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Five Types of Ethical Theory

By

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TO
JACK DONALDSON

"Others apart sat on a hill retired
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.
Of good and evil much they argued then,
Of happiness and final misery,
Passion and apathy, and glory and shame—
Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy!
Yet, with a pleasing sorcery, could charm
Pain for a while or anguish, and excite
Fallacious hope, or arm the obdured breast
With stubborn patience as with triple steel."

(MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, Bk. II.)

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252–253. There is goodness *of* a community, as well as goodness *in* it; though there is happiness only *in* it, and not *of* it.

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255–256. And, even so, if he acts on principle at all, he will never know whether he is acting on the right or the wrong principle.

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271. If the Mixed Judgments be empirical they must be reached by problematic induction from observed instances.

271–272. If they be *a priori* they are probably reached by intuitive induction from observed instances.

272. Any theory which asserts a universal connexion between an ethical and a non-ethical characteristic can take three forms, viz., *Analytic, Synthetic A Priori,* and *Empirical.*

272–273. If Naturalism be false the fundamental concepts and the fundamental universal judgments of Ethics are almost certainly *a priori.*

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286. INDEX

PREFACE

THE history of the present volume is as follows. The essay on Butler's ethics was first delivered as a public lecture at the University of Bristol, a city which seems hardly to realise how great a moralist and theologian it once had for its bishop. It was afterwards published in the *Hibbert Journal*, and I have to thank the Editor for kindly allowing me to republish it. The essays on the ethics of Spinoza, of Hume, and of Kant formed the *Donnellan Lectures* which I delivered in Trinity College, Dublin, towards the end of the summer term of 1929. I must take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to the Provost and his family, and to the Fellows, for the kindness which made my all too short stay in Dublin so pleasant. The essay on the ethics of Sidgwick, and the concluding outline of the main problems of ethics, were written specially to complete this book. Although it has never been part of my duties to lecture on moral philosophy in Cambridge, I have had to teach it privately to the undergraduates whose studies I direct. These two chapters contain the thoughts which have occurred to me on the subject while reading and criticising the essays done for me by candidates for Part I of the Moral Sciences Tripos.

I am inclined to agree with Kant's view that almost every one is interested in ethical questions, though the interest can be killed by a boring enough presentation of the subject. Partly for this reason, and partly because

every one has the necessary materials at his disposal without previous technical training, ethical problems perhaps form the best introduction to the study of philosophy for most men. I hope that my book will be of some use to professional philosophers ; but I also hope that it may be found interesting by intelligent amateurs, and may lead some of them to pursue the subject further for themselves. I have not wittingly shirked any difficulty in order to make the book easy ; but I do not think it contains anything too hard for an intelligent amateur to understand provided he will give to it the amount of attention which any abstract discussion demands.

It is perhaps fair to warn the reader that my range of experience, both practical and emotional, is rather exceptionally narrow even for a don. Fellows of Colleges, in Cambridge at any rate, have few temptations to heroic virtue or spectacular vice ; and I could wish that the rest of mankind were as fortunately situated. Moreover, I find it difficult to excite myself very much over right and wrong in practice. I have, *e.g.*, no clear idea of what people have in mind when they say that they labour under a sense of sin ; yet I do not doubt that, in some cases, this is a genuine experience, which seems vitally important to those who have it, and may really be of profound ethical and metaphysical significance. I recognise that these practical and emotional limitations may make me blind to certain important aspects of moral experience. Still, people who feel very strongly about any subject are liable to over-estimate its importance in the scheme of things. A healthy appetite for righteousness, kept in due control by good manners, is an excellent thing ; but to " hunger and thirst after " it is often merely a symptom of spiritual diabetes. And a white-heat of moral

enthusiasm is not perhaps the most favourable condition in which to conduct the analysis of ethical concepts or the criticism of ethical theories. So, having thus given fair warning to my readers, I may at least claim the qualities of my defects.

I must end by thanking my friend, Mr A. A. Wynne Willson, for his kindness and care in reading the proofs. If it be true, as has been alleged, that he owes (under Providence) such knowledge as he has of the difference between Right and Wrong entirely to his Director of Studies, he has now more than repaid the debt.

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August 1929.

FIVE TYPES OF ETHICAL THEORY

CHAPTER I

Introduction: Biographical Details

I PROPOSE in this book to expound and criticise five typical theories of ethics, viz., those of Spinoza, Butler, Hume, Kant, and Sidgwick. My choice of these five systems was largely determined by the following considerations. In the first place, they are extremely unlike each other, so that between them they give a very fair idea of the range of possible views on the subject, though they by no means exhaust all the alternatives. Secondly, all five authors are thinkers of the highest rank, so it is reasonable to suppose that the types of ethical theory which they favoured will be worth very serious consideration. Since their views differ fundamentally from each other, they cannot all be true in all respects, and it is of course unlikely that any of them contains the whole truth and nothing but the truth about ethics. But it seems likely that each of these great men will have seen some important aspect of the subject, and that the mistake of each will have been to emphasise this aspect to the exclusion of others which are equally relevant. It appears to me that the best preparation for original work on any philosophic problem is to study the solutions which have been proposed for it by men of genius whose views differ from each other as much as possible. The clash of their opinions may strike a light which will

enable us to avoid the mistakes into which they have fallen; and by noticing the strong and weak points of each theory we may discover the direction in which further progress can be made.

I have treated the five moralists in their historical order, and I have not cumbered the discussion with biographical matter or textual criticism. The minute study of the works of great philosophers from the historical and philological point of view is an innocent and even praiseworthy occupation for learned men. But it is not philosophy; and, to me at least, it is not interesting. My primary interest in this book is to find out what is true and what is false about ethics; and the statements of our authors are important to me only in so far as they suggest possible answers to this question. I hope and believe that I have not misrepresented any of the moralists under discussion. I have always tried to put what seems to me to be their fundamental meaning in modern terms and as plausibly as possible. But I am well aware that, in many places, alternative views about what they may have meant can quite reasonably be held. This applies in the main to Spinoza, whose whole terminology and way of looking at things is extremely unfamiliar to us nowadays, and to Kant, who, as Lord Balfour happily says, contrived to be technical without being precise. Butler, Hume, and Sidgwick are admirably clear writers, and they belong to our own country and tradition; so that there is seldom any doubt about their meaning.

For the sake of those readers whom it may concern I will give here very short biographical sketches of our five moralists. Spinoza belonged to a family of Portuguese Jews which had fled to Holland to escape persecution. He was born at Amsterdam on 24th November 1632. He

studied at a rabbinical school, where he read the Old Testament, the Talmud, and various Hebrew commentators and philosophers, such as Ibn Ezra and Maimonides. At one time he also read a good deal of Cabalistic literature, but in the end it filled him with contempt. Spinoza was eighteen years old when Descartes died, and he learned Latin in order to be able to read Descartes' works. Though he differed profoundly from Descartes, and criticised him severely, he said that he had won all his own philosophical possessions from the study of Descartes.

By 1656 Spinoza had departed so far from orthodox Judaism that he was excommunicated by the Synagogue and solemnly cursed in the name of God and His holy Angels. Shortly afterwards a pious member of the congregation, remembering that divine Providence often condescends to act through secondary causes, tried to murder Spinoza in the street with a dagger. This was not the only narrow escape which Spinoza had from death by human violence. In 1673, when the French were invading Holland, Spinoza accepted an invitation to visit the French camp at Utrecht in order to discuss philosophy with Condé, their general, who was a Cartesian. The Dutch, like other nations in war-time, were seeing the "hidden hand" in the most unlikely places, and Spinoza was suspected to be a spy and was in great danger from a mob which demonstrated outside the house in which he lodged at the Hague. In this very ugly situation he displayed the most admirable courage and coolness, and succeeded in convincing the mob of his innocence and making it disperse.

After his encounter with the Zealot with the dagger Spinoza left Amsterdam and lived for a time at a house in the country belonging to the Collegiants, a sect of evangelical

Christians. In 1669 he moved into the Hague, where he lived with a painter called *van den Spijck* till 21st February 1677, when he died of consumption at the age of forty-four. He made his living by grinding and polishing lenses for optical instruments, and he seems to have been highly skilled at his craft. He corresponded with several people on philosophical and scientific subjects, and his letters are important as throwing light on obscure points in his philosophy. His most important work is the *Ethics*, in which he expounds his complete system in the form of definitions, axioms, postulates, and theorems, as in Euclid. This was not published until after his death.

Spinoza was offered the professorship of philosophy at Heidelberg on highly favourable terms by Karl Ludwig of the Palatinate, a very enlightened prince. He refused on the double ground that he would be certain sooner or later to get into trouble for religious unorthodoxy and that he did not want to have to interrupt his own work by formal teaching. It is to be feared that Spinoza would not have been enlightened enough to appreciate the beneficent system of the Ph.D. degree, introduced into English universities as a measure of post-war propaganda, whereby the time and energy of those who are qualified to do research are expended in supervising the work of those who never will be.

Joseph Butler was the son of a linen-draper who had been successful in business and had retired on a competency. He was born at Wantage on 18th May 1692, the youngest of a long family. His father intended him for the Presbyterian ministry and sent him to a dissenting academy, first at Gloucester and then at Tewkesbury. He stayed on for some time as an usher, and in 1713, whilst still there,

he wrote anonymously to Samuel Clarke an acute criticism of certain points in the latter's Boyle Lectures on the *Being and Attributes of God*. The modesty of the younger man, and the courtesy of the older, do the utmost credit to both. A number of letters were exchanged, and in time Clarke came to know and admire Butler.

