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·INTRODUCTION

TO

ETHICS,

INCLUDING A

CRITICAL SURVEY OF MORAL SYSTEMS,

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

JOUFFROY.

By WILLIAM H. CHANNING.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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THE lectures, of which a translation is now presented, are the first which Jouffroy, who is professor in the Faculty of Literature at Paris, has published. Induced by an earnest request from those who had attended his previous courses, that his interesting instructions should be preserved in a permanent form, he consented to have his extemporary addresses taken down by a stenographer, and afterwards revised and corrected them. Their design may be best explained by the following extract from the author's preface:—

“It seemed to me that, in the progressive development of my ideas upon the grand problem of human destiny, those upon ethics could most readily be separated from the rest; and I was influenced by this additional consideration, that it was my purpose

before entering upon the science of ethics, to pass in review the various systems which had prevailed in relation to the fundamental principles of morality. This would give me an opportunity to explain my own system, and thus sum up the results of my previous researches.

“Feeling uncertain whether I shall be able to complete my plan, I shall subdivide my series of lectures into several parts, of which each will form a separate work. The *First*, under the title of an *Introduction to Ethics*, will be devoted to a consideration of the fundamental principles of moral science, and will include, beside my own views, a review and criticism of all the important solutions which have been given of these problems. The *Second*, under the title of *Personal Ethics*, will contain a system of the duties which a man owes to himself. The *Third*, under the title of *Actual Ethics*, will explain the principles of conduct by which man should be governed in his relations to things. The *Fourth*, under the title of *Social Ethics*, will embrace the science of rights and duties arising from the various relations in which man stands to man. The *Fifth*, and last, under the title of *Natural Religion*, will have for its sub-

ject the relations of man toward God, and a determination of the duties thence resulting."

These volumes contain a part of the work first mentioned, an "Introduction to Ethics," and consist of a critical review of various ethical systems. Preliminary to this survey is a lecture describing the results already attained by previous investigations, and two other lectures upon the facts of man's moral nature, from which some notion may be formed of Jouffroy's own theory, though it would be premature to discuss it, before a full exposition of it is given in a third volume, soon to be published. All that can now with certainty be said of this system is, that it is based upon scrupulous psychological observation, and therefore that it must contain much to interest and instruct, even if it fails to be an adequate representation of human nature. For though there is an element of the mysterious and infinite, pervading the spirit of man, and influencing all its operations, which no analysis can enable us to comprehend, yet the suggestions of every careful student of consciousness are a most important aid to those who seek self-knowledge. We may feel sure, too, that this theory will be developed with the singularly lucid method which characterizes the other

writings of this philosopher, and expressed in a style so transparent, as often to hide from a superficial eye the profoundness of the thought. Of the ethical system, partially unfolded in these volumes, this, then, is not the occasion to speak.

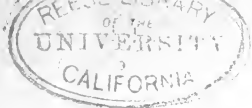
But an expression of the admiration justly due to these lectures, as criticisms, should not be withheld. From the facts of human nature, which he describes, as his point of view, Jouffroy takes a rapid yet comprehensive survey of all ethical systems, distinguishes and classifies them with great discrimination, and then proceeds to discuss, in order, the theories, which seem to him most clearly to manifest the essential principle of their respective classes. It may add new interest to these volumes in the eyes of English scholars, that, in almost every instance, a selection has been made from the works of authors, by the spirit of whose writings the moral atmosphere of England and of our own country is pervaded. The sagacity with which this critic penetrates to the very essence of these systems, and the fairness with which he recognizes their claims to respect, do equal honor to his head and heart. Most readers of these lectures will probably admit, that they had never rightly understood the principles



of Hobbes, of Bentham, of Smith, and of Price, nor comprehended the consequences to which they necessarily tend, until they had seen them illuminated by the analysis of this clear and candid Frenchman. The two lectures upon Spinoza are entitled to especial praise, as well for the lucidness of the descriptions and reasonings, as for the humility with which so deep-read a scholar confesses his inability perfectly to comprehend, and his incompetency to pass judgment upon this most abstract of all systems. To those who believe that every conscientious seeker discovers some elements of truth, while the whole is not revealed even to the largest minded, such an historical review of opinions, as is here given, must be invaluable.

Here this preface might with propriety be closed. But such gross misconceptions, as to the character of modern French philosophy, still prevail among us, notwithstanding the full expositions which have been laid before the public, that it seems unjust to let any opportunity pass unused of making known the true position which the writers of this school occupy. This will now be attempted by simply restating, as briefly and clearly as possible, what has often been said at greater length.

Within little more than half a century, the world has witnessed the rise of three distinct schools of philosophy — the Scottish, the German, and the French. The characteristic principle of the Scottish school, which originated in 1763 with Reid, is a rigorous application of the inductive method to the science of mind. This Locke had previously attempted, but, preoccupied with his theory, that all ideas are derived from sensation and reflection, he made the monstrous oversight of excluding the most vital of all ideas — the first truths, communicated spontaneously by reason. The necessary result of Locke's system was the skepticism of Hume. Appalled by this consequence, Reid was led to detect the fallacy of the modes of investigation, still employed by philosophers, and, discarding hypothesis, to adopt psychological observation as the only true method in intellectual and moral science. By this rule the Scottish school has been scrupulously governed; and though it must be admitted that their observations have been hasty, partial, and confused, and that their inductions have been careless and incomplete, yet the world owes a large debt of gratitude to these writers, for their clear elucidation of the primary importance of psychology.



The German school took its rise from the writings of Kant, in 1781. Kant, like Reid, was impelled to enter upon the profound researches which will immortalize his name, by perceiving that the consequences, which Hume had deduced from the principle, that experience is the only source of ideas, were strictly logical. With powers of reflection far surpassing those of any Scottish writer, he applied himself to the work of analyzing the elements of the human mind; and succeeded in demonstrating, what Reid had assumed, that intuitive reason suggests primary ideas, which, though first recognized on the occasion of some experience, cannot be derived from it, inasmuch as they enter into the very act of the mind, by which this experience is received. By the psychological information, which he communicated, Kant has conferred a lasting benefit upon his race, and substituted spiritualism in place of sensualism forever. But Kant did not stop here. Under the influence of the philosophy of Descartes, the whole energies of his mind were directed towards ascertaining the certainty of human knowledge; and in the solution of this problem he was brought to the adoption of a system of skepticism far deeper than that of Hume's, which he had refuted. His

assertion, that we have no means of proving the existence of objective realities, corresponding to our subjective ideas, determined the movement and character of the German school. The original thinkers, who have succeeded Kant, have turned their attention almost exclusively to logical and ontological questions. A later age may pronounce the methods they have pursued delusive, and distrust the results at which they have arrived; but it will also probably acknowledge, with respect, that these eloquent writers have awakened a new reverence for the human spirit, and communicated to the minds of their own and other lands, fresh vigor, by the freedom of thought, and depth of sentiment, with which their works are inspired.

While the Scottish school has thus been absorbed by psychology, and the German school by ontology and logic, the French school, which is their successor, has imbibed, in some degree, the principles of each, and blended them with a method of its own. It may be said to have commenced, in 1811, with the attempts of Maine de Biran and Royer-Collard to overthrow the systems of sensualism and skepticism, which had so fatally taken possession of the French mind. The efforts of these philosophers

introduced a profounder study of facts, an acquaintance with the writings of the Scottish school, and a stricter application of the inductive method. They began the work of reform. But it is to Victor Cousin that the French school is indebted for the wide celebrity, which it enjoys throughout continental Europe; and for the influence which it is beginning to acquire in England and in this country. The clear analysis, the rigorous inductions, the extensive scholarship, and brilliant eloquence of this admirable lecturer and writer, have secured him a sway over the thoughtful minds of his own nation, which promises to substitute rational faith for unbelief, and generous principles of private and political conduct for the maxims of selfishness. This movement Jouffroy is well fitted to advance, from his habit of patient observation, his liberal spirit, and perfect simplicity of method and of style.

The leading principles of the French school are three.

I. PSYCHOLOGY IS THE BASIS OF PHILOSOPHY. The facts of human nature, recognized by consciousness, are the only foundation for metaphysical or moral science. Neglect of observation leads

to useless hypotheses. Erroneous observation gives rise to systems false in principle and fatal in their consequences. Thorough acquaintance with the fundamental laws of our minds is of indispensable importance. The first qualification of the philosopher, therefore, is the power of profound reflection. Though indebted in part for this principle to Reid and Stewart, the writers of the French school have comprehended it more distinctly, and applied it more strictly, than their teachers, and have arrived at results more definite and complete than theirs. As psychologists, Cousin and Jouffroy have never been surpassed.

