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Five Types of Ethical Theory

By

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but that, of equally good states of mind, one in himself and another in someone else, it is fitting for him to desire the existence of the former more intensely than that of the latter. Pure Egoism, as I have said, seems to be flagrantly contrary to common-sense morality; but I am not sure that the compromise which I have just proposed is not more in accord with the judgments of common-sense than is Pure Universalism.

Before leaving the subject it is important to notice that the above defence of the logical consistency of ethical Egoism would be incompatible with a purely teleological view of ethics. The consistent Egoistic Hedonist holds that pleasure and nothing else is good, and that an equally pleasant state is equally good no matter where it occurs. He knows quite well that, in many cases, if he sacrificed some of his own pleasure, others would gain far more pleasure than he has lost. Yet he holds that any such action would be wrong. Such a view would be quite impossible if he held the teleological theory that "right" and "conducive to intrinsically good results" are mutually equivalent. It can be made consistent only on the extreme deontological view that such an action would be unfitting, and that its unfittingness suffices to make it wrong on the whole no matter how intrinsically good its consequences might be.

If we refer back to the two principles from which Sidgwick deduces his *Principle of Rational Benevolence*, we shall see that the Egoist might accept the first but would have to reject the second. He could admit that "the good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view of the Universe, than the equal good of any other." He would merely remark that, after all, he is not the Universe, and therefore it is not obvious that he ought to

take the Universe's point of view. And he might add that, unless the Universe be supposed to be a person, which was certainly not Sidgwick's opinion, all talk about its "point of view" must be metaphorical, and the precise meaning of the metaphor is not easy to grasp. He would have to deny that "it is my duty to aim at good generally, so far as I can bring it about, and not merely at a particular part of it," which is the second of the two premises from which Sidgwick deduces his *Principle of Rational Benevolence*. According to the Egoist it is not his duty to aim at "good generally", *i.e.*, regardless of where it may occur; it is his duty to confine his attention to aiming at those good states of mind which will be states of his own mind. Now Sidgwick's difficulty was that *both* the principle that I ought to be *equally* concerned about equally good states of mind, no matter where they may occur, *and* the principle that I ought to be *more* concerned about a good state in my own mind than about an equally good state in any other mind, seemed to him self-evident when he inspected each separately. And yet they are plainly inconsistent with each other, so that, in one case at least an ethical principle which is in fact false must be appearing to be necessarily true. All that I can say in the matter is that Pure Egoism, *i.e.*, the doctrine that I ought not to desire to any degree as an end the occurrence of good states of mind in anyone but myself, seems plainly false; whilst Universalism does not seem plainly true. It does seem to me conceivable, though not self-evident, that I ought to desire *more strongly* the occurrence of a good state of mind in myself than the occurrence of an equally good state of mind in anyone else; whilst it seems self-evident that I ought to desire *to some degree* its occurrence anywhere. Sidgwick seems to

have ignored the fact that, in considering the rightness or wrongness of a desire for a certain object, we have to consider, not only whether it is or is not appropriate to desire this object at all, but also what degree of desire it is appropriate to feel for this object if it be appropriate to desire it at all. It is fitting to desire the pleasures of the table, and it is fitting to desire the beatific vision; but it is not fitting to desire the former as intensely as the latter.

I will now leave Egoism, and make a few remarks on Universalism in general and Universalistic Hedonism in particular. Let us begin by considering what can be meant by the total nett happiness (*a*) of an individual, and (*b*) of a collection of individuals. We might compare pleasantness with the sensible quality of whiteness, and unpleasantness with the sensible quality of blackness. Now any shade that is not purely white or purely black may be called "grey". The greys can be arranged in an order from pure black, as one limit, to pure white, as the other limit. This series can be divided into three parts, viz.: (i) the greys that are more like pure black than pure white; (ii) those which are more like pure white than pure black; and (iii) that which is as like black as white. These might be called respectively "the blackish-greys", "the whitish-greys", and "the neutral grey". To say that a certain man is on the whole happy at a certain moment may be compared to saying that a certain area is pure white or whitish-grey at a certain time. The same analogy would hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for the statement that he was on the whole unhappy or in a neutral condition at a certain moment. Suppose there were $n-1$ just distinguishable black-greys, and $n-1$ just distinguishable white-greys, then we might

assign ordinal numbers to each member of the series from pure black to pure white inclusive, as follows:—

$$-n, -n+1, \dots -1, 0, 1, \dots n-1, n.$$

Exactly the same could be done with the pleasure-pain series. Next we must notice that the same shade of grey could be present in various different intensities, and the same seems to be true of any given pleasure-pain quality. If there is a series of just distinguishable intensities from zero upwards, we could assign ordinal numbers to the members of this series. These would all be positive, as follows:—

$$0, 1, \dots m, \dots$$

Now an area might have a certain shade of grey of a certain intensity for a certain time and then change in intensity or shade. We could divide its history into successive slices so short that the intensity and shade of greyness were sensibly constant throughout any such period. The same would be true, *mutatis mutandis*, of a mind and its history. Suppose that the whole history of the area can be divided up into l such successive slices of duration $t_1, t_2, \dots t_l$ respectively. Throughout a typical one t_r of these, let it have a greyness whose ordinal number is n_r and whose intensity has the ordinal number m_r . Take the product $m_r n_r t_r$. This will be positive if n_r be positive, negative if n_r be negative, and zero if n_r be zero; i.e., if the area be whitish-grey throughout the period t_r this product will be positive, if it be blackish-grey the product will be negative, and if it be neutral grey the product will be zero. All this can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the history of a mind. In this case m_r will represent the intensity, and n_r the

position of the pleasure-pain quality in its scale, of the phase of experience which occupies the short period t_r in the history of this mind. We now take the algebraical sum of all such products as $m_r n_r t_r$; i.e., the sum

$$m_1 n_1 t_1 + m_2 n_2 t_2 + \dots m_r n_r t_r + \dots m_1 n_1 t_1,$$

which might conveniently be written as

$$\sum_{r=1}^{r=1} m_r n_r t_r.$$

Now this sum of products might be either positive, zero, or negative. If it be positive we should say that the area had been "on the whole white" throughout its history; if it were negative we should say that the area had been "on the whole black" throughout its history. In the case of a mind we should say that it had been "on the whole happy" if the sum were positive, and "on the whole unhappy" if the sum were negative. And, the greater the numerical value of the sum, the "more happy" or the "more unhappy", according to whether it be positive or negative, do we say that this life has on the whole been.

So far we have confined ourselves to a single grey area or a single mind. In such cases the addition of the products does correspond to something that actually takes place, viz., the adjunction of successive phases to each other in the history of the area or of the mind. But the Utilitarian cannot confine himself to a single mind; he has to consider what he calls "the total happiness of a collection of minds". Now this is an extremely odd notion. It is plain that a collection cannot literally be happy or unhappy. The oddity is clearly illustrated if we continue to use the analogy of greyness. Suppose that a number of different areas, which are not adjoined to each other, all go through

successive phases of greyness. What could we possibly mean by "the total whiteness of this collection of areas"? What the Utilitarian in fact does is this. He first makes a sum of products, in the way described, for the whole history of each mind; he then adds all these sums together. He thus forms a double sum which might be denoted by

$$\sum_{s=1}^{s=N} h_s$$

where h_s is the sum of products for a typical mind M_s , and there are N minds, $M_1, M_2, \dots M_s, \dots M_N$, to be considered. If this double sum is positive he says that this collection of minds "has a positive balance of happiness", and the greater its numerical value the greater is the balance of happiness which he ascribes to the collection.