Soon Butler began to emerge from the slavery of Geneva into the reasonable liberty of Lambeth. He decided to become an Anglican clergyman, and, after some difficulty, persuaded his father to send him to Oriel College, Oxford. He took his B.A. degree in October 1718 at the age of twenty-six. Almost directly afterwards he was ordained priest and deacon at Salisbury. Through influential friends and his own merits he now started on a steady course of ecclesiastical preferment. He became preacher at the Rolls Chapel in London in 1719, Prebendary of Salisbury in 1721, Rector of Houghton-le-Skerne near Darlington in the following year, and Rector of the then extremely valuable living of Stanhope in Durham in 1725.

His *Sermons on Human Nature*, which are his most important contribution to ethics, were delivered at the Rolls Chapel, and were published in 1726 after he had resigned his preachership there. In 1736 appeared his other great work, the *Analogy*, which is perhaps the ablest and fairest argument for theism that exists. A short appendix to this is devoted to ethics.

In 1736 he became Prebendary of Rochester and Clerk of the Closet to Queen Caroline. The queen was a lady of very great intelligence both practical and theoretical, as anyone can see who gives himself the pleasure of reading Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*. She was keenly interested in metaphysics and theology, and she greatly appreciated

Butler's gifts. She died in the latter part of 1737, commending Butler to the attention of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Butler preached an eloquent sermon on "profiting by affliction" to the heart-broken widower, who had declared through his sobs to his dying wife that he would never marry again but would only keep mistresses. George II was deeply affected, and promised to "do something very good" for Butler.

After such happy auspices Butler was naturally a little disappointed when Walpole offered him only the See of Bristol, at that time one of the poorest of the English bishoprics. However, he bore his cross and entered on his duties in 1738. He remained at Bristol till 1750, collecting in the meanwhile such minor scraps of preferment as the Deanery of St Paul's in 1746 and the Clerkship of the Closet to the King in 1747. In the latter year he was offered and declined the Archbishopric of Canterbury. In 1750 his journeys through the wilderness terminated in the promised land of the Bishopric of Durham. This he did not live long to enjoy. His health broke down, and he retired first to Bristol and then to Bath, where he died in 1752. He is buried in the cathedral at Bristol, and the visitor may read a long and flowery inscription, put up in the nineteenth century, in which his achievements as a theologian are fittingly recorded.

Butler seems to have been a thoroughly unworldly man whom the world treated very well. He took no part in politics; and, although he was no doubt fortunate in having certain influential friends, it is probably true that he owed his advancement mainly to his sheer merits as a moralist and a theologian. We all know how greatly Church and State have advanced in morality since the corrupt first half

of the eighteenth century; and it is gratifying to think that a man like Butler would now be allowed to pursue his studies with singularly little risk of being exposed to the dangers and temptations of high office or lucrative preferment.

David Hume was born at Edinburgh on 26th April 1711. He was a younger son of a Scottish country gentleman, who, like most Scottish country gentlemen, was of good family and small means. At the age of twenty-three Hume went into a merchant's office at Bristol; but he found the life intolerable, and decided to live very economically in France, pursuing his studies on his own tiny income. He settled at La Flèche, where Descartes had been educated by the Jesuits. While there he wrote the first two volumes of his *Treatise on Human Nature*. He came home in 1737 to arrange for their publication, and they appeared in 1739. They failed to attract any attention, and Hume was bitterly disappointed. He continued, however, to work at the third volume, on Morals, which appeared in 1740. In 1741 he published a volume of *Essays Moral and Political*. This was more successful; it went into a second edition, and he added a second volume to it in 1742.

During this time Hume had been living on his elder brother's estate at Ninewells in Berwickshire, trying meanwhile to get some congenial and remunerative employment. Twice he tried and failed to be appointed to a university professorship. To vary the monotony of life he spent a year as tutor to a lunatic nobleman; he went with General St. Clair as secretary on one of those strange expeditions which English war-ministers were liable to send to the coast of France; and in 1748 he took part in a diplomatic mission to Vienna and Turin.

In 1748 he published a third volume of *Essays*, and also a condensed and simplified form of *Book I* of the *Treatise*, entitled *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding*. In 1758 this reappeared under the title of *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. His most important ethical work is the *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals*. This is founded on *Book III* of the *Treatise on Human Nature*. It was published in 1751, and Hume considered it to be "incomparably the best" of all his writings.

In 1752 the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh made Hume their librarian. The salary was vanishingly small; but the position gave Hume the run of a fine library, and he started to write a *History of England*. He began with the House of Stuart. The repercussions of the events of that period were still being felt, and Hume's sympathy with Charles I and Strafford raised an almost universal outcry. In 1756 he published the second volume, which dealt with the period from the death of Charles I to the Revolution. This gave less offence to the Whigs, and its success helped on the sale of the peccant first volume. In 1759 appeared the volume which treated of the House of Tudor. It also caused great scandal; but Hume worked steadily away at his *History* and completed it in two more volumes published in 1761.

Hume was now fairly well off, and had determined to settle down for the rest of his life in Scotland. But in 1763 a pressing invitation from the Earl of Hertford took him to Paris, where he became secretary to the English embassy. Hume had great social success in the society of Paris, and enjoyed his life there very much. In 1766 he returned to London with Rousseau, whom he had befriended, and who,

it is scarcely necessary to add, afterwards quarrelled with him. In 1769 he finally returned to Edinburgh with a private income of £1000 a year.

Here he had expected to spend many happy years. But in 1775 he was stricken down with an internal complaint which he recognised to be mortal. He suffered little pain, and bore his steadily increasing weakness with wonderful cheerfulness. He died on 26th August 1776 in Edinburgh, causing the deepest offence to Dr Johnson by the happy and even jocular frame of mind in which he approached the great unknown. Shortly before his death he had written a brief autobiography, which was published in 1777 by his friend Adam Smith. In 1779 his nephew David published his uncle's *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, which, so far as the present writer can see, leave little further to be said on the subject. Hume wrote two essays, one on *Suicide*, and the other on *Immortality*, which were suppressed and remained unpublished for many years after his death. Both are masterly productions. To philosophers Hume is best known for his criticisms on the notion of Causation and on the logical foundations of Induction. It is unfortunate that the general public should know him mainly as the author of the one thoroughly silly production of his pen, viz., the notorious *Essay on Miracles*.

Immanuel Kant was born at Königsberg in East Prussia in 1724, thirteen years after Hume. He survived Hume by twenty-eight years. His father was a saddler, and his family is said to have been of Scottish origin on the father's side. Kant's parents belonged to the evangelical sect called *Pietists*, and his very rigoristic ethics bear witness to the stern moral principles which he absorbed in youth.

Kant is the first professional philosopher with whom we

have to deal in this book. He became professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Königsberg in 1770, and continued to hold this office till his death in 1804. He used also to lecture in the university on Anthropology and Physical Geography. His life was regular and uneventful to the last degree, but he was one of the most important and original thinkers of whom we have any record. He has, indeed, been described by Mr. Bertrand Russell as "a disaster"; but it seems a pity to apply to him an epithet which should obviously be reserved for Hegel. His most important works are his three *Critiques*, that of *Pure Reason*, that of *Practical Reason*, and that of *Judgment*. The first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared in 1781, and the second considerably modified edition in 1787. This is probably the most important philosophical work which had appeared in Europe since Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. It is abominably obscure, but one feels that the obscurity is that of a man who has to deliver a very complicated and important message in a short time, and whose words and ideas stumble over each other.

The *Critique of Practical Reason* was published in 1788. It contains Kant's theory of ethics, and the metaphysical conclusions which he claimed to be able to prove from ethical premises after denying that they could be proved in any other way. The purely ethical part of it is stated more simply and briefly in the *Foundations of the Metaphysic of Morals*, which appeared in 1785. There is a second part of this work, which deals with the particular virtues and vices in terms of the general theory. This was not published until 1797.

The third *Critique*, that of *Judgment*, was published in 1790. It contains Kant's theory of the Beautiful and the

Sublime, and also an extraordinarily able and balanced, but terribly long-winded, discussion of the notions of mechanism, design, and teleology, their mutual relations, and their legitimacy as principles of explanation.

There is no important problem in any branch of philosophy which is not treated by Kant, and he never treated a problem without saying something illuminating and original about it. He was certainly wrong on many points of detail, and he may well be wrong in his fundamental principles; but, when all criticisms have been made, it seems to me that Kant's failures are more important than most men's successes.

He was keenly interested in philosophical theology, and there is a progressive widening in his treatment of this subject from the mainly negative dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, through the purely ethical argument of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, to the reconsideration of the argument from design in the widest sense which occupies so much of the *Critique of Judgment*. If any reader who is interested in this subject will study Butler's *Analogy*, Hume's *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, and the theological parts of Kant's three *Critiques*, he will learn all that the human mind is ever likely to be able to know about the matter, with just one grave omission. The omission is that he will find nothing about the claims of specifically religious and mystical experience to give information about this aspect of reality. It is, perhaps, worth while to add in this connexion that, just as Butler treated specifically Christian doctrines in the second part of the *Analogy*, so Kant treated them in a book called *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*. This work, which was published in 1793, also throws light on certain points in Kant's ethical theory.