II. THE HIGHEST PROBLEMS OF ONTOLOGY MAY BE SOLVED BY INDUCTIONS FROM THE FACTS WHICH PSYCHOLOGY ASCERTAINS. We are not limited to a simple acquaintance with our own consciousness; but by reasoning upon our ideas, and the phenomena which experience brings before us, we may rise to a knowledge of the Infinite Being. Though the influence of the German school may here be recognized, the two methods are, in fact, directly opposite. The Germans begin with the absolute, and descend to man, the French begin with man, and ascend to the absolute. With regard to this principle, it may

he remarked, in relation to Jouffroy, that he has imbibed the caution of the Scottish philosophers, while Cousin, in his bolder generalizations, shows more affinity with the writers of Germany.

III. PSYCHOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY RECIPROCALLY EXPLAIN EACH OTHER. This is the principle, which, being more peculiarly characteristic of the French school, has given the system its distinctive name of *Eclecticism*. The principle is a most simple and rational one, though it has been most strangely misunderstood. Eclecticism means exactly the contrary of a commingling of heterogeneous systems; being intended to designate a discriminating selection of the elements of truth which may be found in each system. It may be thus explained: Philosophical opinions and popular beliefs must correspond to some essential principles of human nature, or else they would never have appeared, nor awakened sympathy. Were the various doctrines, in which men have believed, accurately analyzed, we should have a complete representation of man's spirit. The creeds of men have grown out of some primary law of their minds. There is a portion of truth, then, in every system of opinion and of faith. But how shall we detect

this, and separate it from the errors with which .. is combined? Only by a knowledge of the fundamental faculties and tendencies of our nature. This psychology alone can give. Psychology enables us to recognize in any system the element of our spiritual being which it imbodyes. Thus the facts which we observe in human nature enable us to explain, to criticise, and judge, the theories which the history of philosophy describes. But, on the other hand, our psychology may be defective. How shall we test it? By its adequacy to account for the opinions which men have professed. If we meet with systems which we cannot explain, our observations have been partial, our psychology is incomplete, and we must resume our study of the facts of consciousness.

The following lectures afford a perfect illustration of the manner in which these principles of the French school should be applied.

This hasty description may be sufficient to show that the writers of the French school are, at least, safe guides in philosophical investigations. The love of truth and liberality, which breathe through their works, are the best antidote for whatever errors



they may teach. A familiar acquaintance with them can tend only to make us conscientious observers, strict reasoners, candid critics, and thorough scholars. And now to all fellow-students of philosophy these lectures are presented, with the sincere hope that they may derive from their perusal the instruction and pleasure, which have amply repaid the labor of the translator.

CINCINNATI, *December 23. 1839.*



**CONTENTS**  
**OF**  
**VOLUME FIRST.**

---

**LECTURE I.**

	<b>Page.</b>
<b>OBJECT AND DIVISION OF ETHICAL SCIENCE. . . . .</b>	<b>3</b>

**LECTURE II.**

<b>THE FACTS OF MAN'S MORAL NATURE. . . . .</b>	<b>24</b>
---	-----------

**LECTURE III.**

<b>THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. . . . .</b>	<b>57</b>
--	-----------

**LECTURE IV.**

<b>SYSTEM OF NECESSITY. . . . .</b>	<b>83</b>
-------------------------------------	-----------

**LECTURE V.**

<b>SYSTEM OF MYSTICISM. . . . .</b>	<b>115</b>
-------------------------------------	------------

**LECTURE VI.**

<b>SYSTEM OF PANTHEISM.—SPINOZA. . . . .</b>	<b>145</b>
--	------------

**LECTURE VII.**

<b>THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. . . . .</b>	<b>175</b>
--	------------

XXII CONTENTS OF VOLUME FIRST.

	Page.
LECTURE VIII.	
SYSTEM OF SKEPTICISM. . . . .	200
LECTURE IX.	
REFUTATION OF SKEPTICISM. . . . .	221
LECTURE X.	
THE SKEPTICISM OF THE PRESENT AGE. . . . .	248
LECTURE XI.	
THE SELFISH SYSTEM.—HOBBS. . . . .	279
LECTURE XII.	
THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. . . . .	305

**JOUFFROY.**





# JOUFFROY.

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## LECTURE I.

### OBJECT AND DIVISION OF ETHICAL SCIENCE.

GENTLEMEN,

THE inquiry, to which our attention will be directed during the present course of lectures, forms but one chapter of that more general inquiry, which has been the subject of my instructions from this chair for the last three years. It at once presupposes the preceding courses, and prepares the way for those which are to follow. Before describing, therefore, the precise subject to which our attention will now be particularly directed, it may be well to reconsider the grand problem that for three years past has occupied us; to review briefly such portions of it as we have thus far discussed; and then to set clearly before our minds the part that now presents itself, according to the general plan which we had marked out. This rapid review will not be unprofitable to those who have attended the previous courses, and it will be absolutely necessary for all who have not.

Human destiny, regarded in its threefold aspect,—

as embracing the destiny of individuals, the destiny of communities, and the destiny of the race,—this, gentlemen, is the problem, to the solution of which my instructions have been devoted. When I first presented it to your consideration, I endeavored not only to make you feel how obscure and yet how important a problem it is, but also, by a severe analysis, to resolve it into the several questions which it includes. Having separated and disengaged these elementary problems, I then showed their connection with each other, and the logical order in which they should be discussed. And thus, having settled precisely the divisions of this vast inquiry, and the method to be followed in its pursuit, we began our labors, taking up first the particular question that, according to the plan we had marked out, came first in order.

This question was as follows: *What is the destiny of man in the present life?* The connection between the destiny of a being and his nature, is, as you well know, most intimate. Indeed, the different destinies of different beings are determined wholly by their natures. If all beings had the same nature, their destiny would be the same. It is to the nature of a being, therefore, that we must look, when we would learn his destiny; for it is this which imposes it upon him, and from this it results as necessarily as a consequence from a principle, or an effect from a cause. We have applied this method, dictated as it is by good sense, to man, and, from the examination of his nature, we have inferred his absolute and final end. But, in comparing this final end of man with that to which he actually attains in this life, we have been struck



with a fact, which has proved to us, that, in order to determine what is his end upon earth, we must have regard to something beside his nature. This fact is the difference between the destiny to which man actually here attains, and that which we see traced in plain characters upon his nature. We have easily discovered the cause of this difference. The circumstances amidst which our nature is here placed, are such as to render the completion of our destiny impossible. The destiny of man on earth is determined not only by his nature, therefore, but by his condition also. And, to decide what it must be, we should consider, first, his nature, and then the circumstances of his present being. It has been by examining the resultant, so to speak, of these two combined forces, that we have arrived at a solution—I trust a legitimate one—of the question proposed. The first year of my instructions was devoted exclusively to the solution of this problem, which is the elementary question of moral philosophy.

The second question that occupied our attention was this: *Is the destiny of man wholly accomplished in this life? or did it commence before birth, and will it continue after death?* And no one, before having determined this question, however profound has been his study of the present life, should flatter himself that he has a complete idea of the destiny of man, or even a clear idea of his destiny here. There is but one mode of solving this question, and it is a sure one. It is to see whether human destiny has in this world a true beginning and completion, or whether it is rather a drama, whose prologue and catastrophe

are wanting. It has appeared to us, from examination, that the actual destiny of man in this life is inexplicable, except upon the supposition of a life hereafter; and when we have compared it, such as it now is, with the destiny which seems necessarily to result from his nature, we have been convinced that his destiny is not completed here. Hence our conclusion that another scene of being is absolutely demanded to do his nature justice. We have boldly asserted, therefore, the reality of this future life; and we have anticipated its character, by supposing that it will be especially adapted to the completion of his destiny. Thus have we convinced ourselves of the necessity of a life hereafter, and have decided what the destiny of man in that life will be. The same method applied to the problem of a life preceding the present one, has led us to an opposite result, but one quite as much to be depended on. Indeed, we have satisfied ourselves, that, although the last acts of the drama of human destiny are not to be performed on earth, yet still it had its true commencement here; and that there is no necessity, therefore, for supposing, anterior to birth, a prologue to the present life. Two years were devoted to this important inquiry, which forms one branch of natural religion.

Thus you see, gentlemen, the manner in which the first three years have been occupied, and the result to which we have been led. At the present stage of the inquiry, we have completely solved—according to the measure of our weak intelligence—the general problem of the destiny of man. We have learned that this destiny is divided into two parts,

of which the first is accomplished in this life; while the second is to be completed in one or more future scenes of being. We have learned the exact point to which this work of human development is carried here, and the manner in which it will be completed hereafter; and we have learned, further, the reason why it was necessary that it should begin here, and the necessity for its being completed, having been once begun. In a word, not only have we learned what is the actual destiny of man in this world, but have seen that this destiny—at once so sad, yet happy, so grand, though limited—is to be justified and explained only by a foresight of such a completed destiny as we have been led to contemplate. Here is the precise point in our inquiry at which we have arrived; and we are now to advance yet further.