It will at least enable us to avoid verbal difficulties if we adopt a suggestion of M'Taggart's and talk of the total happiness *in* a collection rather than the total happiness *of* a collection. We shall say then that this double sum represents the total balance of happiness *in* the collection of minds $M_1 \dots M_N$. Even so it is extremely difficult to see that the *arithmetical* addition of one *number* h_s to another represents any kind of adjunction *in rerum naturâ*. However this may be, the command which the Pure Utilitarian gives us is to maximise this double sum so far as we can. This, he tells us, is the whole duty of man.

Now I have three comments to make. (i) Among the things which we can to some extent influence by our actions is the number of minds which shall exist, or, to be more cautious, which shall be embodied at a given time. It would be possible to increase the total amount of happiness in a community by increasing the numbers of that community

even though one thereby reduced the total happiness of each member of it. If Utilitarianism be true it would be one's duty to try to increase the numbers of a community, even though one reduced the average total happiness of the members, so long as the total happiness in the community would be in the least increased. It seems perfectly plain to me that this kind of action, so far from being a duty, would quite certainly be wrong.

(ii) Given a fixed collection of minds, the existence of a given amount of happiness in this collection would be compatible with many different ways of distributing it among the individual members. The collection composed of A and B might have in it a certain amount of happiness, and this sum might be made up either through A and B being both moderately happy, or through A being rather happy and B rather miserable, or by A being intensely happy and B intensely miserable. Now a purely teleological Utilitarian would have to hold that an action of mine would be right provided it increased the total happiness in the community as much as any other action open to me at the time would do, and that the way in which I distributed this extra dose of happiness among the members of the community was a matter of complete indifference. I do not know that this form of Utilitarianism has been held by anyone; it is certainly not the form which Bentham or Sidgwick held. Both consider it self-evident that it can never be right *arbitrarily*, i.e., without being able to assign some ground other than the numerical difference of A and B, to treat A more or less favourably than B in the distribution of happiness. This, however, does not carry us far. We want to know what differences between A and B are, and what are not, proper grounds for giving one more

and the other less of a certain extra dose of happiness. It seems to me that, for a pure Utilitarian, one and only one consideration would be relevant. If and only if giving a larger share of this extra dose of happiness to A than to B would tend to increase the total happiness in the community in future more than giving an equal share to A and B would do, it is right to give A a larger share than B. A, e.g., might be the kind of man who would work harder and produce more consumable goods if he were made happier, whilst B might not. This kind of difference, and this only, would be relevant. In fact the only legitimate ground for preferring one distribution to another should be the greater fecundity of that distribution. Now, an extremely unequal distribution might have much greater fecundity than a more equal one; and this is the justification which has commonly been given for social arrangements in which most people are rather poor and a few people are very rich. Yet it seems clear that, although this greater fecundity is relevant, it is not the *only* relevant factor. A very unequal distribution does seem to be *ipso facto* somewhat objectionable, though it may be right to put up with this evil for the sake of the advantage of greater fecundity. Nor is this all. It might be that a distribution which gave more happiness to A than to B, and a distribution which gave more to B than to A, would each have more fecundity than one which gave them an equal share. If so, the Utilitarian presumably ought to reject the equal distribution and accept *one* of the unequal distributions. But on what principles is he to decide between two unequal distributions, of equal fecundity, one of which favours A at the expense of B whilst the other favours B at the expense of A? Either his choice is a matter of complete indifference, or

some other factor beside fecundity must be ethically relevant.

(iii) The third point which I have to make is this. We have said that you cannot literally talk of the happiness of a community, but only of the happiness *in* it. This, however, does not seem to me to be true of goodness. It seems to me that you can quite literally talk of the goodness or badness of a community, as well as of the goodness or badness *in* it. No doubt the former depends on the latter. If there were no goodness in a community the community would not be good. The goodness of a community depends in part on the distribution of the goodness which is in it among its members; and of two communities, both of which have the same amount of goodness in them, one may be better than the other because in it this amount of goodness is more fittingly distributed. This would be true even if the only goodness in a community were happiness, as the Hedonist holds. The fact is that any collection of minds worth calling a "community", is a highly complex spiritual substance with a character of its own. It is not a mind, though it is composed of interrelated minds; and it is not an organism, though the analogy of organisms may at times be useful. No doubt many expressions which we commonly use both of individuals and communities are used metaphorically in the latter application. When I say: "What Bloomsbury thinks to-day, King's College, Cambridge, thinks to-morrow," I am no doubt using "thinks" in a metaphorical and definable sense; whilst I am using it in its literal and indefinable sense if I say: "What Mr. Keynes thinks to-day Mr. Lloyd George thinks he thinks to-morrow." But I see no reason to believe that this is so with the terms "good" and "bad". There are indeed good qualities which can

belong to individuals and not to communities, and there are other good qualities which can belong to communities and not to individuals; but, so far as I can see, "good" means precisely the same in both applications.

It remains only to say something about Sidgwick's suggestion that it might be reasonable to postulate the existence of a powerful and benevolent God who will make up to us those sacrifices of our own happiness which we make here and now at the dictate of the *Principle of Rational Benevolence*. It is surely quite plain that no such postulate would free ethics from the theoretical inconsistency which Sidgwick finds in it. There are two principles which are logically inconsistent with each other, and, on reflexion each seems to Sidgwick equally self-evident. No God, however powerful and however benevolent, can alter the fact that these two principles are logically incompatible and that therefore something which seemed self-evident to Sidgwick must in fact have been false. The postulate that, in the long run, I shall lose nothing by acting in accordance with the *Principle of Rational Benevolence* would, no doubt, provide me with an additional motive for acting in accordance with it when, apart from this postulate, the apparently equally self-evident principle of Egoism would dictate a different course of action. Thus, the only function of the postulate would be to make it a matter of practical indifference whether I acted in accordance with one or other of two principles, one of which must be false and both of which seem true. This would be a comfort; but it is difficult to suppose that this is an adequate ground for making the postulate.