With Henry Sidgwick we come to comparatively recent times. He was born at Skipton in Yorkshire in 1838. His father, the Rev. William Sidgwick, was headmaster of Skipton Grammar School. Sidgwick went to Rugby in 1852, and came up to Trinity College, Cambridge, in October 1855. He had a brilliant undergraduate career as a classic, and became Fellow and Assistant Tutor of Trinity in 1859. He early developed an interest in philosophical and ethical subjects, and was noted among his undergraduate contemporaries for his acuteness of thought and clearness of expression. He was a member of the society called the *Apostles*, and he used to take part in philosophical discussions in a small society which met for that purpose at the house of John Grote, the Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Cambridge.

The Moral Sciences Tripos was founded in 1851, and Moral Science was admitted as a qualification for a degree in 1860. Sidgwick examined for this tripos in 1865 and 1866. In 1869, finding that his interests had become predominantly philosophical, he exchanged his classical lectureship at Trinity for one in Moral Science. In the same year, however, he began to have conscientious scruples about the religious declaration which it was then necessary for a fellow of a college to make. He accordingly resigned his fellowship, but was permitted by the College to retain his lectureship. Within a short time, the religious tests were abolished; so Sidgwick, like Charles Honeyman, had the advantage of "being St. Laurence on a cold gridiron". It is fair to say, however, that it would have made no difference to his action if the gridiron had been red-hot. In connexion with this incident he published a tract on *The Ethics of Subscription*, and the subject is also discussed very fully

and fairly in his *Methods of Ethics*. It is interesting to remark that the Utilitarian Sidgwick took a more rigoristic view on this question than the Idealist Green.

In 1872, on the death of F. D. Maurice and the consequent vacancy in the Knightbridge Professorship, Sidgwick applied for the post. He was at this time unsuccessful; the electors considered that the soundly evangelical views of one of the other candidates more than atoned for any slight lack in philosophical distinction. The disappointment was only temporary, for in 1883, when the Professorship again fell vacant, Sidgwick was elected, and continued to hold the chair until his death in 1900.

In 1875 he had been appointed Prelector in Moral and Political Philosophy at Trinity; in 1881 an honorary fellow; and in 1885 he again became an ordinary fellow of the college. In the meanwhile he had married a sister of the present Earl of Balfour, who shared his two great interests apart from philosophy, viz., the higher education of women and the investigation of alleged supernormal psychical phenomena. Sidgwick and his wife must take a great share in the credit or discredit for founding and fostering Newnham College and for the present position of women in the University of Cambridge. Whether the object which they accomplished was a good or a bad one is a question on which equally intelligent and virtuous persons are likely to differ till the end of time; but no one can fail to admire the single-minded devotion with which they spent time, labour, and money to bring it about.

The foundation of the *Society for Psychical Research*, and the keeping of it in the straight and narrow path of science in face of dogmatic materialism and enthusiastic credulity, are achievements on which they can be con-

gratulated without reserve. Sidgwick was president of the society from 1882 to 1885, and again from 1888 to 1893, whilst Mrs Sidgwick remains one of its most prominent and valued members. It would be difficult to imagine anyone better fitted by the perfect balance of his mind for research in this most difficult and irritating subject than Sidgwick.

Sidgwick's chief ethical works are his *Methods of Ethics* and his *Ethics of Green, Spencer, and Martineau.* He was at once critical and eclectic, and he tried to make a synthesis of a chastened Intuitionism with a chastened Utilitarianism. In the course of his work almost all the main problems of ethics are discussed with extreme acuteness, and that is why I have devoted a much longer essay to Sidgwick than to any of the other moralists whom I treat in this book. In the other essays exposition and criticism have been about equally mixed. But, in dealing with Sidgwick, I have let the argument carry me whither it would. In each section of the essay I start from some point in Sidgwick and I eventually return to it ; but I often wander very far afield and express my own thoughts, for what they are worth, in the meanwhile.

In conclusion I must say that I have confined myself as far as possible to the purely ethical views of the writers under consideration. In the case of Kant and Sidgwick their theology is so closely bound up with their ethics that I have had to say something about it. But in the other cases I have felt myself justified in letting sleeping Gods lie.

CHAPTER II

Spinoza

THOUGH Spinoza's main work is called *Ethics*, it is not a treatise on ethics in our sense of the word. Nor did Spinoza ever write any such treatise. His views on ethics, in the modern sense, have to be gathered from various passages scattered about his books and his letters. Nevertheless, the ultimate and explicit aim of his philosophical works was ethical. It was to discover in what human perfection consists, to explain the difficulties which prevent most men from reaching it, and to show the way which they must follow if they would overcome these difficulties. Before I begin to expound Spinoza's ethical theory I must state that I shall ignore everything in his system which depends on what he calls *Scientia Intuitiva* or the *Third Kind of Knowledge* ; *i.e.*, I shall ignore his doctrines of the Intellectual Love of God, of Human Blessedness, and of the Eternity of the Human Mind. Such an omission would be inexcusable if I were claiming to expound Spinoza's system as a whole, for they are among the hardest, the most interesting, and the most characteristic parts of it. But for the present purpose it is justified by the following facts. These doctrines, I am convinced, are the philosophic expression of certain religious and mystical experiences which Spinoza and many others have enjoyed and which seem supremely important to those who have had them. As such they belong to Spinoza's philosophy of religion rather than to his ethics in

the ordinary sense. Spinoza himself recognises that he is passing into a different realm when he begins to expound them, for he introduces them with a remark which is extremely startling as coming from him. He says that he has now done with " all that concerns this present life ", and that henceforth he is going to discuss " the duration of the human mind without relation to the body ". That Spinoza was right in thinking that these experiences are of the utmost importance and that philosophy must deal seriously with them I have no doubt ; but I am equally sure that his theory of them is not consistent with the rest of his system. For these reasons I think I am justified in ignoring the doctrines in question.

I must begin by explaining Spinoza's view about the nature of man and his position in the universe. Each man is a finite part of the general order of Nature. He is a system of very great internal complexity having a characteristic kind of unity and balance. He is in constant interaction with other men and with the rest of Nature, and these interactions constantly tend to upset the balance in one direction or another. So long as the balance is approximately maintained he lives and remains in bodily and mental health. When it is temporarily upset to a marked extent he is ill or mad ; and when it is upset so far that it cannot be restored he dies. Now in man, as in every other natural unit, there is an inherent tendency to react to all changes in such a way as to maintain this characteristic unity and equilibrium. This inherent tendency in any finite natural unit Spinoza calls its *conatus*. The *conatus* of anything is the essence of that thing ; the particular way in which it behaves in any particular situation is just the expression of its *conatus* under the special circumstances of the moment. It is of interest to remark that, so far as organisms are concerned, modern physiology agrees entirely with this doctrine of Spinoza's, and that its researches have established it in much greater detail than Spinoza could have dreamed of.

Now a man, like everything else in Nature on Spinoza's view, is a thing with two fundamentally different but inseparably correlated aspects, a physical and a psychical. If we regard a man under his physical aspect and leave his psychical aspect out of account, we call him a human organism. If we regard him under his psychical aspect and leave his physical aspect out of account, we call him a human soul. Both these points of view are abstract and one-sided ; everything which is a soul is also a body, and everything which is a body is also a soul. Suppose now that a change takes place in a man, through his interacting with some other part of Nature. This change, since it takes place in a thing which has two inseparably correlated aspects, will itself have these two aspects. Regarded on its purely physical side, it will be called a modification of the body ; regarded on its purely psychical side, it will be called a modification of the soul. Every event which is a modification of my body is also a modification of my soul, and conversely.

We come now to a further specification of this doctrine which is highly characteristic of Spinoza. Suppose that a certain psycho-physical event $e_{\psi\phi}$ happens in a certain man. Regarded in its purely psychical aspect it counts as a psychical event e_{ψ} in his soul. Regarded in its purely physical aspect it counts as a physical event e_{ϕ} in his body. Now Spinoza's view is that e_{ψ} is what we call the act of sensing the change e_{ϕ} in the body, whilst e_{ϕ} is what we

call the sensum which is the immediate object of the act e_{ψ} of the soul. Many philosophers would agree with Spinoza to the extent of holding that the act of sensing and the sensum are two distinct but inseparable aspects of a single event and are not two distinct events. But of course his doctrine goes further than this. He identifies the sensum, which is the *objective constituent* of a sensation, with the bodily change which is the necessary and sufficient *bodily condition* of the sensation. Very few philosophers have followed him in this. It is enough for me to say that there are great and glaring objections to this identification; and, although I think that most of them could be avoided with a little ingenuity, I am sure that this could be done only at the cost of giving up Spinoza's doctrine that there is nothing positive in error, which is an essential part of his system.