The question that next presents itself, according to our plan, is this: *The end to which man is destined being known, what should be his conduct under all possible circumstances?* or, in other words, *What are the proper rules of human conduct?* The answer to this question forms the subject of the science of ethics. And the course of lectures of this and several succeeding years will be occupied in giving this answer. A question so vast must require many years for its full consideration.

The relations connecting this question with those which have before occupied our attention, and which we have now reviewed, must be evident to you at once. It would be as absurd to inquire how a being should conduct himself whose end is unknown, as to inquire what is the end of a being whose nature

is unknown. For the same reason, therefore, that man's nature should be determined before we inquire what is his destiny, should the question of his destiny be solved before we consider his duties. The question that we are now to consider becomes, therefore, an appropriate one. And now, having pointed out the relations of this question, and unfolded its meaning, let us proceed to measure its extent and separate its elements, and thence draw out a proper plan for this new inquiry upon which we are about to enter, or, if you please, the chart for our voyage.

But, in the very outset, we meet with a prejudice against the whole science of ethics, which it is neither philosophical nor reasonable to pass by. Upon this prejudice, indeed, are founded the objections of numerous systems to the science; and, if these objections do rest upon good grounds, the science is destroyed, and the object of our present pursuit proved to be an illusion. The ideas of rules and law, of rights and duties, imply the idea of *obligation*; and it is plain, that, if there really is nothing obligatory for man—if the idea of obligation is but a vain imagination, which the breath of philosophy dissipates—then all other ideas resting upon it vanish also, and with them the science of ethics, which presupposes them. To seek for rules and laws for human conduct, is to seek for that which man ought or ought not to do—for that which it is his duty to accomplish and respect—for that which he has a right to require other men to respect. Now, if he is really bound by no duties, and if other men are bound by none in relation to him, then are there no rules, no laws of

human conduct, to be sought; and the object of the science of ethics—the science itself—disappears altogether. It is, then, I repeat, a vital question for the science of ethics, whether there is or is not any thing obligatory for man. Many systems have answered this question in the negative. To describe the different ways by which they have arrived at this common conclusion, would be to anticipate the matter of the subsequent lectures. It is sufficient at present, therefore, to say that there are such systems, and that they have obtained celebrity from the authority of the distinguished men who have been their authors. The mere fact, however, that these systems do call in question the very foundation of those rules for human conduct which we propose to consider, is enough to show that we ought, before entering upon any examination of those rules, first to examine the truth of these systems, and to discuss the grounds of the prejudice on which they are based. We will, therefore, gentlemen, open the present course of lectures with this examination, and not proceed to a consideration of the various branches of human duty, until we have removed this prejudice, and reassured ourselves that there really is a law of human obligation.

Let us, however, pass, for the present, to a view of the natural subdivisions of human duty, assuming for the time that there really is a law of obligation.

It might be said that there is, in truth, but one duty for man, which is, to accomplish his destiny. The destiny of man being known, the rules for his conduct are known also. This is true; but equally true is it, that the relations in which man is placed are so

numerous and complex, that it is not always easy to see how he should conduct in order to accomplish this end. Hence it follows, that although his chief duty does comprise the principles and spirit of all duties, yet it is necessary to set these forth distinctly. To do this requires deep meditation and great sagacity; for the subject is at once extensive and difficult. It is the object of the science of ethics to determine the rules for conduct. It begins with describing the grand relations which man sustains, and then passes on to a consideration of the various branches of duty appropriate to each. Its great divisions correspond to our grand relations, and its subdivisions embrace the rules of human conduct which these different relations impose. The science is complete, when it omits no relation, and describes every branch of duty.

It is long since the common sense of humanity has declared, that man sustains, in this life, four principal relations: the first, to God; the second, to himself; the third, to things, animate and inanimate, which people the creation; the fourth, to his kind. Through all ages, therefore, the inquiry has been, what are the rules for human conduct in these four grand relations; and the science of ethics has been divided into four corresponding branches.

We will preserve this division, because it is legitimate and complete, and it would be in vain to seek a better. Such, then, are the four grand inquiries embraced in the subject of our present course, when taken in its full extent. But it is not enough to indicate merely this general division. We must take a nearer view of the different parts, and settle precisely

the object, extent, and proper name of each. Let us consider, then, successively, these four grand relations which we have stated, and enter into some more detailed description of the branches of ethical science corresponding to them.

#### FIRST RELATION.

#### *Relation of Man to God.*

One element, by which our judgment as to the proper rules for human conduct, in each of the four grand relations, may be determined, is always given; I mean the knowledge of man's true destiny — of his final end. But another element is also given, peculiar to each relation; and that is, the nature of the being to whom man is related, and the nature of the relation which thence results.

In the relation that we are now to consider, we must elevate ourselves to a knowledge of God, and of our relations to him, before we can determine the rules which should direct our conduct towards him. A correct description of these rules will depend, then, not only upon the truth of our conception of man and of his destiny, but also upon the purity of the idea that we form of God, and of our relations to him. Hence arise the diversity and progressive purification of human opinions in relation to this first branch of ethics, which is usually called *natural religion*. The name, however, is an improper one; for it corresponds to only one branch of natural

religion, which, in its full extent, embraces, in addition to this question of our duties towards God, the further questions of God's nature, and of man's future destiny—three problems, perfectly distinct, but usually embraced under one common name. Corresponding in history to this branch of ethics, we find such various modes of worship as have been adopted under different systems of religion. Through all nations and ages, men have endeavored, through positive laws and customs, to express, in a more or less imperfect way, the conception that they had formed of religious duty. Parallel, therefore, to this division of ethical science we have an historical manifestation of man's ideas of it. And to all other divisions we shall find similar historical parallels. We must add, then, to our description of the laws for conduct, which reason announces, a history of the manners and customs by which man has expressed his various conceptions of them.

#### SECOND RELATION.

##### *Relation of Man to Himself.*

The branch of ethics that describes the proper rules of man's conduct towards himself, is called *personal morality*. A thorough knowledge of human nature, and of the external conditions upon which its development depends, when added to the true conception of our destiny, will enable us to decide upon the rules for the right treatment of both body and soul



To refute the opinion of those who deny that there is such a branch of ethics, it is enough to read the works of Epictetus or of Marcus Aurelius; or to suppose a man shut up in solitude in a desert island; or to examine the opinions of those who pretend, on the other hand, that all other branches of moral duty may be resolved into this. Without adopting this last opinion, a little reflection will soon convince us, that no duties can be more important. We find, in different forms of religious observances, and in the ethical systems of philosophers of all ages,—in national laws, especially in those of antiquity,—and, above all, in the manners and customs of all times and lands,—numberless rules, practices, habits, corresponding with this branch of ethics, and expressing, with more or less clearness, the absolute rule of duty which man owes to himself. Such laws and observances, taken together, form the historical parallel to this division of ethical science.

### THIRD RELATION.

#### *Relation of Man to Things.*

Under the name *things*, I include all surrounding creatures, animate or inanimate, organized or unorganized, with the exception only of our own race. I am justified in giving to them all alike this common designation, by the consideration, that, in my opinion, free will and reason are needed to constitute personality; and it is doubtful whether these are any more to

be found in animals, even in those which appear to a certain degree intelligent, than they are in minerals or plants. Will you excuse, then, the use of this expression, which I have adopted for the sake of convenience, and which will not prevent us from making the proper distinction between the different classes of beings represented by it? To form a clear and accurate idea of this branch of ethics, to which no name is particularly assigned, we can suppose the case of a man living alone on an island, like Robinson. We shall thus avoid all questions referring to the right of property, that is to say, to the right of making use of things, *exclusively of other men* — questions properly arising under the relation in which man stands to his fellow man, and wholly distinct from those which are suggested by the relation of individual man to things. In this supposed case of a man alone in the midst of things, you will perceive that there are questions of duty, peculiar to this relation. They are such as these: Have we a right to convert to our own uses the nature of things? Are there limits to this right? What are these limits? Are the limits the same in relation to animals as to things inanimate? The rules which we should form for our own conduct towards things, depend, you will see, upon the solution of these questions; and this solution depends upon our ideas of our own destiny, of the nature of these creatures, their destination and purpose here, and of the relations between ourselves and them. Such is the true object of this branch of ethics; and it is divided into two parts — the rules of our conduct towards *animals*, and the rules of our conduct towards

*things*, properly so called. To these rules correspond, in the various forms of religion, in the customs, and even in the laws of certain people, various practices, which are their historical counterpart, and represent them more or less distinctly.

