made incapable of performing the actions of one in health. In this case, as in the other cases, the connection between cause and effect is one that cannot be established, or altered, by any authority external to the phenomena themselves. Again, let us say that instead of being stopped after passing his mouth, that which he would swallow is stopped before reaching his mouth; so that day after day the man is required to waste his tissues in getting food, and day after day the food he has got to meet this waste,

he is forcibly prevented from eating. As before, the progress towards death by starvation is inevitable—the connection between acts and effects is independent of any alleged theological or political authority. And similarly if, being forced by the whip to labor, no adequate return in food is supplied to him, there are equally certain evils, equally independent of sacred or secular enactment. Pass now to those actions more commonly thought of as the occasions for rules of conduct. Let us assume the man to be continually robbed of that which was given him in exchange for his labor, and by which he was to make up for nervo-muscular expenditure and renew his powers. No less than before is the connection between conduct and consequence rooted in the constitution of things; unchangeable by state-made law, and not needing establishment by empirical generalization. If the action by which the man is affected is a stage further away from the results, or produces results of a less decisive kind, still we see the same basis for morality in the physical order. Imagine that payment for his services is made partly in bad coin; or that it is delayed beyond the date agreed upon; or that what he buys to eat is adulterated with innutritive matter. Manifestly, by any of these deeds which we condemn as unjust, and which are punished by law, there is, as before, an interference with the normal adjustment of physiological repair to physiological waste. Nor is it otherwise when we pass to kinds of conduct still more remotely operative. If he is hindered from enforcing his claim—if class predominance prevents him from proceeding, or if a bribed judge gives a verdict contrary to evidence, or if a witness swears falsely; have not these deeds, though they affect him more indirectly, the same original cause for their wrongness? Even with actions which work diffused and indefinite mischiefs it is the same. Suppose that the man, instead of being dealt with fraudulently, is calumniated. There is, as before, a hindrance to the carrying on of life-sustaining activities; for the loss of character detrimentally affects his business. Nor is this all. The mental depression caused partially incapacitates him for energetic activity, and perhaps brings on ill-health. So

that maliciously or carelessly propagating false statements, tends both to diminish his life and to diminish his ability to maintain life. Hence its flagitiousness. Moreover, if we trace to their ultimate ramifications the effects wrought by any of these acts which morality called intuitive reprobates—if we ask what results not to the individual himself only, but also to his belongings—if we observe how impoverishment hinders the rearing of his children, by entailing underfeeding or inadequate clothing, resulting perhaps in the death of some and the constitutional injury of others; we see that by the necessary connections of things these acts, besides tending primarily to lower the life of the individual aggressed upon, tend, secondarily, to lower the lives of all his family, and, thirdly, to lower the life of society at large; which is damaged by whatever damages its units.

A more distinct meaning will now be seen in the statement that the utilitarianism which recognizes only the principles of conduct reached by induction, is but preparatory to the utilitarianism which deduces these principles from the processes of life as carried on under established conditions of existence.

22*a*. Thus, then, is justified the allegation made at the outset, that, irrespective of their distinctive characters and their special tendencies, all the current methods of ethics have one general defect—they neglect ultimate causal connections. Of course I do not mean that they wholly ignore the natural consequences of actions; but I mean that they recognize them only incidentally. They do not erect into a method the ascertaining of necessary relations between causes and effects, and deducing rules of conduct from formulated statements of them.

Every science begins by accumulating observations, and presently generalizes these empirically; but only when it reaches the stage at which its empirical generalizations are included in a rational generalization, does it become de-

veloped science. Astronomy has already passed through its successive stages: first collections of facts; then inductions from them; and lastly deductive interpretations of these, as corollaries from a universal principle of action among masses in space. Accounts of structures and tabulations of strata, grouped and compared, have led gradually to the assigning of various classes of geological changes to igneous and aqueous actions; and it is now tacitly admitted that geology becomes a science proper, only as fast as such changes are explained in terms of those natural processes which have arisen in the cooling and solidifying earth, exposed to the sun's heat and the action of the moon upon its ocean. The science of life has been, and is still, exhibiting a like series of steps: the evolution of organic forms at large, is being affiliated on physical actions in operation from the beginning; and the vital phenomena each organism presents, are coming to be understood as connected sets of changes, in parts formed of matters that are affected by certain forces and disengage other forces. So is it with mind. Early ideas concerning thought and feeling ignored everything like cause, save in recognizing those effects of habit which were forced on men's attention and expressed in proverbs; but there are growing up interpretations of thought and feeling as correlates of the actions and reactions of a nervous structure, that is influenced by outer changes and works in the body adapted changes: the implication being that psychology becomes a science, as fast as these relations of phenomena are explained as consequences of ultimate principles. Sociology, too, represented down to recent times only by stray ideas about social organization, scattered through the masses of worthless gossip furnished us by historians, is coming to be recognized by some as also a science; and such adumbrations of it as have from time to time appeared in the shape of empirical generalizations, are now beginning to assume the character of generalizations made coherent by derivation from causes lying in human nature placed under given conditions. Clearly, then, ethics, which is

a science dealing with the conduct of associated human beings, regarded under one of its aspects, has to undergo a like transformation; and, at present undeveloped, can be considered a developed science only when it has undergone this transformation.