Every idea in my mind then, whatever else it may be, is at least an act of direct acquaintance with a certain modification of my body. And every modification of my body, whatever else it may be, is at least the immediate object of a certain idea in my mind. This doctrine seems at first sight to be wantonly paradoxical, and one thinks at once of objections which seem perfectly conclusive. But Spinoza was quite well aware of these difficulties, and he strove with some success to meet them. We have now to consider two propositions which are of great importance in the further development of Spinoza's theory, and which do something to remove the appearance of paradox. (1) The ideas in my mind of most of the changes in my body, though they are acts of direct acquaintance with those changes, are highly confused. The reason, according to Spinoza, is this. When an event B is caused by an event A the former, taken

apart from the latter, is not a natural unit. The whole AB is much more nearly a natural unit. Consequently the psychical aspect of B, taken apart from that of A, is not a natural unit. The psychical aspect of AB would be a relatively clear idea, and any mind which had it would have a relatively clear idea of the physical aspect of B. But a mind which contained the psychical aspect of B without that of A would have only a confused idea of the physical aspect of B. The application of this general principle will be most easily explained by an example. Suppose I eat some cucumber and have a feeling of stomach-ache. To feel stomach-ache is to be directly acquainted with a certain physiological process in my stomach which is in fact caused by a certain chemical process in the cucumber. But I am not directly acquainted with this process in the cucumber, because the cucumber is not a part of my body and therefore the psychical correlate of the process in it is not a state of my mind. So my idea of the process in my stomach, which constitutes my feeling of stomach-ache, is a fragmentary part of a complete idea, and its complement is not in my mind but elsewhere. It is therefore an inadequate and confused, though direct, acquaintance with this bodily process. Now contrast this with the idea which a physiologist might have of the process in my stomach. He would know a great deal about its causes, and his idea of it would therefore be fairly clear and adequate. But it would not be direct *acquaintance with* the process, for he cannot *feel* my stomach-ache; it would only be *knowledge about* the process. The above example is typical of all those ideas of my bodily modifications which we call "sensations" and "feelings". They are all ideas of effects cut loose from the ideas of their causes, and therefore fragmentary, inadequate,

and confused. But they are all acts of direct acquaintance with their objects, whilst the clearer and more adequate ideas of science are not. I think it will be useful at this point to introduce two names which do not occur in Spinoza's writings. I propose to call my direct acquaintance with the process in my stomach, which, on Spinoza's view, constitutes my feeling of stomach-ache, an " intuitive idea ". And I propose to call the sort of idea of the process which another person might have a " discursive idea ".

(2) The second important point is this. Although my mind contains intuitive, but confused and inadequate, ideas of every change in my body, I am not aware of all these ideas. On Spinoza's view corresponding to every idea there is an intuitive idea of a higher order which has the former for its immediate object. But he holds—though I doubt whether he be consistent in doing so—that an idea may be in one mind whilst the intuitive idea of it may be, not in the same mind, but in some other. I am almost certain that he would hold that, in the case of the lower animals, their minds contain nothing but ideas of the first order, and that the ideas of these ideas are elsewhere in what he calls the " Attribute of Thought ". Everything, for Spinoza, is conscious, but not everything is self-conscious; and the extent of a thing's self-consciousness may vary from time to time.

We are now in a position to understand, so far as is necessary for our present purpose, what Spinoza meant by the distinction which he draws between the *First* and the *Second Kinds of Knowledge*. The materials of the First Kind of Knowledge are those confused intuitive ideas of our own bodily modifications which we call " sensations " and " feelings ". And these ideas are interconnected only by

associations, which depend on the order and the frequency with which other things have affected ourselves. In this way the ideas of objects which have no intrinsic relation to each other may be connected, whilst the ideas of objects which are intrinsically related to each other may be disjoined. Thus the First Kind of Knowledge is the level of mere sense-perception and imagery, and of uncritical beliefs founded on animal instinct, association, or hearsay. This is the only kind of knowledge which animals have. Men start as infants with nothing but this kind of knowledge, and every man continues to move at this level for long stretches throughout the whole of his life. But all men have some capacity for another kind of knowledge, and all men to some extent realise this capacity, though most of them do so to a lamentably slight degree. This Second Kind of Knowledge is rational insight. At this level one sees intrinsic connexions and disconnexions between objects, and one's ideas are connected and disjoined according to these intrinsic relations between their objects. The best example of the Second Kind of Knowledge is pure mathematics; but we must remember that Spinoza, like most of his contemporaries, thought that physics, when properly understood, would be seen to have the same necessary character as pure mathematics. Spinoza is quite certain that the Second Kind of Knowledge presupposes the First Kind, whilst the First Kind might exist, and in animals presumably does exist, without leading on to the Second. His account of the transition is vague and radically unsatisfactory, and we need not waste time over it. The essential points for our purpose are these. There are two fundamentally different kinds of cognition:—the sensitive, instinctive, and associative, on the one hand, and the

rational, on the other; both men and animals have the first; men have, and animals have not, the capacity to rise from the first to the second; men in this life start with nothing but the first and the capacity to reach the second from it; and they all realise this capacity to various degrees in the course of their lives. All this seems to me to be plainly true, and to be unaffected by the facts that Spinoza overestimated the range of rational cognition and failed to give a satisfactory account of the details of the process by which it is reached.

It has been necessary to give this outline of Spinoza's theory of knowledge, because his theory of human perfection and imperfection is so closely bound up with it. We are now in a position to explain his doctrine of the will and the emotions. It is based on the notion of *conatus*. Spinoza calls the *conatus* of a human being *Appetitus*, which I propose to translate by the phrase *Vital Impulse*. It has, of course, two inseparably connected aspects. Viewed on its purely physical side it is the tendency of the human organism to maintain its characteristic form and balance in spite of and by means of its interaction with its surroundings. I will call Vital Impulse, when only its bodily aspect is considered, *Organic Self-maintenance*. Spinoza does not give a special name to it. The purely psychical aspect of Vital Impulse is the tendency of the human mind to maintain its characteristic unity and purposes in spite of and by means of the influences that are constantly affecting it. This aspect of Vital Impulse Spinoza calls *Voluntas*; I propose to call it *Mental Self-maintenance*. A man's Vital Impulse then is the fundamental thing in him; and all his particular behaviour, bodily and mental, is just an expression of the reaction of this Vital Impulse to particular situations. In

accordance with Spinoza's general principle one's Mental Self-maintenance is the intuitive, but often very confused, idea of one's Organic Self-maintenance. Now, as we have seen, the idea of an idea may or may not be in the same mind as the original idea. My mind *must* contain an intuitive awareness of my Organic Self-maintenance, for this awareness is the psychical aspect of that Vital Impulse of which my Organic Self-maintenance is the physical aspect. But my mind need not contain an intuitive awareness of this awareness; *i.e.*, I need not be conscious of my own Vital Impulse, although my Vital Impulse is, in one aspect, a state of my consciousness. Spinoza gives a special name to Vital Impulse when the man whose *conatus* it is is also aware of it. He then calls it *Cupiditas*, which we might translate as *Volition*.

We can now tackle Spinoza's very peculiar theory of voluntary decision. Spinoza is, of course, a rigid determinist. He regards "freedom", in the sense of indeterminism, as meaningless nonsense. The only sense in which the word "free" can intelligibly be used is in opposition to the word "constrained". An action is free in this sense in so far as the cause of it is wholly contained in the nature and past history of the agent. It is constrained when some essential factor in its total cause lies outside the agent. It is clear that nothing can be a completely free agent in this sense except the Universe taken as a single collective whole. And we cannot ascribe free *will* to the Universe; for will belongs, not to the Universe as a whole, but only to certain finite parts of it such as men.

So far Spinoza's doctrine is not very startling, and it would be accepted by a great many other philosophers. We come now to something more interesting. He holds

that the ordinary analysis of choice and voluntary decision, which most determinists would accept, is radically mistaken. The usual view, even of determinists, is that we contemplate various possible alternatives; that we are attracted by certain features in each and repelled by certain others; and that finally the balance of attractiveness in one alternative determines our choice in its favour. According to Spinoza all this is wholly wrong. We do not desire things because the prospect of them attracts us, nor do we shun things because the prospect of them repels us. On the contrary the prospect of certain things attracts us because we already have an impulse towards them, and the prospect of other things repels us because we already have an impulse against them. We may or may not be aware of these impulses. If we are, they are called "volitions" and we are said to deliberate and to act voluntarily. If we are not, we are said to act blindly and impulsively. The presence or absence of consciousness of an impulse makes no difference whatever to the impulse or its consequences. The decision and the action are completely determined by the impulses, whether we be aware of them or not; and the process of deliberating and deciding, if it be present, is a mere idle accompaniment which can only give a formal recognition to a *fait accompli*, as the King does when he gives his assent to an Act of Parliament. It is amusing to notice that this is precisely the theory which Mr. Bertrand Russell puts forward in his *Analysis of Mind* as a wonderful new discovery which we owe to the Psycho-analysts.

Spinoza's theory seems to me to be true in what it asserts and false in what it denies. It is true that the *mere* thought of an alternative neither attracts nor repels us. This is obvious from the fact that the thought of the same

alternative will be accompanied by attraction in one person, by repulsion in another, and by neither in a third. It is evident from this that the attractiveness or repulsiveness of the alternatives which we contemplate depends upon certain relatively permanent factors in ourselves. These we may call "conative dispositions". It is possible, of course, that there may be some conative dispositions common to all sane human beings. If so, some types of alternative will be attractive and others will be repulsive to all such beings whenever they happen to contemplate them. In such cases the essential part played by the conative disposition might easily be overlooked, and it might be thought that the *mere* contemplation of the alternative sufficed to stir desire for it or aversion from it. But this would be a mistake. Now it is of course true that one need not be aware of one's conative dispositions in order that they should make certain alternatives attractive and others repulsive to us. A disposition, *i.e.*, a more or less permanent tendency, is not the kind of thing of which one could be directly aware by introspection. We have to infer what our conative dispositions are by noticing what kind of things we do habitually desire and what kind of things we do habitually shun. If Spinoza wished to assert no more than that (*a*) the attractiveness and repulsiveness of alternatives depend on our conative dispositions, and (*b*) that, so far from being acquainted with our conative dispositions, we have to infer what they are from our desires and aversions, he was certainly right. But there can be no doubt that he did mean to assert something more, viz., that my awareness or unawareness of my own desires makes no difference to their consequences in the way of decision or action.