Sidgwick seems to think that the making of such a postulate might be admitted to be reasonable if it be

admitted that it is reasonable to make postulates on similar grounds in other departments of experience, *e.g.*, in natural science. Now a postulate is a proposition having the following characteristics. (i) It is neither intuitively nor demonstratively necessary and neither intuitively nor demonstratively impossible; (ii) it can neither be proved nor disproved by experience and problematic induction; and (iii) to act as if it were true will have better consequences than to act as if it were false or doubtful. These "better consequences" may be either (a) increase of knowledge and theoretical coherence, or (b) increase of happiness, virtue, practical efficiency, and so on. In the first case we talk of a *theoretical*, and, in the second, of a *practical*, postulate. Now compare and contrast Sidgwick's postulate of a benevolent and powerful God, who will make up to us the happiness which we have sacrificed in acting benevolently, with the scientific postulate that, if two apparently similar things behave differently in apparently similar situations, there must be some difference in the things or the situations which will bring the difference in behaviour under a general law. It is plain that, if we act on the scientific postulate we shall look for such differences; whilst, if we act as if the postulate were false or doubtful, we shall very soon give up looking for them. Now, if we look for them, we may find them and thus increase our knowledge; whilst, if we do not look for them, we certainly shall not find them. The justification for making the scientific postulate is thus plain. We have already seen that Sidgwick's postulate cannot be justified as a means of increasing our knowledge or introducing more coherence into our beliefs. It leaves the theoretical incoherence where it was, except that it adds the difficulty of why the benevolent and powerful

being should allow a false moral principle to seem as necessarily true as a true one. If it is to be justified at all, it must be justified as a practical postulate. Since science does not make practical postulates, the analogy of science is not here directly relevant. Sidgwick's postulate must be justified, if at all, by the fact that to act as if it were true will increase our practical efficiency and our comfort. The conscientious man who finds the Principles of Egoism and of Rational Benevolence equally self-evident will be saved from the discomfort and hesitation which would arise when the two principles seemed to dictate different courses of action, provided he makes this postulate. But I am very much afraid that he would be saved from discomfort and hesitation *only* if he had *other grounds* for believing in the existence of a benevolent and powerful being, such as Sidgwick postulates, or if he could forget that he was merely postulating the existence of this being. You would not get much comfort from postulating the existence of God so long as you remembered that you were postulating it only in order to give yourself comfort. But of course it is psychologically possible to forget such inconvenient facts with a little practice, and then the postulate might increase the comfort and efficiency of a conscientious man whose ethical intuitions conflicted in the special way in which Sidgwick's did.

But, even so, one perplexity would remain. A conscientious man would wish to act, not only *in accordance with* a right principle, but *from* a right principle. Now it results from the postulate that he will be acting in accordance with a right principle whether he acts from Egoism or Benevolence; for the postulate ensures that any action which is in accordance with either will be in accord-

ance with both. But, if the agent acts on principle at all, he must be acting either on the egoistic or the benevolent principle. In one case he will be acting from a right principle and in the other from a wrong principle; but, postulate or no postulate, he will never be able to know which is the right and which is the wrong one.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion : Sketch of the Main Problems of Ethics

I HAVE now fulfilled to the best of my ability my undertaking to expound and criticize the ethical theories of Spinoza, Butler, Hume, Kant, and Sidgwick. I propose to end my book by giving a sketch of what seem to me to be the main problems of ethics, illustrated by reference to the writers whose works we have been studying.

(1) ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL CHARACTERISTICS. I propose to give the name "ethical characteristics" to whatever characteristics are denoted by the words "good", "bad", "right", "wrong", "ought", and "duty", and by any other words which are plainly mere synonyms for some word in this list. Now the first and most fundamental problem of pure ethics is whether these characteristics are unique and peculiar, in the sense that they cannot be analysed *without remainder* in terms of non-ethical characteristics. Even if this were so, it would not follow that all of them were unanalysable and consequently indefinable. It might still be possible to analyse and define some of them in terms of one or more of the others either with or without non-ethical characteristics.

Those theories which hold that ethical characteristics *can* be analysed without remainder into non-ethical ones may be called (1, 1) *Naturalistic Theories*; those which hold that they cannot may be called (1, 2) *Non-Naturalistic Theories*. Hume and Spinoza definitely hold naturalistic

views. Sidgwick is definitely non-naturalistic about "right" and "ought". His discussion about "good" is so complicated that it is difficult to be sure whether he comes to a naturalistic or a non-naturalistic conclusion. But the impression which I get is that, after offering a very complicated naturalistic analysis in terms of desire, he finally admits that it is not adequate. With many writers it is extremely hard to be certain whether they are naturalists or not. It is very common to find that the following two propositions are not clearly distinguished from each other, viz.: (a) "The ethical characteristic E *synthetically entails* and is entailed by the non-ethical characteristics N_1, N_2, \dots "; and (b) "The ethical characteristic E is *analysable without remainder* into the conjunction of the non-ethical characteristics N_1, N_2, \dots ". Many moralists are liable to think that they believe (b) when they really only believe, or only have produced reasons for believing (a). Non-naturalistic theories can, and generally do, accept some propositions of the first kind. E.g., Sidgwick holds that all happiness is good and that nothing is good but happiness. But he denies that to be good can be analysed into containing a positive balance of happiness. Butler's distinction between the psychological power and the moral authority of conscience make it fairly clear that he was not a naturalist. Kant has been accused of naturalism by Moore in his *Principia Ethica*, but it is not at all clear to me that the accusation is well-founded. No doubt Kant says that what I, as an empirical self, *ought* to do is what I, as a purely rational noumenal self, *necessarily would* do. But it is not clear that he means this to be an analysis of the term "ought". Mill presumably meant to be a naturalistic hedonist. But it is difficult to be sure in the case of such an extremely confused

writer that he really was one. We will now say something about the subdivisions of Naturalistic ethical theories.

(I, 1) *Naturalistic Theories*. These have taken many different forms, according to what non-ethical characteristics have been supposed to constitute the complete analysis of ethical characteristics. So far as I know, the most important have been the following. (I, 11) *Theological Naturalism*. An example would be Paley's view that "right" means "commanded by God". (I, 12) *Biological, Sociological, or Evolutionary Naturalism*. It is hardly worth while to attempt to separate these, as those who have held any of them have tended to hold the rest in various proportions. Typical examples are the following. "To be virtuous means to perform the specific activities of the species to which you belong efficiently" (Spinoza). "Better conduct means conduct that comes later in the course of evolution, and is more complex than earlier conduct of the same kind" (Herbert Spencer). "Right action means action which tends to promote the stability and increase the complexity of human society" (many Sociologists). (I, 13) *Psychological Naturalism*. This attempts to define ethical characteristics in terms of certain psychical characteristics such as pleasantness, approval, and so on. Hume's theory is a typical example of it. It is much the most important and plausible form of Naturalism; and the other types, when pressed with objections, often tend to fall back on it. We will therefore consider the various forms which Psychological Naturalism might take.

In the first place it might take the form of (I, 131) *Private*, or (I, 132) *Public Psychological Naturalism*. If, e.g., a man holds that a "right" action means an action which evokes in *him* a certain kind of emotion when *he*

contemplates it, he is a Private Psychological Naturalist. If he holds that a "right" action means one which evokes a certain kind of emotion in all or most men, or in all or most Englishmen, or in all or most Etonians, he is a Public Psychological Naturalist. It is most important not to confuse the distinction between Naturalistic and Non-Naturalistic theories with the distinction between Subjective and Non-Subjective theories. A subjective theory is one which would make all ethical judgments to consist of statements by the speaker about his own mental attitude towards an object at the time of speaking. On this view there is nothing in ethics to discuss, and it would be mere rudeness to question any ethical judgment that anyone might choose to make. Now it is evident that the non-psychological forms of Naturalism are not in the least subjective in this sense. The psychological form *may* be subjective, for it may be private; but it *need* not be, for it may be public. The question whether all or most men or all or most Etonians do feel a certain emotion when they contemplate a certain action is open to discussion and statistical investigation. We have seen that Hume's form of Psychological Naturalism is public. Later on we shall see that there is another distinction, viz., that between *Relational* and *Non-Relational Theories* which is highly relevant to the present point.