#### FOURTH RELATION.

#### *Relation of Man to his Kind.*

The relations which may arise between man and man are so various, that the corresponding division of ethical science is much the largest and most complex. And some writers have, in consequence, appropriated the name *ethics* exclusively to the rules of proper conduct between man and man. Subdivisions of these rules, too, have received particular names, and have become the objects of distinct sciences. And again, in the third place, some authors have introduced into the science of ethics, thus understood, researches which make no part of it whatever. The phraseology used in relation to this division of ethical science has thus become confused; and, in order to arrive at precise notions, and consequently at clear and definite expressions, we must analyze with care this grand relation of man to man, and distinguish from each other the different relations, or at least the principal ones which it embraces. This we will now attempt; and I must ask your candid attention.

The particular relations, comprehended under the general relation of man to man, admit of one primary

distinction, founded on the circumstance that some of these relations would exist even were there no such state as society, while others arise wholly out of this state, and presuppose it.

I am far from admitting the idea of that state of nature which some philosophers have dreamed of, who allot to man, as he came first from the hands of his Creator, the life of a solitary animal. All history protests against this fiction; and, so far from representing this condition as the natural state of man, history proves that it has been by a concurrence of remarkable circumstances, and only in a few rare cases, that any individual of the species has lived thus solitary. History does not contradict, however, but rather confirms the opinion that there has existed, at least in some portions of the earth, anterior to the formation of any society, a state which we might well call, for the sake of distinction, *the state of nature*; such a state, for instance, as Abraham and his children are described as living in by the Scriptures. This state differs from the state of society in many important respects, the chief of which I will point out. It is this:—The state of society is adventitious, founded, though it is, on many principles of our nature, while the patriarchal state is necessary; in other words, we cannot conceive of man as existing out of the *family state*, while we can easily conceive of him, and history has often pictured him, as living out of the *social state*, properly so called.

When we consider man as existing in this state of nature, which is a possible one, and has certainly preceded the social state, in some parts of the earth,

and probably in all, we find that there are two relations between man and man, which, equally with the state itself, are independent of the existence of society. These are the relations of man to man as individuals of the same species, and the different relations created by the family tie among its members. From these two kinds of relations arise two branches of duties and of rights—the duties and rights of humanity, and the duties and rights of family. These two branches may be called the *ethics of humanity*, and the *ethics of family*; and, existing, as they do, independent of society, I will call them both by this common name—the *ethics of nature*.

When society is formed, these two anterior relations of man to man, as such, and of the members of families towards each other, are found already existing; but society modifies both. In the bosom of society, individuals who are strangers by blood do not remain in the simple relation of man to man; they enter into that of fellow-citizens of the same state; and the members of a family, too, continue no longer to be simply fathers and sons, husbands and wives, brethren by blood, but they are also citizens together in a social state. Society modifies, therefore, the rules of right conduct between man and man, considered as such, and between the members of a family in all the domestic relations. It modifies these so as best to secure the good of the whole. Now, all these rules, thus modified, extended, multiplied, of whatsoever sort they may be, constitute what may be called *private ethics*, the first branch of *social ethics*, which in itself embraces the rules

for every relation that can exist between the citizens of the same state.

But, independently of such relations as exist previous to the formation of society, and of which it modifies the character, society creates a wholly new relation; it is that of a citizen to the society of which he is a member, or to the power which represents that society. Hence arise the rules of conduct for citizens towards the state, and for the state towards its citizens, which together form *public ethics*, so called, the second branch of *social ethics*.

Here, however, an objection presents itself, that must be removed before we go further. All rules of private and public ethics are evidently established relatively to the constitution of each particular state of society. It would seem, then, at first view, as if they must be wholly dependent upon this constitution, and as if it belonged rather to positive than to natural law to determine them. This would be true if there were not essential properties common to all possible forms of society, which arise out of the very nature of society, independently of the various forms which it may assume, and thus constitute its fundamental elements. These essential conditions give birth to essential social duties, which are natural and absolute, duties anterior and superior to all positive laws, and which it is the very purpose of social enactments to preserve, under every possible form of society. Here, then, we have the natural ethics of society subdivided, as positive social ethics are, into public duties and private duties.

You see, then, that, before we can determine the rules of the natural ethics of society, we must have previously settled two points— 1. The end of all society. 2. The essential conditions of all society. These two questions should occupy our attention, therefore, before we proceed to the examination of the rules of the natural ethics of society. And here let it be remarked, that this whole inquiry is distinct from questions as to the best organization, and the best form of society, or as to the best means of securing the material well-being of society. These are not so much questions of duty as of art. They are the object of the two sciences of politics and political economy, which are quite distinct from ethics; and I should not have alluded to them at all, had not some authors connected them with those which form the proper object of ethical science.

There is one other relation which arises from the general relation of man to man: it is that of societies to societies. The rules for conduct between one society and another are evidently the same with those between one family and another in the state of nature. They constitute what is called the *ethics of nations*, the fifth and last branch of this division of ethical science.

And now, to review our train of thought, we have found that the general relation of man to man divides itself into five kinds of principal relations— 1. The relation of man to man as such, which is the object of the ethics of humanity; 2. That of family, which is the object of the ethics of family; 3. That of fellow-citizens of a social state, which is the object of

private ethics; 4. That of citizens to the state, and of the state to citizens, which is the object of public ethics; 5. That of societies to societies, which is the object of the ethics of nations.

These five grand relations may be subdivided into three classes — 1. Those existing independently of society, which are the object of the ethics of nature: under this division come the first two relations; 2. Those arising from the existence of society, which would be the same were there only one social state: these are the object of social ethics, and include the third and fourth relations; 3. That resulting from the simultaneous existence of several societies, or at least of several families living separately, which is the object of the ethics of nations: this is the fifth and last.

These different branches of ethical science find their parallels in history: to the ethics of nature correspond a multitude of philosophical systems and religious usages; to social ethics, all positive laws; and to the ethics of nations, the customs which have governed the intercourse of nation with nation, in all the different ages of the world.

Such is the ideal of the complete science of ethics, as it has presented itself to the finest minds which have occupied themselves in its study. But as the word *ethics* has not been universally used in so wide a sense, it may be well to make you acquainted with such other and different meanings as have been attached to it.

When we consider the meaning of the epithet *natural*, in the term *natural ethics*, we shall be led to understand by it all rules of conduct resulting from



the nature of things, in all relations whatever to which reason can attain. Hence a very general acceptance of the word, which includes in natural ethics natural religion, personal morality, our duties to things, and all social rights and duties of every kind. But, on the other hand, if we particularly regard the word *ethics*, we may be conducted to two other quite different meanings of the term. Some writers, taking the word *ethics* in its philosophical sense, that is to say, as implying rights correlative to duties, are unwilling to employ the term *natural ethics*, except as designating that portion of the rules for human conduct, which, by imposing a duty on one man, create a corresponding right for another; and they limit its application, therefore, to one part only of the rules for the conduct of man to his kind. Hence a second acceptance of the word, according to which *natural ethics* comprehends neither natural religion, nor personal morality, nor duties to things, and not all the rules of conduct, even, for man to his kind. Others, again, taking the word *ethics* in a yet narrower sense, give the name *natural ethics* only to that part of the rules of human conduct discoverable by the reason which correspond to positive laws. This leads them to a definition much less comprehensive than the former. Hence the third and last acceptance of the term.

For myself, I would say that the use of these words is a matter of indifference, provided a definite signification is attached to them. I like one definition as well as another. But in the present lectures, I adopt the first mentioned, which gives to the term *natural ethics* the widest possible signification. Ethics then,

with me, means the science that treats of all the rules for human conduct in the various relations which I have enumerated. This science it is my wish and purpose to describe. It only remains for me to state the order in which I propose to discuss the different portions of so vast a subject.

I shall begin with personal morality, or the rules for the conduct of man towards himself. I shall then proceed to the rules for man's conduct towards things. Next, I shall pass to those which arise from the relations between man and man, taking up first the ethics of nature, proceeding to the ethics of society, and ending with the ethics of nations. I shall close the whole course with the consideration of natural religion, both because it is the crown of the whole subject, and because, having already directed your attention, during two consecutive years, to one branch of this science, it may be well to pursue it yet further. Of the different parts of this subject you can readily foresee that the third will occupy the most of our time; and it is pleasing to me to think that this part will interest you most deeply. I will do all in my power to reach it as soon as it can be done without sacrificing to your curiosity the interests of the science which I profess to teach in its strictness, and whose purpose it is, not to delight, but to exhibit truth. This sacrifice I can never consent to make.