Now this doctrine has a certain ambiguity in it, which

I will point out. But, in whichever sense it is interpreted, there is no reason to think it true, and strong reason to think it false. (i) Spinoza might mean that any contemplated object attracts or repels us in consequence of certain characteristics which it *actually has*, whether we recognise their presence or not, and that it makes no difference whether we do or do not believe these characteristics to be present and to be the cause of the object's attractiveness or repulsiveness. This doctrine certainly cannot be true. In most cases of desire and deliberation none of the contemplated objects actually exist at present. You therefore cannot talk of the characteristics which they actually have, or suppose that these excite our conative dispositions as the presence of a magnet might stir a compass-needle. What affects our conative dispositions and calls forth desire or aversion *must* in all such cases, so far as I can see, be our *beliefs about* the characteristics which the various alternatives *would have* if they were actualised. (ii) Let us then pass to a more plausible interpretation. I may have a number of beliefs about the characteristics which a contemplated alternative would have if it were actualised. And I may be aware of some of these beliefs and unaware of others. Thus I may in fact believe that a certain alternative would have the characteristic c_1, and I may also believe that it would have the characteristic c_2, but I may be aware of the first belief and unaware of the second. Spinoza might mean that my desires and aversions are determined by the beliefs which I in fact have, and that my beliefs excite my conative dispositions in exactly the same way whether I happen to be aware of them or not. As regards this view there are two things to be said. (*a*) It is not *prima facie* particularly plausible. It is not obvious

that the simpler cause-factor "belief that so-and-so would have a certain characteristic, unaccompanied by awareness of that belief" must always have precisely the same effect on our conative dispositions as the more complex cause-factor consisting of this belief accompanied by awareness of it. (*b*) In many cases it is plainly false. In so far as I am unaware of some of my beliefs about the characteristics which an alternative would have, I may be unaware of some of the conative dispositions which the contemplation of this alternative is exciting. Now some of these may be such that I should strongly object to their being excited. They might have led to disastrous consequences in the past, or I might regard them as morally disreputable. If I became aware of these beliefs, and thus of the conative dispositions which were coming into play, I might decide to act very differently. To take a fairly obvious example. A person X of decent moral character may contemplate an act of generosity to another person, Y. He may in fact believe (*a*) that this will make Y happy, and (*b*) that it will make it easier for him to seduce Y. Of these two beliefs X may be aware of the first and unaware of the second. Surely it is perfectly ridiculous to maintain that his decision will always be precisely the same whether he remains in ignorance of the second belief or becomes aware of it. When he realises that a part of the cause of his desire to do this act was a purely sensual conative tendency, which he may regard as intrinsically disreputable or may know to have led to disastrous consequences in his past life, he will be provided with a motive against doing it which would not have been present otherwise. Of course it is true that *mere* awareness of one's own beliefs and conative tendencies will no more modify one's actions than *mere* awareness of

anything else. But the point is that we have conative tendencies of the second and higher orders as well as those of the first order; *i.e.*, we have conative tendencies which lead to desires or aversions towards other conative tendencies. And awareness of one's beliefs about a desired object may lead to recognition of the conative tendencies to which it is appealing; this may excite conative dispositions of the second order which would not otherwise have been excited; and this may make a profound difference to our final action or decision. (iii) There is yet a third possible interpretation of Spinoza's doctrine to be considered. I might contemplate a certain alternative, and be aware of all my beliefs about the characteristics which it would have if it were realised. And I might desire it. But I might not be aware that I was desiring it. I might fail to recognise that I was taking up any conative or emotional attitude towards it, or I might think that my attitude was one of aversion when it was really one of desire. Spinoza may have meant to assert that the result of desiring an alternative *without* recognising that one was taking up this attitude towards it would be precisely the same as the result of desiring it *and* recognising that one was desiring it. This, again, does not seem to me to have the least plausibility on the face of it. And it seems not to be true. If I recognised that I was desiring something which I think an unfitting object of desire, this would be a motive for suppressing the desire or averting my attention from this object. If I did not recognise that I was desiring this object no such motive would operate on me. And the presence or absence of this motive might make a profound difference to my final decision.

I cannot think of any other interpretation of Spinoza's doctrine beside the three which I have just discussed and

rejected. It therefore seems to me that the most characteristic part of Spinoza's theory of the will is a failure. And the fact that some of the exponents of the "New Psychology" have unwittingly plagiarised it does not, to my mind, materially reduce the probability that it is nonsense.

We will now deal with Spinoza's theory of the emotions. Whenever my body is acted upon by another body one of three things may happen. Its vitality may be increased, or diminished, or it may remain at the same level in spite of the interaction. In my mind there will be an intuitive but confused awareness of these changes or of this maintenance of my bodily vitality. And this awareness is the mental aspect of those psycho-physical states which we call "emotions". There are thus three primary emotions; viz., pleasure, which is the consciousness of a transition to heightened vitality; pain, which is the consciousness of a transition to lowered vitality; and what Spinoza calls "desire", which is the consciousness of the constancy of one's vitality throughout a change in the body. Spinoza distinguishes two kinds of pleasure and of pain. (1) The vitality of the body as a whole may be increased. The consciousness of this he calls *Hilaritas*, which we may translate as "Sense of Well-being". (2) The vitality of a part may be increased without any increase of the total vitality, or even at the expense of it. The consciousness of this he calls *Titillatio*, which we may translate as "Localised Pleasure". The two corresponding kinds of painful emotion he calls *Melancholia* and *Dolor* respectively. We might translate them as "Depression" and "Localised Pain".

The above is Spinoza's general account of Emotion. He now draws a distinction, which is vitally important for

his ethics, between *Passive* and *Active* Emotions. Passive emotions correspond to the confused and inadequate ideas of the First Kind of Knowledge. Active emotions are the affective correlates of clear rational knowledge. We are said to be " passive " in respect of any change that happens in us when part of the cause of this change is outside us. When the complete cause of a change in us is itself in us we are said to be " active " in respect of that change. Now at the level of the First Kind of Knowledge, as we have seen, our minds contain intuitive ideas of changes in our bodies and do not contain ideas of the causes of these changes. That is why the First Kind of Knowledge is confused and irrational. We now see that we are passive in Spinoza's sense at this level, and that the intellectual inadequacy and confusion are bound up with the passivity. The emotions which correspond to this intellectual level are thrust on us. We do not understand them or their causes, and, for that very reason, they tend to be inordinate and obsessive. Panic fears, overmastering loves and hates and jealousies, are the typical excesses of passive emotion. So long as we are at this level we may fairly be called slaves of passion, instinct, impulse, popular opinion, convention, and superstition. This state Spinoza calls " Human Bondage ".

Now the essence of the human mind, that which distinguishes it from animal minds, is the striving to understand, to think clearly, and to connect its ideas rationally. This, in human beings, is the psychical aspect of the Vital Impulse which is their *conatus*. Whenever a human mind passes from a state of greater to one of less mental confusion its vitality is increased, and this transition is felt as pleasure. Since this kind of pleasure depends on the mind's own characteristic activities it is called " Active Pleasure ". It is the sort of pleasure that we feel when we solve a problem for ourselves and replace muddle and confusion by order and rational arrangement. Active Desire would be the feeling that we have when we manage to keep our existing level of clearness in spite of distractions and difficulties. There is no active emotion corresponding to the passive emotion of pain. Of course the mind may pass from a level of greater clearness and insight to one of relative confusion, as it does when we are ill or tired. And this transition will be felt as painful. But it is a passive emotion, since the change is not due to the mind's own characteristic activities but to its falling under the dominion of other things. Certain active and certain passive emotions are called by the same names, and may lead to actions which are superficially alike. We might compare, *e.g.*, the case of a doctor and of an ordinary man in presence of a bad accident. The ordinary man may feel an emotion of sympathetic pain, and this may make him try to help the sufferer. But his actions will tend to be fussy and inefficient, and he may feel too sick to do anything even if he knows how to. The doctor feels very little of this sympathetic pain, but he has a clear idea of what is needed and an active emotion of helpfulness. Yet these two very different emotions would often be called by the same name of " sympathy " or " humanity ". Even the more amiable passive emotions are apt to degenerate into the state which Dickens illustrated in the character of Mrs Jellyby, who neglected her duties as a wife and a mother in order to promote the education of the natives of Borrioboola-Gha.

According to Spinoza the active emotions fall under

two main heads, which he calls *Animositas* and *Generositas*. These are equivalent to Rational Self-love and Rational Benevolence. The state of predominantly clear knowledge and predominantly active emotion is called "Human Freedom"; and the problem of practical ethics is to discover how men may pass from the state of Human Bondage, in which they are all born and in which most of them remain, to that of Human Freedom, which some few of them do reach. We must now consider Spinoza's teaching on this topic.