Now a Psychological Naturalist might develop his theory in two ways which are *prima facie* quite different. Of course he might use one of these two types of analysis for one ethical characteristic, e.g., goodness, and the other for another ethical characteristic, e.g., rightness. Let us take the concept of intrinsic goodness. A Psychological Naturalist might hold that to be "intrinsically good" means (a) to have a certain psychical *quality*, e.g., pleasantness, or (b) to

be the object of a certain mental *attitude*, e.g., approval. Naturalistic Hedonism is an example of the first type of theory, whilst Hume's doctrine is an example of the second. We might call these two types of theory respectively *Mental Quality Theories* and *Mental Attitude Theories*. On the Mental Quality type of theory the publicity of an ethical characteristic would mean that a certain kind of object produced in all or most observers mental states with a certain kind of quality, e.g., pleasantness. On the Mental Attitude type of theory it would mean that a certain kind of object evokes towards it a certain kind of emotion in all or most observers, e.g., approval. If the suggestion which I threw out in discussing Hedonism in connexion with Sidgwick be true, Hedonism itself will be a form of Mental Attitude theory. For the suggestion was that pleasantness and painfulness are not really qualities of experiences but relational properties of them. It was suggested that "the experience X is pleasant to me" means "I like the experience X for its non-hedonic qualities." On this view the Naturalistic Hedonist asserts that "X is intrinsically good" means that X is an experience which the person who has it likes for its non-hedonic qualities. And publicity, on such a view, would consist in the fact that experiences of certain kinds are liked for their non-hedonic qualities by all or most men who have them.

Now both kinds of Public Psychological Naturalism could be divided up on two different principles. (a) They might be subdivided according to the nature of the group of experiencers used in the definition. The most important division here would be according to whether the mental state was supposed to be caused, or the mental attitude evoked, (i) in all or most human beings, or (ii) in a certain

sub-group of the human race, *e.g.*, the members of a certain society. The first type of theory defines ethical concepts in terms of specific properties of the human mind as such. The second does not. Hume's theory is an example of the former. It would be fair to say that the former type of theory makes morality "natural" (in the sense in which liking sugar is natural), whilst the second makes it more "artificial" (in the sense in which disapproving the combination of a frock-coat and brown boots is artificial). (b) Psychological Naturalism might also be subdivided according to the mental quality or the mental attitude which is used in defining ethical characteristics. Thus the quality might be pleasantness, as the Hedonists hold, or it might be quantity and complexity of experience; and the attitude might be approval or disapproval, as Hume held, or a sublimated form of fear or egoism.

There is another important principle of subdivision among theories of the Psychologically Naturalistic type. Are ethical terms to be defined by reference to the *actual* experiences of *actual* men or groups of men, or to the *hypothetical* experiences which it is supposed that certain *idealised* men or groups of men would have? Very often the Naturalist starts with the first type of theory, and afterwards, when pressed with objections, falls back on the second. He begins, *e.g.*, to talk of the emotions which would be felt by an idealised "impartial observer", whilst admitting that no actual observer is completely impartial. We will call the two types of theory respectively *Factual* and *Ideal* Naturalism. Now Ideal Naturalism is not necessarily inconsistent, for the ideal man or group may be defined in purely non-ethical terms, like the perfect gas and the frictionless fluid. But the Ideal Naturalist is on a very

slippery slope, and he scarcely ever manages to avoid inconsistency. In defining his ideal he nearly always unwittingly introduces some characteristic which is in fact ethical, and thus fails to do what, as a Naturalist, he claims to do, *viz.*, to define ethical characteristics in completely non-ethical terms.

This completes the classification of possible types of Naturalistic Theory. We come now to a very important division of theories about the analysis of ethical concepts, which crosses the division of such theories into Naturalistic and Non-Naturalistic. This is the distinction between *Relational* and *Non-Relational* theories. With regard to any ethical characteristic it may be asked whether it is a pure quality, like *red*; or a pure relation, like *between*; or a relational property, like *loved-by-Jones*. Of course some ethical characteristics might be of one kind and some of another. *E.g.*, it might be held that *good* is a pure quality, whilst *right* is a relation between an action or intention or emotion and an agent, on the one hand, and a situation, on the other. Some people have held, again, that the fundamental ethical notion is, not good and bad, but better and worse. And others have held that "good" means what it would be right for every one to desire.

There is a close connexion between the distinctions of Naturalistic and Non-Naturalistic and Relational and Non-Relational respectively. It seems to be this. (a) Non-Naturalistic theories are compatible with either a relationist or a non-relationist view of ethical characteristics, or with any combination of the two. (b) Any form of Naturalistic theory which defines ethical characteristics in terms of the mental attitude which a certain man, or a certain class of men, or the whole human race, takes towards certain actions

or intentions is plainly relational. For it makes all ethical characteristics into relational properties, like *loved-by-Jones* or *disliked-by-most-Etonians*. Exactly the same remarks apply to the Theological form of Naturalism. (c) The only doubtful case would seem to be the form of Psychological Naturalism, such as Naturalistic Hedonism, which defines ethical characteristics by mental *qualities*, such as pleasantness. It might seem at first sight that this form of Naturalism was non-relational. But, in the first place, as we have seen, it is possible that "pleasant" really means "liked by an experient for its non-hedonic qualities". And, quite apart from this possibility, there is a distinction which must be drawn. If this type of theory defines "good" as *producing* in all or in certain classes of human minds mental states having a certain quality, it is obviously as relational as any other form of Naturalistic theory. But, if it defines "good" as *having* a certain mental quality, then it is not relational. *E.g.*, if a Naturalistic Hedonist defined "good" as productive of pleasant experiences, his theory would be relational even though pleasantness were a pure quality. But, if he defined "good" as pleasant, in the sense in which only an experience can be pleasant, his theory would be non-relational provided that pleasantness is a pure quality.

(2) EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS. The questions which we have discussed so far are purely logical and ontological. They refer simply to the problem: "What is the right analysis of ethical characteristics?" and not at all to the problem: "How do we come to have ideas of ethical characteristics and to believe propositions which involve them, and what mental faculties are involved in doing so?"

We pass now to these epistemological questions. The problem has generally been put in the form: "What part, if any, is played by Reason; and what part, if any, is played by emotion, feeling, and sentiment, in the formation of ethical concepts and the making of ethical judgments?"

I have already pointed out, in connexion with Hume and Sidgwick, that Reason must not be identified with the power of reasoning. It includes three cognitive powers, viz., (a) the power of forming *a priori* concepts, *i.e.*, concepts of characteristics which are not sensibly manifested in any instance and are not composed of characteristics which have separately been sensibly manifested in various instances; (b) the power of recognising that a conjunction of attributes is an instance of a necessary connexion between these attributes, *i.e.*, the power of Intuitive Induction, as Mr. Johnson calls it; and (c) the power of inferring conclusions from premises.