A preparation in the simpler sciences is presupposed. Ethics has a physical aspect; since it treats of human activities which, in common with all expenditures of energy, conform to the law of the persistence of energy: moral principles must conform to physical necessities. It has a biological aspect; since it concerns certain effects, inner and outer, individual and social, of the vital changes going on in the highest type of animal. It has a psychological aspect; for its subject matter is an aggregate of actions that are prompted by feelings and guided by intelligence. And it has a sociological aspect; for these actions, some of them directly and all of them indirectly, affect associated beings.

What is the implication? Belonging under one aspect to each of these sciences—physical, biological, psychological, sociological—it can find its ultimate interpretations only in those fundamental truths which are common to all of them. Already we have concluded in a general way that conduct at large, including the conduct ethics deals with, is to be fully understood only as an aspect of evolving life; and now we are brought to this conclusion in a more special way.

23. Here, then, we have to enter on the consideration of moral phenomena as phenomena of evolution; being forced to do this by finding that they form a part of the aggregate of phenomena which evolution has wrought out. If the entire visible universe has been evolved—if the solar system as a whole, the earth as a part of it, the life in general which the earth bears, as well as that of each individual organism—if the mental phenomena displayed by all creatures, up to the highest, in common with the phenomena presented by aggregates of these highest—if one and all conform to the laws of evolution; then the necessary implication is that those phenomena

of conduct in these highest creatures with which morality is concerned, also conform.

The preceding volumes have prepared the way for dealing with morals as thus conceived. Utilizing the conclusions they contain, let us now observe what data are furnished by these. We will take in succession—the physical view, the biological view, the psychological view, and the sociological view.

CHAPTER 5

The Physical View

24. Every moment we pass instantly from men's perceived actions to the motives implied by them; and so are led to formulate these actions in mental terms rather than in bodily terms. Thoughts and feelings are referred to when we speak of any one's deeds with praise or blame; not those outer manifestations which reveal the thoughts and feelings. Hence we become oblivious of the truth that conduct as actually experienced, consists of changes recognized by touch, sight and hearing.

This habit of contemplating only the psychical face of conduct, is so confirmed that an effort is required to contemplate only the physical face. Undeniable as it is that another's behavior to us is made up of movements of his body and limbs, of his facial muscles, and of his vocal apparatus; it yet seems paradoxical to say that these are the only elements of conduct really known by us, while the elements of conduct which we exclusively think of as constituting it, are not known but inferred.

Here, however, ignoring for the time being the inferred elements in conduct, we have to deal with the perceived elements—we have to observe its traits considered as a set of combined motions. Taking the evolution point of view, and

remembering that while an aggregate evolves, not only the matter composing it, but also the motion of that matter, passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity, we have now to ask whether conduct as it rises to its higher forms, displays in increasing degrees these characters; and whether it does not display them in the greatest degree when it reaches that highest form which we call moral.

25. It will be convenient to deal first with the trait of increasing coherence. The conduct of lowly organized creatures is broadly contrasted with the conduct of highly organized creatures, in having its successive portions feebly connected. The random movements which an animalcule makes, have severally no reference to movements made a moment before; nor do they affect in specific ways the movements made immediately after. Today's wanderings of a fish in search of food, though perhaps showing by their adjustments to catching different kinds of prey at different hours, a slightly determined order, are unrelated to the wanderings of yesterday and tomorrow. But such more developed creatures as birds, show us in the building of nests, the sitting on eggs, the rearing of chicks, and the aiding of them after they fly, sets of motions which form a dependent series, extending over a considerable period. And on observing the complexity of the acts performed in fetching and fixing the fibres of the nest or in catching and bringing to the young each portion of food, we discover in the combined motions, lateral cohesion as well as longitudinal cohesion.

Man, even in his lowest state, displays in his conduct far more coherent combinations of motions. By the elaborate manipulations gone through in making weapons that are to serve for the chase next year, or in building canoes and wigwams for permanent uses—by acts of aggression and defense which are connected with injuries long since received or committed, the savage exhibits an aggregate of motions which, in some of its parts, holds together over great periods.