He certainly cannot be accused of underestimating the difficulties; for he begins by insisting on the power of the passive emotions over human beings, and it seems almost overwhelming. In the first place, we are, and cannot cease to be, parts of the general order of Nature. Now the rest of Nature, taken together, is stronger than any one of us, and it is not specially designed for the benefit of any one of us. Consequently every man, by reason of his finitude, is always liable to passive emotions; and, if external circumstances be specially unfavourable, it is always possible that he may be completely overcome and obsessed by some passive emotion: *e.g.*, the character of the wisest and best man is at the mercy of an accident to his brain and of infection by the germs of sleepy sickness. Secondly, an idea which is clear and adequate has not for that reason any special power to expel an idea which is confused and inadequate. The clear discursive idea of the sun as a vast sphere millions of miles away coexists with the confused intuitive idea of it as a small disc a little way above our heads. One emotion can be expelled only by another emotion, and the clearest and most exhaustive knowledge that certain emotions are irrational

in themselves and harmful in their consequences will not have the faintest tendency to expel them unless it be itself accompanied by some emotion which is stronger than they. This is of course profoundly true. If a person be obsessed by jealousy the mere conviction that this emotion is irrational and degrading will have no tendency to overcome his jealousy unless the thought of himself as irrational and degraded stirs an emotion of disgust in him.

The power of the mind over the passive emotions, such as it is, arises from the following causes: (1) We can to some extent form clear ideas of our own passive emotions, and regard them and ourselves from the disinterested scientific standpoint of the introspective psychologist. In so doing we largely dissociate these emotions from the idea of such and such an external cause, and substitute for them the emotion of scientific curiosity. We thus cease to be so much perturbed by excessive love and hate of external things and people. (2) In the long run emotions towards ideal and impersonal objects which we clearly understand are more permanent than emotions towards particular things or persons which we know only confusedly through the senses and remember by images which grow vaguer and fainter with lapse of time. *E.g.*, emotion at the beauty of a mathematical theorem is no doubt far less intense than the emotion of love or hate for a particular person who is actually present. But this person will change or go away or die, and in his absence the image of him will recur with decreasing frequency and distinctness, and the emotion will fade away. But the thought of the mathematical theorem can be reproduced with equal clearness at will. And so the less intense emotion gains in the long run over the more intense one. (3) Every event is really

due to an infinite network of contemporary cause-factors. And again it is the inevitable outcome of an infinite chain of successive total causes stretching back endlessly into the past. Now much of the obsessiveness of the emotions which we feel towards an event at the non-rational level is due to two illusions. We think that we can single out one particular thing or person as completely and solely responsible for the event. And we think that, although the event happened, it need not have done so. Now, when we clearly understand that nothing that happens could have fallen out otherwise, a great deal of the bitterness of many of our emotions tends to evaporate. And when we clearly understand that every event is the inevitable consequence of an endless chain of total causes, each of which is of infinite complexity, our emotion ceases to be concentrated on any one event or thing or person and is spread over all these infinitely numerous conditions. The result is that we no longer feel an intense and obsessive love or hate of any one thing or person when we view the world from the level of rational knowledge. *E.g.*, in the late war ignorant people could regard the Kaiser as its sole and sufficient cause, and could feel an intense and perturbing emotion of hatred for him. But this was impossible for anyone who was intelligent enough to know, and intellectually honest enough to bear in mind, that the war was the inevitable outcome of immensely complex causes, stretching back for centuries, and many of them quite impersonal. (4) In moments of calm a rational being can deliberately form certain habits of thought and certain associations and dissociations of ideas which will persist and will check passive emotions when they threaten him. All these four ways of replacing obsessive passive emotions by calm active emotions are

plainly genuine and important; and Spinoza shows here his usual profound psychological insight. The path from Human Bondage to Human Freedom is thus steep and slippery, but it does exist and it is not impassible. As Spinoza says in a famous passage: "If it were not very difficult why should so few have travelled it? But all supremely excellent things are as difficult as they are rare."

We come now to a topic which is of the utmost importance in all ethical systems, viz., the relative positions which are to be assigned to egoistic and to altruistic emotions, desires, and actions. There are always two questions, one psychological and the other ethical; and the answer to the first has a direct bearing on the answer to the second. Now Spinoza's psychology is fundamentally and explicitly egoistic. Every emotion, volition, and action of a man is an expression of the Vital Impulse, which is his essence. And this Vital Impulse, like every other *conatus*, is a striving for *self*-maintenance and *self*-preservation and for nothing else. All our primitive instincts are therefore instincts of self-preservation; and, when we reach the rational level, we can only pursue deliberately and with clear insight the same end for which we formerly strove instinctively and blindly. Thus deliberate self-sacrifice is literally impossible; and, since it is impossible, it can be neither right nor a duty. Now any such theory as this is at once faced with two objections. The first is that there seem to be non-egoistic emotions and actions at both the instinctive and the rational level. And the second is that we seem to regard self-sacrifice in certain cases as right and even as a duty. We must now see how Spinoza deals with these objections.

We will begin with the question of fact, and we will

consider it first at the instinctive level and then at the rational level. It seems to me that the apparent exceptions to Spinoza's theory which we find at the pre-rational level come under three main heads: (1) Certain emotions and actions which are concerned with the preservation of a species, viz., those which are involved in sexual intercourse and parenthood. The action of the male spider, who is generally eaten by his wife, and the action of the hen, who attracts the attention of a hawk to herself in order to divert it from her chickens, are certainly very odd expressions of an impulse towards nothing but self-preservation. (2) The general sentiment of sympathy towards another member of one's race or species, as such, when one sees him in pain or difficulty. That this is often overcome by other emotions and impulses is true enough. But it is equally certain that, when there is no special cause to inhibit it, it is evoked and may lead to actions which do not make for the preservation of the agent. (3) Certain kinds of emotion and action towards particular persons whom we already love or hate. If A either loves or hates B strongly enough he will often feel emotions and perform actions which are, and can be seen to be, most detrimental to his own welfare and even to his own survival. Acts done in a passion of jealousy or spite are obvious examples.

Spinoza does not explicitly deal with the first class of apparent exceptions, and I cannot see that any general principle which he uses in his treatment of the other two would provide a plausible explanation of them. I think that they make it certain that he has taken the notion of Vital Impulse too narrowly, and that this impulse certainly involves a primitive striving to propagate and preserve one's species in addition to the primitive striving to preserve

oneself. These two factors may conflict; and, at the pre-rational level, the former seems often to be stronger than the latter. Spinoza does explicitly treat the other two kinds of apparent exception, and we will now consider his theory.

Spinoza's attempted explanation of the sympathetic emotion which I feel when I contemplate any other human being in a state of pleasure or pain is as follows. If A and B be two bodies of similar nature, and a certain modification of A determines a certain modification of B, then the latter modification will resemble the former. This general principle will apply to the case of two human bodies. Suppose now that a man A is having a certain emotion, and that another man B is perceiving A's body at the time. A's body will have a certain characteristic modification, which is the physical correlate of the emotion which A is feeling. This will cause a certain modification in B's body, which will be the physical correlate of B's perception of A's body. By the general principle just enunciated this modification in B's body will resemble the modification in A's body which causes it. It will therefore be correlated with an emotion in B which is similar to the emotion which A is feeling.

I think it is quite certain that this explanation will not work. In the first place, there is no reason to accept the general principle or its particular application. If one human body emits a shriek and a second human body be within earshot it will be affected by the event in the former. But it will not in general be so affected as to emit a shriek itself. Secondly, even if the principle were true it would not be sufficient. When A has a certain emotion the only part of the physical correlate of this emotion which can affect B's body is its external expression, *e.g.*, a shriek,

a smile, a frown, and so on. Now this is certainly not the whole, or even the principal part, of the physical correlate of A's emotion. So, even if it were to produce a similar modification in B's body, it would produce only a small and rather trivial part of the total physical correlate of the emotion. It is therefore quite possible that B would not feel an emotion like that which A is feeling and expressing at the time. Even if I could not see a fellow-man frown without frowning myself it would not in the least follow that my frown must be accompanied by an internal bodily state like that which accompanies the other man's frown. So Spinoza's explanation of the second class of apparent exceptions is a complete failure.

Spinoza's theory of the third class of apparent exceptions is as follows: To say that I "love" A means that the perceived or imagined presence of A gives me pleasure, and this is a sign that it heightens my vitality. To say that I "hate" A means that the perceived or imagined presence of A gives me pain, and this is a sign that it lowers my vitality. I shall naturally try to preserve and strengthen anything that heightens my vitality, and to destroy and weaken anything that lowers my vitality. For by so doing I am indirectly preserving and increasing my own vitality. Thus I shall tend to do actions which give pleasure to those whom I love and pain to those whom I hate. That such actions at the pre-rational level often overshoot the mark must presumably be ascribed to the state of intellectual confusion which is characteristic of this level. This explanation seems to me to be sound so far as it goes. But I doubt if it accounts for all the facts. Is not the presence of those whom we hate sometimes highly stimulating? Is it not a perfectly well-known fact that many people delight

in hurting those whom they love? And does not the whole theory over-intellectualise the mental processes of animals and of men at the level of impulse and passion? I conclude on the whole that Spinoza has failed to answer the *prima facie* case against egoism as an adequate psychological theory of emotion and action at the pre-rational level.