Now no theory of ethics denies that Reason, in the sense of the power of reasoning or inferring, plays a part in the formation of ethical judgments. Take, *e.g.*, even an extreme form of Private Psychological Naturalism. On this view every ethical judgment takes the form: "Whenever I contemplate such an object as X I feel the emotion Y towards it." Now it is clear that reasoning might be needed in making an ethical judgment, even of this kind, in two ways. (i) In order to determine what exactly is the nature of the object which I am contemplating. The total object may be an action done in a certain situation and likely to have certain consequences. And I may need to use reasoning in order to determine exactly what the situation is and what the consequences are likely to be. (ii) In order to generalise my present judgment by Problematic Induction. I may argue that I shall probably feel the same kind of emotion

to similar objects on future occasions. And, on this view of ethics, this means that I infer that all similar objects will probably be good (or bad) in future in the only sense in which the theory allows me to say that this object is good (or bad) now.

This, I think, is the only sense in which any Naturalistic theory can admit that Reason is concerned in ethics. As we have seen, this is definitely asserted by Hume. Now I shall call a theory which does not admit that Reason plays any part in ethics except that of reasoning (2, 1) a *Non-Rationalistic Theory*. We see then that all Naturalistic theories are Non-Rationalistic theories.

(2, 2) A *Rationalistic Theory* would be one that admits that Reason plays some part in ethics beside that of mere reasoning. And it is necessarily a Non-Naturalistic theory. Now the concepts of ethics, even though they were *sui generis*, might conceivably be empirical, like *red* and *between*. Or they might be *a priori*, as I am inclined to think that *cause* and *substance* are. Then again the universal judgments of ethics might be empirical generalisations, like "all grass is green", or intuitively or demonstratively necessary propositions, like "anything that has shape must have size" or "the square-root of 2 cannot be a rational number". It is important to remember that there can be empirical judgments which involve *a priori* concepts, e.g., "friction causes heat"; and that there can be *a priori* judgments which involve empirical concepts, e.g., "there cannot be shape without size". Consequently there are four possible views for a Non-Naturalistic theory to take in this matter, viz., that ethics involves (a) both *a priori* concepts and *a priori* judgments, or (b) *a priori* concepts but no *a priori* judgments, or (c) *a priori* judgments but no *a priori*

concepts, or (d) neither *a priori* concepts nor *a priori* judgments.

We see then that it is logically possible for a Non-Naturalistic theory to be Non-Rationalistic, viz., in case (d). But I must confess that I do not know of any instance of such a theory. We see further that there are three possible forms of Rationalistic theory, viz., (2, 21) *Two-sided Rationalism*; (2, 22) *Rationalism of Concepts with Empiricism of Judgments*; and (2, 23) *Rationalism of Judgments with Empiricism of Concepts*. Of the writers whom we have discussed it is plain that Sidgwick is a Two-sided Rationalist. He holds that the concept of *right* or *ought* is *a priori*, and he holds that we can see that what is pleasant and it only is necessarily good. Moreover, he holds that we can intuit certain necessary propositions about rightness, viz., the various abstract principles about impartiality and distribution which we have considered in the chapter on his ethics. I think it is pretty plain that Kant was also a Two-sided Rationalist. I do not know of instances of the more moderate kinds of Rationalism in ethics, but persons better read than I in the history of the subject might be able to think of some.

So much then for the part played by Reason in ethical cognition. Let us now consider the various views which might be taken about the part played by Emotion or Feeling in ethical cognition. Let us begin with Naturalistic theories. (a) Emotion and feeling play no important cognitive part in any but the psychological form of Naturalism. At most the other forms of Naturalism might hold that pleasant feeling or approving emotion are on the whole more or less trustworthy signs of the presence of the non-psychological characteristics by which these theories define

ethical terms. Thus Spinoza would hold that pleasure is a trustworthy sign, provided it be *Hilaritas* and not mere *Tiillatio*, that one is performing efficiently some action characteristic of one's species, and therefore that one was doing a good action or was in a good state. (b) In Psychological Naturalism feeling or emotion is an essential part of the *content* of ethical judgments. For, on this theory, when I say that so-and-so is good or right what I am asserting is that some person or group of persons does or would experience a certain feeling or emotion in contemplating this object.

Let us now take Non-Naturalistic theories. Here the emotion or feeling is never part of the *content* of an ethical judgment, in the sense that we are asserting that such and such an emotion or feeling would be experienced by such and such people. But it might be the case that the presence of certain kinds of emotion or feeling is a necessary condition for recognising the presence of ethical characteristics, and thus indirectly a necessary condition for making ethical judgments. The occurrence of sensations, *e.g.*, is a necessary condition of our getting the notions of colours and shapes, and therefore is a necessary condition for making judgments such as "this is red" and "that is round". Yet these judgments are not simply assertions about our sensations. Similarly, it might be that we could not have got the notions of *right*, *good*, etc., and therefore could not make such judgments as "this is right" or "that is good", unless we had felt certain emotions in certain situations. And yet these judgments might not be merely assertions about our emotions and feelings.

On the Non-Naturalistic type of theory how do we become aware of ethical characteristics, and how do we

arrive at universal ethical judgments? If ethical concepts be empirical, like the concepts of "red" and "between", we must have been presented with instances which manifest them to us; and we must either abstract them from these instances or construct them from concepts so abstracted. Now it is obvious that these characteristics are not manifested to us by any of our senses. One does not literally see or feel or taste the rightness of right actions or the goodness of good motives. So we should have to postulate some peculiar kind of experience, analogous to sensation, yet different from any of the ordinary sensations. This, I suppose is what the moralists who talked about a "Moral Sense" had, or ought to have had, in mind; though I am afraid they used their terms very loosely. Now it would be natural to try to identify the "sensations" of this so-called "Moral Sense" with certain emotions which we undoubtedly do have, which we call "Feelings of Approbation and Disapprobation". So I think that the most plausible form of the *Moral Sense Theory* would be that ethical concepts are empirical, and that we derive them by abstraction from instances which are presented to us by means of the emotions of Approbation and Disapprobation, in somewhat the same way as that in which we derive our concepts of colours from instances of them presented to us by means of visual sensations. Such a theory, when clearly stated, certainly does not seem very plausible. And this may be a good ground for holding that, if ethical characteristics be *sui generis*, as Non-Naturalistic theories maintain, then the concepts of them must be *a priori* and not empirical.

If our concepts of ethical characteristics be not empirical, they are not abstracted, or constructed from what has been

abstracted, in this way. There will then be no need to postulate a Moral Sense. But we may still suppose that Reason needs certain specific kinds of experience to furnish the *occasions* on which it recognises these characteristics. This would be analogous to the way in which, on the view that the concept of causation is *a priori*, Reason recognises the causal relation on the occasion of experiences of regular sequence, although we do not abstract the notion of causation from such experiences. Now it would be plausible, on this view, to suggest that the emotions of Approbation and Disapprobation furnish the necessary occasions on which Reason recognises ethical characteristics, such as *goodness* and *rightness*. This theory would be a form of *Ethical Intuitionism*. It might be called the *Milder Form of Intuitionism about Ethical Concepts*. Some moralists, however, seem to have held that ethical characteristics are recognised by Reason without any special kind of emotional experience being needed to furnish it with the occasion to form these concepts. It seems to me probable that Kant took this view. It is a logically possible theory, but all analogy seems to be against it. I will call it the *Extreme Form of Intuitionism about Ethical Concepts*.