One word more, gentlemen, before I close this lecture. Let it be well understood that it is no part of my plan to teach the rules for human conduct in detail, as they would be explained in a catechism. This would be an endless work, and would tend rather to

confuse than enlighten your minds. My purpose is very different. I wish rather to establish the principles of these different branches of the law of nature, and to communicate to you, if I may say so, their spirit and substance. For it is far less important to know the literal rule for every possible situation in life, than to have a clear and enlarged view of the general end which we should propose to ourselves; leaving it to conscience to decide what, in view of the great end, the proper course may be in the innumerable relations into which the mutable and uncertain scenes of life may bring us.

## LECTURE II.

## THE FACTS OF MAN'S MORAL NATURE

GENTLEMEN,

WE have seen, in our former lecture, that the object of the science of ethics is the discovery of the rules for human conduct; and that, taken in its widest extent, it embraces all rules, of every kind, which should direct man in the present life. I have pointed out to you the different parts into which it is naturally divided. And, lastly, I have stated what branches of the science I shall pass by for the time, and those which I propose to treat at present, as well as the order in which I shall take them up.

Before entering, however, upon our inquiries, you will remember that there is a question of prejudice, so to speak, which we are to examine and answer. It is as follows:—Is there really any such science as ethics at all? For, as you well know, some philosophical systems have endeavored to prove that there is no law of obligation, and that morality reduces itself to mere counsels of prudence, to be followed or neglected, at our own risk.

Now, as these systems deny the very foundation of ethics, or at least so far alter it as to destroy its

true character and high importance, it has seemed to me necessary, before entering deeply into the science, first to examine the great fact in our nature on which it rests, and to discuss the numerous systems which do thus deny or alter it. Such a discussion, as you will at once see, properly precedes those inquiries which are the object of the course; and, besides, what can be more important than for us to know whether there is, in truth, any law of obligation for human conduct? The consideration of this question as to the law of obligation—a question that has occupied the attention of the most celebrated writers in philosophy, politics, and jurisprudence—carries us, then, you will see, to the very foundation of all duties and rights.

I have hesitated between two ways of proceeding in this discussion. I have questioned whether it would be better for me to explain and refute these systems successively, reserving till the end an exhibition of the facts in human nature which they have altered or misconceived; or whether I should not rather commence with an outline of the facts of human nature, and thence, with the light of these facts before us, pass to a judgment of the different systems which have given an imperfect view of them, sacrificing to clearness whatever greater interest novelty might give to the former mode of criticism.

I have determined to adopt the latter method; for I fear that, with all my efforts to make you comprehend the principles and tendency of each system, I should still fail, unless I had first set before you those facts of our moral nature which are the common foundation on which all systems rest.

I will begin, then, with presenting my own system and I trust you will find it to be an exact exposition of the principal facts of man's moral nature. Having thus given you a distinct outline of these facts, I will then proceed to an examination of the different systems, and, bringing them successively into comparison with the standard of truth, I will attempt to show what facts they have either overlooked or perverted. In this way we shall be enabled to mark their various degrees of deviation; and it will become an easy task to refute their errors.

We will devote this lecture, then, to an exposition of the facts of our moral nature in their leading outlines; and, as this will be little else than a recapitulation of a part of my lectures for the last three years, I shall confine myself to a rapid review of the results at which we have arrived, endeavoring at the same time to state them with such clearness as will enable those who have not attended the previous courses, easily to comprehend them.

Beings are distinguished from each other by their organization. It is this which makes a plant distinct from a mineral, and animals of one species from those of another. Every being has, then, his own peculiar nature; and this nature destines him to a certain end. The destiny of a bee, for example, is different from that of a lion, and a lion's from that of a man, because their natures are different. Every being is organized for a certain end; and, were we fully acquainted with the nature of a being, we might thence infer his destiny. There is, then, an absolute identity between the true good of any being and his

destiny. His highest good is to accomplish his destiny—to attain the end for which he was organized.

As every being has a particular end, which is his highest good, because he is organized in a certain manner, and in virtue of this organization, so there is no being unendowed with such faculties as are fitted to accomplish this end. In fact, since the result of a being's constitution is a certain destiny, nature would contradict herself, if, after having appointed him to accomplish this end, which constitutes his good, she had not also bestowed such faculties as would enable him to attain it. To the eye of reason this seems a necessary truth; and experience is not needed to verify it, though it would be easy at any time to do so, by an examination of the nature of beings, of the end for which they are destined, and of the faculties given to them to accomplish it. Not an exception could be found to this principle.

Man, then, by being gifted with a peculiar organization, has necessarily an end, the accomplishment of which is his true good; and, being thus organized for a certain end, he has necessarily the faculties fitted to accomplish it.

From the moment when an organized being begins to exist, (and this remark is equally true of unorganized beings,) its nature tends to the end for which it is destined. Hence arise within that being impulses, which carry it forward, independently of all reflection and calculation, toward certain particular ends, which, taken collectively, make up its final end. We will

call these instinctive emotions, which, even in reasonable beings, have no character of deliberation, which manifest themselves as soon as the child is born, and develop themselves with his growth, *the primitive tendencies of human nature*. These tendencies are common at once to all mankind, and yet peculiarly proportioned in each individual; and the celebrated Dr. Gall has attempted to determine and enumerate them in an exact manner, by showing how they exist, in different degrees of development, in different individuals, and how they result in the formation of each man's character. These tendencies have attracted the attention, also, of a few philosophers, who, though they have not used them as they might, have still been guided by their knowledge of them in the construction of their systems.

As soon, then, as man exists, his nature aspires, in virtue of his organization, to the end for which he is destined, through impulses carrying him on irresistibly towards it. Later in life, we call these impulses the *passions*.

Contemporaneously with the development of these instinctive tendencies, impelling us to the end which is our true good, the faculties with which God has endowed us, that we may attain it, also begin to act under the influence of these impulses, and thus to seize the objects which they are fitted to grasp. As soon as man exists, there awaken, on the one side, tendencies which manifest his nature, and on the other, faculties given to him for their satisfaction. Such is the commencement and primary source of





human activity; and so long as life lasts do all the various phenomena of human conduct spring from the same origin.

I have, I believe, clearly proved, in the previous courses of lectures, that when these faculties which have been placed in us that we may realize the end to which our impulses aspire, first awaken and unfold into activity, they do so in an indeterminate manner, and without a precise direction.

The cause of the concentration of our faculties for the attainment of their end, which soon takes place, is the fact that, in a life ordered like the present, they meet with obstacles which would otherwise prevent their ever attaining it. I have already shown you that, if this world was made up from the harmonious forces of beings; and if all these forces, instead of opposing one another, were developed peacefully, — it would be enough for a being merely to develop itself to attain its end without effort; but such is not the structure of the present world. We might rather define it as a conflict of various destinies, and consequently of the forces of all beings which compose it.

It is, then, with our nature, as with all other natures, that, in developing itself for the attainment of its end, it meets with obstacles which arrest and impede it. To enable you to comprehend, in a precise manner, the fact which I have now pointed out, I will not enter into detail, but give merely a general outline, selecting, as an example from among our faculties, the understanding, whose office it is to satisfy our instinctive desire of knowledge.

As you well know, the understanding does not

discover at once the truth it seeks. It meets, on the contrary, with difficulty, uncertainty, darkness; in a word, with obstacles of all sorts to impede it. Now, what happens when the understanding, developing itself in its primitive mode of action, fails to grasp the knowledge which it is fitted to acquire? Spontaneously it makes an effort to overcome the obscurity it meets with, and the difficulties which retard it. And this effort is a concentration upon one point of forces before diffused. When the understanding develops itself instinctively, it takes no particular direction, but extends itself in all, raying out, as it were, through all the senses; but every where meeting with various kinds of obscurity, it concentrates itself successively upon them. And this occurs spontaneously—a fact which it is important in a moral point of view to state, because this spontaneous movement is the first manifestation of the power which we possess of directing our faculties, the first sign of free will. Remark, now, that this effort of concentration does not result from our nature, but from our circumstances, and that we feel pain whenever we are obliged to make it. Yes, even now, disciplined and exercised as our faculties are, it is always fatiguing to concentrate attention, perseveringly upon a particular point. It is not, then, their primitive and natural mode of operation, but one to which they are condemned by the condition of humanity. The moment effort is relaxed, human nature returns with pleasure to the indeterminate mode of action which is natural to it, and finds there repose. In human life generally, and especially in the primitive condition of man, where reason has hardly

yet appeared, there is a constant alternation between these two modes of the development of our faculties—the indeterminate or natural, and the concentrated or voluntary.