We have now to consider the question at the level of rational knowledge, active emotion, and deliberate action. Here Spinoza's contention is that actions performed at this level which are commonly counted as altruistic are simply those which a clear-sighted egoist would see to be essential to his own ultimate interests. His theory is as follows. Self-preservation and the performance of the characteristic activities of the self are our only ultimate end. And all our other desires are subordinated to it; for, as he says, "We cannot desire to be blessed, or to act rightly, or to live rightly, without desiring to live." At the rational level we pursue this end deliberately and wittingly, and we choose the right means to it; whereas at the instinctive level we pursued it blindly and were often misled by association. Now the one essential activity of a human being is to think clearly and understand rationally. Everything that we do which does not consist in or involve the exercise of this activity can be done as well or better by animals. So the self which a human being who clearly understands his own nature will strive to preserve and develop is a self which thinks clearly and understands rationally. He will tolerate or further other activities in himself or in others only in so far as they are indifferent or helpful to this end. Now Spinoza maintains two very important propositions, one negative and the other positive. The negative contention is that men come into conflict with each other only in so

far as they live at the pre-rational level. The goods which belong to that level are limited in amount, and the part of them which belongs to A cannot also belong to B. This is obvious as regards the pleasures which are derived from the exclusive possession of a bit of property, of a beloved person, and so on. But rational insight is a non-competitive good; the possession of such knowledge of a certain subject by A does not prevent B from having just as clear and just as extensive knowledge of the same subject. And the same would apply to all those goods which depend on, though they do not reduce to, rational insight, *e.g.*, the admiring contemplation of beautiful objects. The positive contention is that rational insight, and the other goods which depend on it, cannot exist except in an ordered community of human beings, and that it cannot reach any high degree in one unless it reaches a high degree in all. A solitary hermit would have to spend so much time and energy in securing the bare necessities of life and defending himself against his foes that he would have hardly any left for cultivating the specifically human excellences. And no man could carry his own intellectual development far, even though he lived in a society which supplied him with defence and the necessities of life, unless he had the constant stimulus and co-operation of other men of intelligence and culture.

Thus the "Free Man", as Spinoza calls him, would have positive egoistic grounds for wishing to live in a society of some kind rather than in solitude; and he would have positive grounds for wishing the other members of this society to be Free Men, like himself, rather than ignorant slaves of superstition, instinct, and passion. And, since he is a clear-sighted rational being, he will know that omelettes cannot be made without breaking eggs. He will tolerate

and desire, as a necessary means to the existence of an organised society and to the development of its members into Free Men, much that is *directly* indifferent or even detrimental to his own intellectual development. For he understands the properties of the materials with which he has to deal, and he knows that he is but sacrificing a smaller immediate gain for a greater ultimate return. And the process which he sets in motion is cumulative; for, the nearer his society approaches to a society of Free Men, the fewer will be the grounds of possible conflict between its members, and the less often will he have to sacrifice a sprat to catch a mackerel. In this way, Spinoza would say, we can explain and justify all actions at the rational level which would commonly be counted as altruistic. And egoism remains the fundamental principle; for, although the Free Man wills the perfection of other men as well as his own, he wills his own as an end, whilst he wills theirs, not as an end, but only as a necessary means to his own.

What are we to say of this doctrine of Spinoza's? It is quite certain that there would be far less friction and mutual frustration in a society of rational egoists, each of whom cared for nothing but his own intellectual development and unhesitatingly took the most effective means to secure it, than there is among men who are partly ruled by the instincts, passions, and loyalties of the pre-rational level. And I think it very likely that many of the actions which it would be reasonable for a rational egoist to perform in a society of rational egoists would not differ much externally from those which are now praised as altruistic. This we must grant to Spinoza. But there remains much to be criticised in the theory.

(1) We must not assume that, because many types of action which are alleged to spring from non-egoistic motives *would* also be done by a rational egoist who understood his business, therefore these actions *do in fact* spring from egoistic motives. We have already seen that the Vital Impulse, even at the pre-rational level, must include factors beside the instinct of self-preservation, factors which may conflict with and sometimes overcome that instinct. So, even if Spinoza be right in holding that there is nothing new on the conative side at the rational level, and that we have here only the old Vital Impulse grown conscious of itself and of the necessary conditions of its own satisfaction, there would still be no ground to expect that egoism would be an adequate theory of deliberate action.

(2) The contention that " we cannot desire to act rightly, or to live rightly, without desiring to live " is no doubt true when the proper qualifications are made. But it then becomes trivial. For we must substitute for it the statement that I cannot desire to act rightly without desiring to live long enough to perform the right action which I am intending. Now this would be true even if the action which I judge to be right and intend to perform to-morrow is to sacrifice my life for my country in a forlorn hope or to science in a certainly lethal experiment. I should still desire to live till the charge is sounded or until the apparatus is ready and the observers are assembled. Consequently this principle cannot disprove the possibility of deliberate self-sacrifice. I think it is true that no rational being deliberately wills his own destruction as an end ; but it is quite clear to me that such a being may deliberately choose an alternative which he knows at the time will involve his destruction as a necessary condition of its fulfilment.

(3) The distinction between competitive and non-competitive goods is superficially striking, and it has a certain relative importance. But I believe that it is ultimately rather misleading. It is of course obvious enough that knowledge can be shared without being divided, in a sense in which property cannot ; and that it is capable of being indefinitely increased. But, although knowledge itself is not a competitive good, some of the necessary conditions for acquiring and exercising intellectual powers plainly are competitive. Philosophers and scientists and artists need as much food, clothing, shelter, and warmth as anyone else. And they need considerably more leisure, and a long and expensive training. Now the supply of all these things is limited. Unless some people mainly devote themselves to producing such things, and thereby forfeit their own chance of any great intellectual or artistic development, it is certain that scientists and philosophers will not have the leisure or the training or the freedom from practical worries which are essential to their intellectual development and activity. So, to be quite frank, I do not agree that a perfectly rational man, in Spinoza's sense, would want *all* men to be perfectly rational. He would indeed want to co-operate with a *great many* such men, and, *within this class*, he would want the members to be as highly developed in intellect as possible. But he would recognise that the very existence of a class of disinterestedly scientific or artistic persons depends on the labours of people like bed-makers, bricklayers, miners, etc., who cannot and must not make intellectual curiosity their main motive or develop their intellects too far. No doubt these humble and dutiful lives are amply rewarded by knowing that they are the soil from which spring such fine flowers of culture as our-

selves. But the fact remains that, so long as our intellects are bound to animal organisms which have to be clothed, fed, warmed, and housed, all talk of disinterested knowledge and æsthetic appreciation or production as non-competitive goods which all men might enjoy together to the highest degree is, to put it plainly, moonshine.

We have now, I hope, gained a fairly clear idea of the range of application of the words " good " and " bad " on Spinoza's view. And this is one important part of the total problem of ethics. But there is another part of that problem to which we must now turn our attention. The question is: " What is the *meaning* of ethical terms, like ' good ' and ' bad ', ' right ' and ' wrong ', ' ought ', etc. ? Can they be analysed ; and, if so, what is the right analysis ? And how are they related to each other ? " On these questions Spinoza has much less to say. But his views are characteristic and important, though they are not stated or defended in as much detail as would be desirable.

The first point to notice is that all implication of praise or blame must be removed from ethical judgments, in so far as this implies that a thing or person might have been other than it is or might have done otherwise than it did. Any such implication, on Spinoza's view, is simply a delusion due to partial ignorance of the conditions. The judgment that a thing or person or action is good or bad, when freed from these delusive implications, must be as purely positive as the statement that a thing is round or square. There is one and only one sense in which the words " perfect " and " imperfect " can properly and literally be used, and that is " realising or falling short of the intentions of the designer ". They can thus be applied properly only to the artificial products of deliberate design, such as plates or

motor-cars. When men apply them to each other and to things in the outer world which are not the products of human design they are making a certain tacit assumption. They are thinking of God as a being like themselves who desires ends and uses means to secure these ends ; they are thinking of themselves as deliberately designed and produced by God, as plates and motors are designed and produced by men ; and they are thinking of the non-artificial part of the outer world as designed by God for the benefit of men. The whole of this tacit assumption, according to Spinoza, is philosophically absurd. And it is daily refuted by the experience that the rest of Nature is perfectly indifferent to man and his welfare. In face of such experiences men do not give up their false assumption, but sink still deeper into folly by talking of the " inscrutable wisdom " and the " mysterious purposes " of God when earthquakes, pestilences, and famines devastate humanity. This Spinoza calls " taking refuge in the asylum of ignorance ". We must therefore rigidly confine our use of the words " perfect " and " imperfect " to things that we know to be the products of deliberate human design.

What then are we to say about the meaning of the terms " good " and " bad ", " better " and " worse " ? Spinoza's view seems to be the following. If we take any species of beings there will be certain powers and activities which are common and peculiar to the members of it. Within a given species to say that one member is " better " than another simply means that it has the characteristic powers of the species to a greater degree and that it performs the characteristic functions of the species more efficiently. The fundamental ethical judgment is of the form " A exercises the characteristic functions of his species more efficiently

than B, who belongs to the same species", and this is what is meant by "A is better than B". But it is not always convenient to express ethical judgments in this comparative form. It is often more convenient to put them in the form "A is a very good man" or "B is a fairly bad man". We arrange members of a species in an order according to whether they perform the specific functions more or less efficiently. This series has neither in theory nor in practice a first or last term or an upper or lower limit. Thus the notion of a "perfectly good" or "perfectly bad" man would be meaningless. But we can form the notion of an average or typical member of the species, though it is of course a fiction to which nothing actual exactly answers. A member of a species will then be called "good" if it performs the specific functions with decidedly greater efficiency than the average member, and it will be called "bad" if it performs them with decidedly less efficiency than the average member. The notions of "good" and "bad" are thus doubly relative. In the first place, they mean "better or worse than the average". And, secondly, the average is that of a certain species, and "better" or "worse" refer to the relative efficiency with which the characteristic functions of this species are performed. Still, there is a sense in which "good" is a positive term, whilst "bad" is a merely negative or privative term like "blind" or "short-sighted". For the relation of worse to better within the species is simply the relation of less to more of the positive powers and activities which are characteristic of the species.