So much for the different possible views about the formation of ethical concepts. Let us now consider the ways in which we might be supposed to arrive at universal ethical judgments. Such judgments are of two kinds, which I will call *Pure* and *Mixed*. A pure ethical judgment asserts a universal connexion between two ethical characteristics. An example would be: "It is one's *duty* to try to produce the *best* result that is open to one." A mixed ethical judgment asserts a universal connexion between an ethical and a non-ethical characteristic. An example would

be: "Any experience which is *pleasant* is *intrinsically good*." I propose to confine my attention for the present to mixed ethical judgments.

If such judgments be empirical they must be generalisations reached by problematic induction. We observe, *e.g.*, a number of pleasant experiences and find that they are all intrinsically good. And we meet with no cases of pleasant experiences which are not intrinsically good. Then we generalise in the usual way, and conclude that probably all experiences which are pleasant are intrinsically good. In this case of course our judgments, for all we know, may be false even in the actual world, and certainly might have been false in other possible worlds.

If, on the other hand, such judgments be *a priori* the most plausible supposition is that they are reached by intuitive induction. We observe, *e.g.*, a number of instances of lying, and notice that they are all wrong. We then reflect, and see or think we see, a necessary connexion between the non-ethical characteristic of being an intentionally misleading statement and the ethical characteristic of being wrong. If this be so, the judgment would necessarily be true, not merely of the actual world, but of all possible worlds. I will call this view the *Milder Form of Intuitionism about Ethical Universal Judgments*. But some moralists seem to have taken a much more extreme view. They have held that we start with the knowledge of certain universal ethical propositions before meeting with instances of them. We do not first meet with this, that, and the other instance of lying; notice that each is wrong; and then come to see that lying as such is necessarily wrong. We start with a knowledge of the general proposition that lying as such is wrong; and then, meeting with a case of

lying, we argue: "This is an instance of lying, and is therefore wrong." Such a view, again, is logically possible, but all analogy is against it. I will call this type of theory the *Extreme Form of Intuitionism about Ethical Universal Judgments*.

It is important to notice a certain consequence of the distinctions which we have been drawing, because it is not generally recognised. Any ethical theory which professes to state universal connexions between certain ethical and certain non-ethical characteristics can take three different forms, which are often confused with each other. Suppose we take Hedonism as an example. The proposition connecting goodness with pleasantness may be supposed to be (i) analytic, or (ii) synthetic. And, if it be supposed to be synthetic, it may be supposed to be either (a) necessary, or (b) contingent. Thus three quite different forms of Hedonism are logically possible, viz., (1) *Naturalistic Hedonism*, which would assert that to be "intrinsically good" means to contain a balance of pleasure; and (2) *Non-Naturalistic Hedonism*, dividing into (2, 1) *A Priori Hedonism*, which would assert that anything that was intrinsically good would necessarily contain a balance of pleasure, and conversely, and (2, 2) *Empirical Hedonism*; which would assert that everything in the actual world which is intrinsically good *does in fact* contain a balance of pleasure, and conversely. Obviously a precisely similar trichotomy could be made, no matter what was the non-ethical characteristic which is supposed always to accompany and be accompanied by the given ethical characteristic.

Although it is thus logically possible to combine an empirical view of the fundamental universal propositions of ethics with a non-naturalistic and rationalistic view of the

fundamental ethical concepts, I do not think that this alternative has the slightest plausibility. It seems to me that, if Naturalism be false, then it is almost certain both that the fundamental concepts and the fundamental judgments of ethics are *a priori*. This of course is Sidgwick's view. No doubt some people would accept this hypothetical proposition and use it as an argument in favour of Naturalism.

This completes what I have to say about the epistemological problems which can be raised in connexion with ethics.

(3) QUESTIONS ABOUT VOLITION AND MOTIVES. A good deal of purely psychological discussion on this subject has always been undertaken by moralists. Theories about motives may first be divided into (3, 1) *Egoistic* and (3, 2) *Non-Egoistic*. Psychological Egoism is the doctrine that nothing can move a man to action or decision except his own present experiences and his expectations of his own future experiences. Egoistic theories may be divided into (3, 11) *Hedonistic* and (3, 12) *Non-Hedonistic*. The former assert that one's only springs of action are one's present pleasures and pains or the expectation of one's future pleasures and pains. This is the theory which we have discussed in connexion with Sidgwick under the name of *Psychological Hedonism*. As we have seen, Butler, Hume, and Sidgwick agree in rejecting Psychological Egoism and therefore Psychological Hedonism. Spinoza was a Psychological Egoist. Kant appears to have thought that all desires other than the desire to act in accordance with the moral law could be reduced to the desire for one's own happiness. I should say that T. H. Green was a Psychological Egoist of the non-hedonistic type; *i.e.*, he appears to hold that the only prospect that could move me is the

prospect of some future state of myself, but he does not hold that this state must be conceived as pleasant or painful in order to attract or repel me.

There has been a great controversy as to whether "Reason" can ever furnish a motive for action. Hume, e.g., makes a point of denying that it can, whilst Butler and Kant and Sidgwick take the opposite view. The problem is very badly stated. In the first place there are the ambiguities in the word "Reason" which we have pointed out in dealing with the function of Reason in ethical cognition. Then again moralists have been liable to confuse the two quite different questions of Reason as a faculty used in moral cognition and Reason as supplying a motive to moral action. They seem often to have thought that an affirmative or negative answer to one of these questions entailed an affirmative or negative answer respectively to the other. The real question is this: "Does the recognition by Reason that a certain proposed course of action is right or wrong by itself stir a desire for doing or avoiding it?" Is there in human and other rational beings, among their other conative tendencies, also the tendency to seek what is believed to be right, as such, and to avoid what is believed to be wrong, as such? Or must the contemplation of the proposed course of action always stir some other conative tendency if it is to excite desire or aversion? The answer seems to be that there almost certainly is this peculiar conative tendency in human beings. But this fact has to be established simply by introspective analysis. It cannot be inferred from the fact that Reason is needed for the cognitive function of forming the ideas of ethical characteristics and of making universal ethical judgments. There is one actual example of a philosopher who

admitted that some of the principles of morality are intuitively certain propositions recognised by Reason, and yet held that we should have no motive for acting in accordance with them when such action would conflict with our happiness in this world unless we believed that God had attached sufficient rewards and punishments to obedience and disobedience to make obedience worth our while. This philosopher was Locke, who thus combined a non-naturalistic and rationalistic view about the nature of ethical characteristics and about ethical cognition with Psychological Hedonism about human volition and action.