I limit myself now to a simple statement of this fact, though hereafter I shall draw from it important consequences. There is another fact of equal interest, and it is this: However great may be the efforts made by our faculties to satisfy the primitive tendencies of our nature, and to supply them with the good they crave, yet are they never successful in obtaining more than an incomplete, and; in truth, an exceedingly incomplete satisfaction. Such is the law of life. Man never triumphs over the hard condition here imposed upon him. In the present life, complete satisfaction of our tendencies, perfect good, is never found—a fact as incontestable as those already noticed.

When our faculties, becoming active, strive to find satisfaction for our tendencies, and gain some portion of the good they seek, the phenomenon which we call *pleasure* appears. Privation, or the check that our faculties experience when they are prevented from obtaining what they seek, produces another phenomenon, which we call *pain*. We experience pleasure and pain, because we are not only active, but sensitive. It is owing to this sensitiveness, that our nature rejoices or suffers according to our success or failure in the pursuit of good. We can conceive of a nature which should be active without being sensitive. It would still have an end—a good; tendencies impelling it towards that good; faculties fitted to attain it: it would sometimes be successful, sometimes disap-

pointed; but without sensibility it could never experience pleasure or pain, that is to say, a sensible recognition of good and evil. Such is the true origin and character of pleasure and of pain; and these phenomena are, as you at once see, subordinate to good and evil. I beg you to remark this attentively, for good is too often confounded with pleasure, and evil with pain; but they are widely distinct. Good and evil are success or failure in the pursuit of those ends to which our nature aspires; we could obtain one and suffer the other without pleasure or pain, if we were not sensitive. But being, as we are, sensitive, it is impossible that our nature should not rejoice when it succeeds in attaining its good, and suffer when it fails. This is the law of our constitution. Pleasure, then, is the consequence and the sign of our having reached our good; pain, the consequence and sign of our failure to obtain it. But the pleasure is not the good, and the pain is not the evil.

As every being seeks a good, rejoices when it attains it, suffers when it fails, it must love every thing which can aid in procuring it, and feel an aversion to whatever prevents its acquisition. It is thus that, as our faculties develop, and as we meet with objects which advance or oppose our efforts, we feel for the first time affection and love, aversion and hatred. In this way it is that our tendencies, that is to say, the most important of them—the true passions of human nature—branch out as they advance toward the accomplishment of their end, and become divided into a multitude of particular tendencies, which we also call *passions*. But these are distinguished from our prim-

itive passions by the fact that the latter are developed spontaneously and independently of all external objects, and that they aspire toward their end even before reason has made that end known to us; while the passions which I call *secondary*, are first called forth by the external objects which help or hinder the development of the primitive passions. Whatever assists our tendencies we call *useful*; whatever interferes with them, *injurious*. Such is the origin of the secondary passions, and of the idea of utility. Among our natural tendencies are some, which, like sympathy, have regard to the welfare of our fellow-beings, while others have not, as curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, and ambition, or the desire of power, for example. And although it is true, that in infancy, and before reason makes us acquainted with our nature, all our tendencies are developed without any view to our own good, yet, even then, some among them are adapted to procure mere selfish gratification, while others tend to produce, in addition, the happiness of others. And it is important to be remarked, that even when, at a later period in life, and after reason has begun to act, we are benevolently disposed towards others, it is not owing to the influence of reason alone, but also of our tendencies, that we feel this sympathy, which, independently of all idea of duty and of all calculations of interest, impels us forward to the good of others, as its proper and final end. The principle is personal; but the end to which it spontaneously aspires is the good of others. Thus, even when man is moved by instinct only, he already has the benevolent affections.

The facts which I have thus far presented are peculiar to the primitive state of man — his infancy. When reason appears, two changes take place in this primitive state, from which two other moral states, entirely distinct, arise. Before describing, however, these two states, let us reconsider, in a few words, the constituent elements of the primitive state. I have said, that, in the very commencement of life, certain tendencies develop themselves, and manifest the end for which man is created; that contemporaneously appear certain faculties adapted to aid them in obtaining satisfaction; that the unaided development of these faculties is naturally indeterminate, but that the obstacles which they meet with produce incidentally a concentration, which is the first manifestation, or the earliest stage, of the development of the will. You have seen that human nature, because it is sensitive experiences pleasure when its tendencies are satisfied and pain when they are not; that, further, it feels love for whatever assists, and aversion for whatever prevents, the development of our tendencies; and that thus our primitive passions branch out into a multitude of secondary passions. Such are the elements of the primitive state. The peculiar distinction of this state is the exclusive dominion of passion. Undoubtedly there is, in the fact of the concentration of our faculties, a commencement of self-control, and of the personal direction of our faculties; but this power is as yet blind, and entirely obedient to the passions, which determine necessarily the action and direction of our faculties. It is at this period that reason appears, and frees the will from the exclusive empire of the passions.

Up to the time when it first begins to exercise its influence, the present impulse, and among these impulses the strongest, has carried the will captive, because as yet there can be no foresight of evil consequences. Thus the passion, for the moment active, triumphs over passions which are dormant, and among passions already awakened, the strongest has sway. This is the law of human volition and action in the primitive state. The will already acts, but it is not yet free. We have power over our faculties, but we cannot yet direct them altogether as we choose. Let us now contemplate the change produced when the reason, awakening, leads us out from this condition of infancy.

Reason, in the simplest definition of it, is the faculty of comprehension; and we must be careful not to confound it with the faculty of knowing. Animals acquire knowledge, but we see no signs of their being able to comprehend; and this distinguishes them from men. If they could comprehend, they would be like us, and instead of living as they do now, in the condition in which they are born, they would rise successively, as man does, to the two moral states which reason introduces.

When reason first begins to exert its power, it finds human nature in full development, its tendencies all in play, and its faculties active. In virtue of its nature, that is to say, of its power of comprehension, it enters into the meaning of surrounding phenomena, and it at once comprehends that all these tendencies and faculties are seeking one common end—a final and complete end, which is the satisfaction of our

entire nature. This satisfaction of our nature, which is the sum and resultant of the satisfaction of each separate tendency, is our true end—our real well-being and good. Toward this good all passions of every kind aspire; and it is this good which our nature is impelled, with every unfolding faculty, to seek. Reason comprehends this, and the general idea of good springs up; and although the good, of which we thus acquire the idea, is still a personal good, yet have we made an immense advance from the primitive state when we had no such idea.

The observation and experience of what is constantly passing within us enables reason to comprehend that the complete satisfaction of our nature is impossible, and, consequently, that it is a delusion to expect perfect good; that therefore we ought not, and cannot, aspire to more than the greatest possible good, that is to say, the greatest possible satisfaction of our nature. We rise, then, from the idea of mere good to the idea of the greatest possible good.

Reason immediately comprehends, too, that every thing which can conduct us to our highest good is itself good on that very account, and that every thing which would turn us from it is evil; but it does not confound these two properties of certain objects with good and evil in themselves, that is to say, with the satisfaction or disappointment of our nature. It draws a wide distinction between good in itself and the means proper to produce it; and, generalizing this property common to various objects, it rises to the idea of the *useful*.

Reason does not fail to distinguish also this satis-



faction or disappointment of the tendencies of our nature from the agreeable or disagreeable sensations which accompany them in our sensibility; and perceives that the idea of pleasure is different from those of good and of utility, and the idea of pain from those of evil and of injury; and as it had before acquired the general idea of good and the idea of utility, so now, by combining all agreeable sensations together, does it form the general idea of *happiness*.

Thus these three ideas of good, utility, happiness, are soon deduced, by reason, from the spectacle of our nature in its process of development — ideas which, in all languages, are perfectly distinct, because all languages represent that common sense which is the truest expression of reason. Man has now a key to the secret operations which are passing within him. Heretofore he has lived without comprehending them, but now he has become intelligent; he sees the origin and scope of his passions, the direction, bias, and measure of his faculties; he learns the nature and origin of his love and hatred, the causes of his pleasure and his pain; all becomes plain through the teachings of reason.

But reason does not stop here. It comprehends, too, that, in the condition in which man is actually placed, self-control, or the direction of the faculties and forces of which he is conscious, is the indispensable condition for his attaining the greatest possible satisfaction of his nature.