Is there any sense of "better" and "worse" in which they relate members of different species to each other? *E.g.*, would there be any sense in saying that the worst

man that we can imagine is "higher than" the best mouse that we can imagine, or that human good is "to be preferred to" canine or equine good when it conflicts with them? So far as I can understand, Spinoza's answer would be as follows: When and only when the powers which are characteristic of species A include all and more than all the powers which are characteristic of species B we can say that any member of A is "higher than" any member of B, and there is an objective ground for preferring the good of A to that of B if the two conflict. This relation holds between men and all animals. For men have the power of rational cognition, whilst animals have not. And, although men are physically weaker and less skilful in many ways than certain animals, yet by using their rational cognition they can in the end accomplish everything that any animal can accomplish and do it far more efficiently. Where this kind of relation does not hold, as, *e.g.*, between dogs and cats, there is no sense in talking of "better" and "worse", "higher" and "lower". On the general principle of egoism, which we have already discussed, any man will treat any other individual, whether human or non-human, simply as a means to his own intellectual development. But, in the case of other human beings, the form which such treatment takes will be enormously modified by the fact that the companionship and co-operation of other rational beings are vitally important to one's own intellectual welfare and growth. In the case of animals there is no such modifying influence; and, although the Free Man will not treat them with wanton cruelty, he will unhesitatingly use them for food, clothing, haulage, and scientific experiments. Spinoza would not have had the faintest sympathy with vegetarianism or the agitation against vivisection; and I am afraid that

he would have regarded the pleasure which most decent people get from the love and companionship of cats, dogs, or horses, as a form of passive emotion from which the Free Man would have freed himself.

A "virtue", on Spinoza's view, is any active power or capacity which is part of the nature of a thing. The fundamental human virtue is to understand clearly, and all other human virtues are subordinate to this. It will be worth while to say something about Spinoza's views on certain alleged virtues and vices. The vice which he thinks most evil is hatred, for it is bad both directly and indirectly. In the first place, it is an extremely disturbing passive emotion which tends to make us hurt and destroy other human beings. Now, as we have seen, the Free Man will want to preserve other men and to make them rational enough to be his companions and colleagues. The Free Man, if he is hated, will not return hatred but will try to return love. For it is a plain psychological fact that to return hate for hate always increases the original hatred, whilst this may sometimes be overcome by love. This is of course true; but it is a truth which goes so much against the grain that men will not act upon it even when it is promulgated by what they regard as divine authority and supported by daily empirical verification.

Spinoza has a low opinion of what Hume calls "the monkish virtues", viz., deliberate asceticism, pity, humility, repentance, and shame. They are not strictly virtues, but passive emotions which spring from our weakness and not from clear rational insight. And they are bad in two respects. In the first place, they are all painful emotions, and therefore signs of diminished vitality in the man who feels them. Moreover, the actions to which they lead,

being based on inadequate knowledge, are quite as likely to do harm to ourselves and others as to benefit them. The Free Man will aim directly at good, and, in so doing will incidentally avoid evil. He will not be constantly thinking about evil and trying to avoid it. And he will enjoy in moderation all those bodily and mental pleasures which are not hurtful to his intellectual development. Spinoza compares him to the healthy man who eats what he likes and incidentally avoids illness. The man who devotes himself to avoiding evil is like the valetudinarian who is always thinking of his own ailments and has to diet himself in order to keep alive. "The last thing that the Free Man thinks about," says Spinoza, "is death; and his wisdom is a meditation, not of death, but of life."

Nevertheless, Spinoza allows a certain relative value to these "monkish virtues". After all, most people are not Free Men, just as most people are not perfectly healthy. And it is only those who "know that sin is in vain" who can safely "whistle the Devil to make them sport". If a man is to be swayed by passive emotions at all it is better for him to be moved by pity, humility, repentance, shame, etc., than by malice, hardness of heart, and insolence. We must then recognise, beside the ethics of Free Men living in the society of their equals, a kind of *Interimsethik* which governs the relations of those who are still in bondage. It is at this level, on Spinoza's view, that we find the State, as we know it, with its laws, customs, and institutions. Every man, whether he lives at the rational or the pre-rational level, has a natural right to preserve his own existence. And from this follow the natural rights of seeking what he judges to be to his own advantage, of avenging injuries to himself, of cherishing what he loves

and injuring what he hates, and so on. At the rational level the exercise of these natural rights would lead, not to conflict, but to co-operation. But, when men have confused ideas and passive emotions, they make mistakes about their own real interests and about the proper means to secure them. They thus come into perpetual conflict with each other; and the only way out of this is for all of them to forego some part of their natural rights and to refrain from actions which injure each other. But at this level they will not be able to see this fact steadily, nor will they be able to adjust their lives at all times to these limitations merely because it is reasonable to do so. At this level some men at all times and all men at some times will refrain from inflicting injury only in so far as they fear a greater injury for themselves. And the State is an institution, which arises at this partially rational level, with power to lay down rules of conduct, to define what are and what are not injuries, and to prevent injurious actions by punishment and the threat of punishment. There is no property, and there can be no justice or injustice, apart from a State and its laws. "Sin" is disobedience to the laws of one's State, and "merit" is obedience to them. And so, Spinoza says, "it is evident that justice and injustice, merit and sin, are extrinsic ideas, and not attributes which display the nature of mind."

The State, then, exists primarily, not for the Free Man, but for men who are partly rational and mainly at the level of confused ideas and passive emotions. But the Free Man will have to be a citizen of some State and to make the best of it. For, although he will often feel, as one often felt during the late war, that he is living in a lunatic asylum which is being conducted by the inmates,

even the society of homicidal maniacs with occasional lucid intervals is incomparably better for one's intellectual health than the squalor and stagnation of the hermit's cave. The situation of the Free Man in a society of those who are still largely in bondage is of course a delicate and difficult one. He must not make the mistake of treating them as if they were free, or he will outrage their prejudices and incur persecution and perhaps death. On the other hand, he must not visibly make a difference between them and himself or adopt offensive airs of superiority. Spinoza had ample opportunities of practising this difficult art of combining the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove; and all that we know of his life suggests that he acquired great skill in it. He always avoided giving provocation or seeking martyrdom; yet, when the occasion arose, he displayed a calm heroic courage in face of a murderous patriotic mob. And he was equally successful in "the long littleness of life". He shared the joys and sorrows of the simple people among whom he lived in a perfectly natural un-self-conscious way; and he tolerated and respected in them beliefs and practices which would have been impossible for himself. In the meanwhile he earned his own living by his skill as a practical optician, and was a burden to no one. He thus accomplished one of the hardest of all tasks, viz., to be a prophet without being a prig and to be a saint without being a sponger.

There remains one other point of general ethical interest to be mentioned before we leave Spinoza and pass to Butler. This is the position of pleasure and pain in Spinoza's ethical system. He is not a Hedonist, in the strict sense. States of mind and actions are not good *because* they are pleasant or conducive to pleasure, nor are they bad *because* they are

painful or conducive to pain. But pleasure and pain, though they are thus not the *ratio essendi* of good and evil, are the *ratio cognoscendi* thereof. Pleasure is the infallible sign of heightened vitality, pain is the infallible sign of lowered vitality, and these are the only ultimate good and evil. If a man were born with completely clear ideas and completely active emotions he would, according to Spinoza, have no idea of good or evil. For he would never have felt the pleasure of passing to a higher degree of vitality and mental clearness nor the pain of passing to a lower degree of vitality and to a state of greater mental confusion. Yet he would in fact be in the best state in which a human being could be. But the hypothesis in question is one that could not possibly be realised, for we necessarily start in a state of predominantly confused cognition and predominantly passive emotion. There is just one qualification to be made to the above statements. We must remember the distinction between Well-being and Localised Pleasure, and between Depression and Localised Pain. It is only the first members of these two pairs which are infallible signs of heightened and lowered vitality respectively, and therefore of good and evil.

CHAPTER III

Butler

BUTLER'S ethical theories are contained in the *Sermons on Human Nature* which he preached at the Rolls Chapel in London, and in the *Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue* which forms one of the appendices to his famous *Analogy of Religion*. It would be hard to find two writers of such eminence who were so unlike each other as Butler and Spinoza. The writer with whom he has most affinity among those who are treated in this book is Kant, though Hume accepted and emphasised his refutation of psychological egoism. Butler was not, of course, as great a metaphysician as Kant; but he largely made up for this by his clearness and balance. Kant's work is marred by a mania for neat logical classifications and by a strong trace of moral fanaticism; whilst Butler has the solid common-sense and the sweet reasonableness of an English bishop of the eighteenth century. He writes about facts with which we are all acquainted in language which we can all understand; and his work, though it does not pretend to be a complete treatise on ethics, forms one of the best introductions to the subject that exists.

It is necessary to say something at the outset about the ethical and religious tone of the period, because this largely determined the form in which Butler put his arguments. The Christian religion was then going through one of its recurrent phases of dormancy, and has seldom been at a