At this point there are seven questions that can be raised. (a) Is there such a desire as the desire to do what is believed to be right, as such, at all? (b) If so, is it ever *sufficient* by itself to determine our actions, or does it always need the *support* of some other motive, such as desire to be thought well of by others? (c) Does it ever suffice to determine our actions in *opposition* to all other motives that are acting at the time? (d) Is there any sense, and, if so what is it, in which we can say that this desire *always could have* overcome all opposing motives, even though in fact it did not do so? It is here that the metaphysical problem of Determinism and Indeterminism begins to be relevant to ethics. (e) Is it essential for the validity of moral judgments that (d) should be answered in the affirmative? And, if it be relevant to the validity of some, but not all, kinds of moral judgment, which are those to which it is relevant? (f) Are *all* actions done with this motive right? And (g) are *only* actions done with this motive right? The last four questions play an essential part in Kant's ethics, and in Sidgwick's discussion of the ethical importance of the controversy between Determinism and Indeterminism.

(4) QUESTIONS ABOUT EMOTIONS AND SENTIMENTS. At this point the question of emotion and feeling in ethics enters again. We have already considered what part, if any, they play in ethical cognition. But in most actions emotion is a middle term between cognition and conation. We contemplate some possibility; and if, and only if, our cognition of it is emotionally toned, we feel desire or aversion for this possibility. The question then is this. Is there any specific emotion connected with the cognition of right and wrong in human beings? And, if so, is it essential that this emotion should be felt if the recognition of right or wrong is to stir desire or aversion? Some moralists have held that there is such a specific emotion. Kant, with his *Achtung*, is a case in point. Others have denied it. And, even if it be admitted to exist, it might be held either (a) that it is an idle accompaniment of the cognition of right or wrong, and that we should desire the former, as such, and feel aversion to the latter, as such, even though this specific emotion were not felt; or (b) that, without the intermediary of the emotion, the cognition of right or wrong would not stir the conative tendency to seek the former and to shun the latter. Kant appears definitely to have taken the former of these alternatives.

(5) HOW FAR CAN ETHICS BE REDUCED TO A SYSTEM? We will suppose henceforth, for the sake of argument, that Naturalism is rejected, and that it is admitted that there are ethical characteristics which cannot be analysed without remainder into non-ethical terms. The following questions can then be raised:

(5, 1) How, if at all, are the various ethical characteristics connected with each other? It is evident that they fall

into two very different classes. On the one hand we have notions like "right", "ought", "duty", etc. We may call these *Concepts of Obligation*. On the other hand we have concepts like "goodness", "merit", etc. These may be called *Concepts of Value*. Now obviously the first thing to do is to clear up these concepts as far as possible; to point out any ambiguities in the uses of the words; and to consider whether there be any analogies in non-ethical matters to these concepts. Thus, *e.g.*, we might point out that "ought" is used in a partly different sense when we say that we ought or ought not to *act* in a certain way in a certain situation, and when we say that certain kinds of emotion ought or ought not to be *felt* in certain situations. The first sense of "ought" implies "could"; the second does not. I have gone into this question in connexion with Sidgwick. Then again we should have to point out the difference between "good-as-means" and "good-as-end", and so on. Also we should have to consider the analogy or lack of analogy between, *e.g.*, moral and logical obligation, *i.e.*, the kind of obligation which is expressed when we say: "If you accept so-and-so you ought not to reject so-and-so which is logically entailed by it." And we should have to consider the analogy or lack of analogy between, *e.g.*, moral and æsthetic value.

Now, when this process of clearing up ambiguities and considering analogies has been completed, we can begin to consider the connexion or lack of connexion between the two types of ethical characteristic. The first possibility (5, 11) is that Moral Obligation and Moral Value have no special connexion with each other. This has hardly ever been held. If we reject it we have (5, 12) theories which hold that there is some special connexion between the two.

Now such theories might take the following forms. (5, 121) The concepts of obligation are fundamental and the concepts of value are definable in terms of them. Thus it might be held that the notion of *fittingness* is fundamental, and that "X is intrinsically good" means that it is fitting for every rational being to desire X. Such theories might be called *Deontological*. (5, 122) The concepts of value are fundamental, and the concepts of obligation are definable in terms of them. Such theories may be called *Teleological*. *E.g.*, it might be held that "X is a right action" means that X is likely to produce at least as good consequences as any action open to the agent at the time. Utilitarianism, in some of its forms, would be an example of this. But Sidgwick, though a Utilitarian, definitely rejects the view that "right" means "conducive to good". (5, 123) Neither concept might be definable in terms of the other, but there might be synthetic and necessary connexions between them. Many people who would deny that the proposition "I ought to do X" means that X will probably have the best consequences of all actions open to me at the time, would yet hold it to be self-evident that I ought to do the action which will probably have the best consequences of those open to me at the time.

Of course, whichever of these alternatives we might take, there would be a number of possible varieties of that alternative. *E.g.*, granted that the rightness of an action is connected in *some* way with the goodness of its consequences, we should have to ask whether it depends (a) on the actual goodness of the actual consequences, or (b) on the actual goodness of the probable consequences, or (c) on the probable goodness of the actual consequences, or (d) on the probable goodness of the probable consequences. And, however we might answer these questions, there would be

another fundamental question to be raised, viz., whether the rightness of actions which would produce an equal amount of good could be different according to whether this good would exist only in the agent, or only in others, or in both the agent and others. Thus the alternatives of *Ethical Egoism*, *Ethical Altruism*, and *Ethical Universalism* would have to be considered at this point. And, in addition it would be necessary to consider the suggestion which I threw out in discussing the relations between the various Methods in Sidgwick. The suggestion, it may be remembered, was that, whilst it is fitting for me to desire the occurrence of intrinsically good states, no matter where they may occur, yet of two equally good states, one in me and one in another mind, it may be fitting for me to desire the occurrence of one with greater intensity than that of the other.

(5, 2) Having considered the relations between concepts of value and concepts of obligation, we now can take each in turn and inquire how much systematic unity there is in each department separately. We begin (5, 21) by raising this question about intrinsic goodness. Is there any non-ethical characteristic which is (a) common, but not peculiar, or (b) peculiar, but not common, or (c) common and peculiar to all things that are intrinsically good? Let us consider the characteristic of pleasantness for example. It might be held (a) that anything that is intrinsically good is pleasant, but that some bad or indifferent things are also pleasant. Or (b) that anything that is pleasant is intrinsically good, but that some unpleasant or indifferent things are also intrinsically good. Or (c) that all that is intrinsically good is pleasant and all that is pleasant is intrinsically good. The last is presumably the minimum which a man must hold in order to count as an Ethical Hedonist. It will be

noted that Ethical Hedonism implies that the characteristic of being an experience is common, but not peculiar, to all things that are intrinsically good. For everything that is pleasant is an experience, though not all experiences are pleasant. It is evident that any theory which holds that there is a non-ethical characteristic which is both common and peculiar to all things that are intrinsically good introduces a much greater unity into this department of ethics than a theory which denies this. Theories like Ethical Hedonism may be called *Monistic Theories of Value*. Theories which hold that there is no non-ethical characteristic common and peculiar to things that are intrinsically good may be called *Pluralistic Theories of Value*.