In fact, so long as our faculties are abandoned to the guidance of passion, they obey the passion which is dominant for the moment; and therein is a twofold

disadvantage. For, first, the passions are so variable and transient, that the sway of one is soon displaced for that of another; there can be, therefore, no progressive or steady action of our faculties, and consequently nothing important is accomplished. And, secondly; a momentary good, gained by the satisfaction of any dominant passion, is often the cause of great evil, while a momentary evil, from not satisfying it, often is a means to great good; so that nothing is less suitable to produce our highest good than the direction of our faculties by our passions. Reason is not slow in discovering this, and of course concludes that, for the attainment of our highest good, it is not well that human will should be any longer a prey to the mechanical forces of passion; it sees, on the contrary, that, instead of being borne on by impulse to the satisfaction of any passion which may for the instant be strongest, it would be better that our faculties should be freed from this servitude, and directed exclusively to the realizing of what is clearly seen to be for the interests of all our passions, that is to say, the highest possible good of our nature. And the more strongly reason conceives of this end, the more satisfied is it that we have the power to effect it. It depends on ourselves to form the estimate of our greatest possible good; reason enables us to do it. Equally does it depend on ourselves to set free our faculties, and to employ them for the fulfilment of this idea of our reason. For we have the power; it has been already manifested, and we have recognized it in the spontaneous effort by which, to gratify a passion, we concentrate upon one point all the faculties of the mind. We have but to

do voluntarily, what we have already done spontaneously, and *free will* is born. The instant that this grand revolution is conceived of, that instant it is accomplished. A new principle of action springs up within us, namely, *self-interest*, well understood — a principle which is not a passion, but an idea, which is not the result of a blind and primitive instinct, but of deliberate and rational reflection — a principle which is not, like the passion, a *momentum*, but a *motive*. Strengthened by this motive, our natural power over our faculties exerts itself, and, directing them by this idea, shakes off the bondage of passion and develops into full vigor. Henceforth human power is free from the vacillating and turbulent empire of passion, and becomes subject to the law of reason; it forms an estimate of the greatest possible satisfaction of our tendencies, that is to say, of our highest good, and pursues self-interest, well understood.

Such is the new moral condition which the action of reason introduces; self-interest, well understood, is substituted for the partial good to which the passions impelled us, as the end; and self-direction is made the means. The exclusive dominion of passion, which characterized the primitive state, is over. A new power has come in between the passions and our faculties, even reason and free will; of which the first points out an end, and the second directs our faculties in its pursuit.

It must not be thought, however, that, after this revolution, the direction of human power in the hands of reason receives no support from passion. The fact is quite otherwise. When reason first perfectly coin-

prehends the inconvenience of yielding to passion, yet more when it conceives the idea of interest well understood, and of the importance of giving it a preference in every case over our passing impulses, then, at that very instant, does our nature, in virtue of its laws, become passionately attached to that system of conduct which appears a good means to attain its end, or, in other words, passionately attached to all that is useful ; it loves this system of conduct, deviates from it only with regret, and feels aversion for all that opposes it. Thus passion comes in aid of the government of human power by interest well understood, and harmonious action ensues between the passionate and rational elements of the soul. Yet is not this coöperation entire ; for the idea of our highest good, as conceived by the reason, does not stifle wholly the instinctive tendencies of our nature ; they still remain active, because they are imperishable, and crave, as before, instant gratification, and strive to employ, for this end, the force of our faculties, and often succeed. The idea of self-interest well understood finds sympathy indeed from our passions ; but it encounters also an opposing host. Human power is, then, far from being completely redeemed from the influence of the passions in the second state. They disturb too often, especially in weak minds, the control of self-interest. In a word, where reason introduces the idea of self-interest, a new moral state, a new mode of self-determination, arises. But it does not steadily take the place of the primitive mode of action. Man oscillates between the two, now resisting impulse and following his interest, now yielding to it a free range ; a new mode of self-

determination is introduced, notwithstanding, into the operations of our spiritual being.

This new moral state and mode of self-determination is, precisely speaking, the *selfish* state. The essence of self-love is the knowledge that, in acting, we are promoting our own peculiar good. But this knowledge we are unconscious of in the primitive state, and the child therefore cannot be called selfish. In him the instinctive tendencies of nature reign supremely, each aspiring to its particular end, as to a final end; the child perceives these ends, loves them, strives to attain them, but he sees no further. It is true, to be sure, that the passions are really tending to the satisfaction of the whole nature; but the child is unconscious of this tendency; he is not, then, selfish, in the true sense of that word. He is innocent as Psyche, loving without knowing what love is. Reason in man is the torch of Psyche. Reason alone can reveal to him the final end of his passions, and thus substitute a rational motive to conduct, for the impulses which before directed him. Reason alone, then, calls forth true self-love; it cannot possibly exist in the primitive state of infancy.

As yet we have not reached the state which peculiarly and truly deserves the name of *moral*. It results from a new discovery made by reason — a discovery which elevates man from the general ideas which belong to the period of self-love, to universal and absolute ideas.

This step the moralists, who base their systems on self-interest, do not take. They stop at self-love. In making it, we cross an immense abyss, which separates

the selfish from the disinterested school of morals. Let us see, then, how this transition from the second state, which I have just described, to the moral state, properly so called, is effected.

There is an illogical arguing in a circle concealed beneath the selfish explanation of human volitions. The selfish system gives the name of *good* to the satisfaction of the tendencies of our nature, and when asked, Why is the satisfaction of these tendencies a good? it answers, Because it is the satisfaction of the tendencies of our nature. It is in vain that, to escape from this vicious circle of reasoning, the selfish system seeks, in the pleasure which accompanies the satisfaction of our tendencies, an explanation of the asserted fact, that this satisfaction and our good are equivalent. Reason finds no more evidence that pleasure is equivalent to good, than that the satisfaction of our nature is; and the reason why this latter is so, remains therefore unexplained. It is this mystery, which, by painfully perplexing us, forces reason to ascend one step higher in moral conceptions. Elevating itself above exclusively personal considerations, it conceives the thought that creatures of all kinds are situated like ourselves; that all having a nature peculiarly their own, aspire, in virtue of this nature, to that particular end which is their highest good; and that each of these separate ends is one element of a complete and final end, which absorbs them all — an end which is that of the creation itself — an end which is universal order. The realization of this end alone, in the view of reason, merits the title of good, fulfilling the idea, and forming an equivalent to it so evident that it needs

no proof. When reason has ascended to this conception, it has reached, for the first time, the idea of *good*. It had previously applied the name in a confused manner to the satisfaction of our nature; but it could neither explain nor justify this use of the name. But now, in the light of this new discovery, the application of the word becomes clear and legitimate. Good — true good — good in itself — absolute good is the realization of the absolute end of the creation — is universal order. The end of each 'element of creation, that is, of each being, is one element of the absolute end. Each being aspires towards this absolute end in seeking its own peculiar end, and this universal aspiration is the universal life of creation. The realization of the end of each being is then an element of the realization of the end of creation, that is to say, of universal order. The good of each being is a fragment of absolute good; and it is on this account that the good of each being is really a good; thence comes its character; and as absolute good is worthy of all reverence, and sacred in the eyes of reason, so the good of each being — the realization of its end — the accomplishment of its destiny — the development of its nature — the satisfaction of its tendencies, which are all identical, become equally sacred and worthy of reverence.

The moment the idea of *order* is conceived, reason feels for it a sympathy so profound, true, immediate, that she prostrates herself before it, recognizes its consecrated and supreme right of control, adores it as a legitimate sovereign, honors it, and submits to it as the natural and eternal law. To violate this law

is an outrage in the view of reason ; to realize order, so far as our weakness is capable of it, is good, is right, is worthy. A new motive of action is made known — a new rule, truly a rule — a new law, truly a law — a motive, rule, and law self legitimated, which are of instant obligation, and need the aid of nothing foreign, of nothing anterior or superior to make them recognized and respected.

To deny that there is any thing sacred, venerable, obligatory for us rational beings, is to assert one of two things — either that human reason cannot elevate itself to the idea of good in itself, of universal order ; or that, after having conceived this idea, reason does not bow to it, nor feel instantly and deeply that it has, for the first time, become acquainted with its true law. But neither of these facts can possibly be misunderstood or questioned.

This idea, this law, gives light and strength, by showing us that the end of each being is an element of universal order ; it communicates to these ends, and to the instinctive tendencies of all beings, a respectable and sacred character, which they had not before. Up to this time we have been impelled to the satisfaction of our tendencies by their impulse, or by the pleasure which follows this satisfaction. Reason had judged this satisfaction to be fit, useful, agreeable. It had estimated the best means of gaining it ; but that it is lawful and good in itself, or that it is our duty to pursue it and our right to attain it, this it was as yet unable to perceive. The right and duty of advancing toward the end, which is our highest good, is not revealed, until we see our end to be an element



of universal order, and our good a fragment of absolute good. Our highest good assumes, then, its character of lawful propriety and absolute goodness; but not our good alone—the good, the end of every creature, equally becomes, to our view, lawful and proper. Heretofore we were able to conceive that all beings had tendencies to be satisfied, and that consequently this was as good for them as for ourselves; and, impelled by sympathy, we could desire instinctively their good, could find pleasure in doing so, and thus include the promotion of their happiness in our calculations of self-love. But that it is good and proper in itself that they should attain this end, and that this good, therefore, ought to appear in some sort venerable and sacred to us,—this reason could not determine or even conceive of. But when the idea of absolute good is once formed, what was unseen before becomes clear, and the good of others appears to us as sacred as our own; or, in other words, equally an element of that which alone is venerable in itself—order. Thus the idea of obligation attaches itself at one and the same time to the attainment of our own and others' good. And we see no longer any difference between the duty of accomplishing our own good, and of aiding other beings to accomplish theirs; both are parts of absolute good; and since this is obligatory in itself, it impresses the character of lawfulness upon them.