(5, 22) It is clear that very much the same questions can be raised, and that very much the same alternatives are logically possible, about the universal propositions of Ethics which involve the notions of rightness or duty. Suppose that there are a number of such propositions, such as "Lying is always wrong", "Gratitude is always due to benefactors", and so on. Then the question can be raised: "Are these all logically independent, so that each has to be intuited by a separate act of Rational Intuition? Or is it possible to bring them all under one or a small number of fundamental ethical principles, and to regard each of them as simply stating the application of the primary principle or principles to certain classes of situation. Or again is there some self-evident second-order principle which states some feature common and peculiar to all true propositions of the form: "So and so is right (or wrong)?" The first view seems to have been held by certain extreme supporters of the infallibility of conscience. The second is held by Utilitarians. They would say that the fundamental principle

which is self-evident is that we ought to try to maximise human happiness. More specific principles, such as "Lying is wrong", are derivative from this and the factual proposition that, when all its consequences are taken into account, lying does tend to diminish human happiness. The third view is characteristic of Kant. He thinks he can see that *any* principle of conduct which ought to be accepted and acted upon must have a certain formal characteristic, and that *only* such principles will have this formal characteristic. We may distinguish theories of the second and third kinds from those of the first kind as *Monistic Theories of Obligation*.

I have now given what appears to me to be a fairly adequate sketch of the main problems of Ethics, and of the various kinds of theory which are logically possible about each of them. I may, not unfairly, be asked before ending the book to state my own views on the subject. So far as I have any I will now state them very briefly and dogmatically.

(1) No form of Ethical Naturalism seems to me to be in the least plausible except the psychological form, and I am not acquainted with any definition of ethical concepts in purely psychological terms which seems to me to be satisfactory. I therefore think it very likely, though not absolutely certain, that Ethical Naturalism is false, and that ethical characteristics are *sui generis*. (2) If such terms as *right*, *ought*, *good*, etc., be *sui generis*, I think it almost certain that the concepts of them are *a priori* and not empirical. But I should suppose that Reason would not form concepts of these characteristics unless experience provided it with suitable occasions. And I think that these

occasions may very well be the feeling of emotions of approval and disapproval in certain situations. (3) It seems to me that there are necessary propositions connecting ethical with non-ethical characteristics, and that they can be seen to be necessary by inspection. I believe, *e.g.*, that in any possible world painfulness would *pro tanto* make an experience bad, though the experience might have other qualities and relational properties which made it on the whole good. On the other hand, I do not say that any particular kind of experience, such as toothache, which all human beings find painful, would even tend to be bad in all possible worlds. For it appears to be quite possible that there might be minds who found sensations with this sensible quality exquisitely pleasant. I think that there are also self-evident propositions of the form: "Such and such a type of intention or emotion would necessarily be fitting (or unfitting) to such and such a kind of situation." In any possible world it would be fitting to feel gratitude towards one's benefactors and unfitting to feel pleasure at the undeserved suffering of another. But it does not follow that any propositions about *total rightness* are self-evident. For an action may fit some factors and some phases in a developing situation and be unfitting to others; and its rightness will also depend partly on the intrinsic goodness and badness of its consequences. Here again I do not doubt that Reason needs to meet with concrete instances of fitting or unfitting intentions and emotions before it can rise, by Intuitive Induction, to the insight that *any* such intention or emotion would necessarily be fitting (or unfitting) in *any* such situation. (4) When I introspect and analyse my experiences as carefully as I can I seem to find among my other conative tendencies a standing desire to do what I

believe to be right, as such, and to avoid what I believe to be wrong, as such. Sometimes it overcomes other desires and sometimes it is overcome by them. But, even if it were always overcome, I should still recognise its presence, making right-doing a little easier and pleasanter, and wrong-doing a little harder and less pleasant, than they would otherwise be. (5) I do not, however, find it easy to believe that, even when this desire was *in fact* so weak as to be overcome by others, it *could* have been present in such strength as to have overcome the others, although everything else in the universe up to this time had been exactly as it in fact was. For this seems to conflict with certain fundamental metaphysical propositions which I cannot help thinking to be necessary. (6) I am almost certain that "right" and "ought" cannot be defined in terms of "good". But I am not sure that "X is good" could not be defined as meaning that X is such that it would be a fitting object of desire to any mind which had an adequate idea of its non-ethical characteristics. (7) I think that, in the case of a community of interrelated minds, we must distinguish between the total goodness in the community and the total goodness of the community. The latter depends partly on the former, partly on the way in which the former is distributed among the members of the community, and partly on certain relations between the members. What we ought to try to maximise is the total goodness of the whole community of minds, and it is conceivable that we may sometimes have to put up with less total goodness *in* the community, than might otherwise exist, in order to accomplish this. (8) I do not think that there is any one non-ethical characteristic which is common and peculiar to everything that is intrinsically good. Nor do I think that

all the self-evident principles of ethics can be brought under any one supreme principle. All attempts to do this seem quite plainly to over-simplify the actual situation.

This danger of over-simplification is the note which I should wish most to stress in bringing my book to an end. One lesson at least has been taught us so forcibly by our historical and critical studies in the theory of Ethics that we ought never to forget it in future. This is the extreme complexity of the whole subject of human desire, emotion, and action; and the paradoxical position of man, half animal and half angel, completely at home in none of the mansions of his Father's house, too refined to be comfortable in the stables and too coarse to be at ease in the drawing-room. So long as we bear this lesson in mind we can contemplate with a smile or a sigh the waxing and waning of each cheap and easy solution which is propounded for our admiration as the last word of "science". We know beforehand that it will be inadequate; and that it will try to disguise its inadequacy by ignoring some of the facts, by distorting others, and by that curious inability to distinguish between ingenious fancies and demonstrated truths which seems to be the besetting weakness of the man of purely scientific training when he steps outside his laboratory. And we can amuse ourselves, if our tastes lie in that direction, by noticing which well-worn fallacy or old familiar inadequacy is characteristic of the latest gospel, and whether it is well or ill disguised in its new dress.

It might be retorted that we have gone to the other extreme and made the fact of right action inexplicable. Quite simple people, there is no reason to doubt, often act rightly in quite complicated situations. How could they possibly do so if the problem is so involved as we have

made it out to be? The answer to this objection is to compare right action with playing a ball rightly at tennis or cricket, and to compare the theory of right action to the mechanical and hydrodynamical theory of the action of the racket or bat and the flight of the ball. The good player responds, without explicit analysis or calculation, to a highly complex situation by actions which an observer possessed of superhuman powers of analysis and calculation would deduce as the solution of his equations. We can no more learn to act rightly by appealing to the ethical theory of right action than we can play golf well by appealing to the mathematical theory of the flight of the golf-ball. The interest of ethics is thus almost wholly theoretical, as is the interest of the mathematical theory of golf or of billiards. And yet it may have a certain slight practical application. It may lead us to look out for certain systematic faults which we should not otherwise have suspected; and, once we are on the look out for them, we may learn to correct them. But in the main the old saying is true: *Non in dialectica complacuit Deo saluum facere populum suum*. Not that this is any objection to dialectic. For salvation is not everything; and to try to understand in outline what one solves *ambulando* in detail is quite good fun for those people who like that sort of thing.

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