All duty, right, obligation, and rules of morality, spring from this one source, the idea of good in itself—the idea of order. Destroy this idea, and no longer is there any thing sacred in itself to the eye

of reason; consequently nothing obligatory, and no moral difference between our various ends and actions; the universe becomes a riddle, and all destiny a mystery. But restore this idea, and the universe and man become at once intelligible; an end appears for all and every creature; a sacred order, which every rational being is bound to respect, and to aid in preserving within and around it, is revealed to us, and with it duties, rights, rules for morals, and a natural code of laws for human conduct. Such are the changes in human nature which follow the conception of order, or good in itself.

But this idea of order, high as it is, is not the final limit of human thought. Reason takes one step higher, and is elevated to the conception of the God who created this universal order, and who has given to every creature its constitution, and consequently its destiny. Thus allied to the Eternal Being, order appears no longer a mere metaphysical abstraction; it becomes the expression of the thought of divinity, and morality exhibits its religious aspect. But even were this not seen, the obligatory nature of duty would still be felt. If, supreme above order, reason had never beheld the Deity, order would have been as sacred; for the relation between reason and the idea of order exists independently of all religious convictions. Only, then, when God appears to us as the very essence and substance of this order, if I may use the expression, as the will which has established it, the intelligence which conceived it, do religious and moral obedience become united in one, and order assume its venerable aspect.

There is yet another phenomenon of our nature to

be noticed. From very infancy, and long before reason, in its development, has risen to the idea of order, we feel a sympathy for all that has the character of beauty, and an antipathy to all that is wanting in this beauty. A profound analysis shows that this presence or absence of beauty is only the expression and material symbol of order or disorder. These two sentiments result, then, only from a confused perception of the idea of order, and are the effect of that deep sympathy which unites all that is elevated in our nature to this grand idea. Later in life, when we have conceived this idea distinctly, we are able perfectly to explain this instinctive sentiment of love for beauty, and of its attractive charm; and beauty is seen by us to be one face of absolute good. So also is it with truth. Truth is order conceived, as beauty is order realized. In other words, absolute truth — the perfect truth, which we imagine in the Deity, and of which we only possess fragments in ourselves — is not, and cannot be, any thing more than the eternal laws of that order which all beings tend to fulfil, and all rational beings are bound voluntarily to advance. As this order, viewed as the end of creation, is absolute good, and, as expressed by the symbol of creation, is beauty, so, considered as a thought in the mind of God or man, it is truth. Good, beauty, and truth, are, then, order under three different aspects; and order itself is the thought, the will, the development, the manifestation of God. But we must not lose ourselves in these lofty views; and we resume our subject.

When we have conceived the idea of order, and of the obligation we are under, so far as in us lies, to

fulfil it, a new mode of self-determination, in addition to the two which have at an earlier period impelled us, appears — *the moral mode*. We may be determined to act, not only by the impulse of passion, as in the primitive state, and by the view of the highest possible satisfaction of these passions, as in the state of self-love; but also by the idea of order, or good in itself, to which reason has attained, and which is seen to be the true law of our conduct. And as soon as this motive begins to sway our actions, a third and wholly distinct mode of self-determination is introduced.

The characteristics of this new mode are widely different from those of passion or of self-love, although it has this in common with the latter, that it can take place only in a rational being. Both modes are thus so plainly distinguished from that of passion that no one can fail to notice it.

As self-love and passion may both impel us to the same acts, so self-love and the moral motive may prescribe to us precisely the same conduct in a multitude of cases; but it is just when they thus do coincide that the differences which distinguish them are most clearly displayed. Self-love counsels, duty commands. The first looks only to the greatest satisfaction of our nature, and remains personal even while prompting us to do good to others; the second regards order alone, and is forgetful of self, even while it prescribes the search of our own good. We obey ourselves in yielding to the former; but in obeying the latter, we submit to something above self, and which has no other character in our eyes but that of being good, or, in other words, a law. In the latter case,

then, there is self-devotion to something not ourselves, while in the first there can be no devotion. The devotion of a being to something not itself, which seems to it good, is precisely what we mean by virtue or moral good; and hence you see that moral good or virtue could never be manifested except in a mind which has attained to the third state, and that it is a phenomenon peculiar to this mode of self-determination. Our acts are moral whenever we obey, voluntarily and consciously, a law as the rule of our conduct, and immoral whenever we disobey it purposely and wilfully. Such are moral good and evil, strictly defined. They are entirely distinct from absolute good and evil, which are order and disorder; and equally distinct from the kinds of good and evil which we call happiness or misery, and which consist in the accomplishment of man's peculiar end, or the fulfilment of order in relation to him.

This difference between the moral mode of self-determination and the two others reappears in the phenomena which follow this act of choice. Among these phenomena is one especially characteristic of the moral state. Whenever we comply with the requisitions of the moral law, independent of all pleasure which sensibility experiences, we judge ourselves worthy of esteem or reward; and, in the opposite case, independent of pain, we condemn ourselves as worthy of blame and punishment. This is called the satisfaction of having done well, and the pain of having done ill, or remorse.

This judgment of merit or demerit necessarily follows every act which has a moral character, whether

good or bad. It does not and cannot follow the two first described modes of volition. When we have acted contrary to well-understood self-interest, we may lament our feebleness and want of skill, or, in the opposite case, may congratulate ourselves on our prudence, wisdom, tact. But these phenomena are quite distinct from moral approbation or disapprobation. No one feels remorse for having failed in securing his interests. It is only when self-interest is united to the idea of order, and when our conduct, by losing a good, seems in so doing to violate this order, that remorse follows imprudence. It is a consequence of this last consideration only, never of the first. I do not condemn, you see, self-interest; on the contrary, I prove that it is lawful as an element of order, and I make it in many cases a duty. But this character it does not possess in itself; it derives it from absolute good. Such are the phenomena which follow a moral action, whether good or evil.

This outline would not be complete without adding two observations, which sum up the whole matter.

To what end do our primitive tendencies, and the passions arising from them, tend? To the true end of our nature, our true good. How is our conduct directed by self-interest well understood? To the fullest possible realization of the tendencies of our nature; that is to say, the most perfect accomplishment of our end or good. What does the law of order, when it finally appears in us, prescribe? A respect for absolute good, or order, and an effort to realize it completely. But our good is an element of absolute

good, of order. The law of absolute order, then, commands the accomplishment of that very good which nature craves and self-love recommends. True, it is not with a view to ourselves, but to universal order, that it commands this; true, it demands not only our own good, but the good of others also. But, on the one hand, our nature loves order, and instinctively seeks the good of others; and, on the other, self-love shows us that the enjoyments of beauty and of benevolence are two chief elements of happiness, and that respect for the interests of others and for order must enter into the calculations of our own private interest. There is, then, no contradiction, but an entire harmony, between the primitive tendencies of our nature, self-interest well understood, and the moral law. These three principles do not impel us in a different, but in the same direction. The moral motive does not enter to destroy the other two, but to explain their object and regulate their course. Indeed, how could man direct himself aright, if he was condemned to the constant conflicts which some philosophers have imagined,—if he was compelled by an obligatory principle, conceived by the reason, to sacrifice continually, in order that he might be virtuous, both the impulses of natural instinct, and the counsels of prudence? None could be virtuous on these conditions. Most true, the end of virtue is distinct from that of self-love and of passion; but these ends are not opposed to each other: they are entirely in accordance; and hence may every virtue find an auxiliary in passion and self-interest. And hence, also, in very many cases,

instinct and self-love impel us to the very course which the moral law requires. Thus is it with the child, and even with the majority of men; and it is through this agreement of passion and self-interest with duty that societies subsist. For, if every act, not performed with direct reference to duty, was, on that account, opposed to the moral law, and at variance with order, communities could not only not endure, but they would never be even established.

We must renounce, then, these false views, and look at things as they are. Reason only modifies man's obedience to his passions and his interest, and in this manner. As reason, under the influence of self-love, makes known to our nature one general end, which includes the various ends of particular passions, and which consequently deserves the preference — thus preventing the former blind obedience of the will to passion; so reason, under the influence of morality, reveals, beyond our private good, an absolute good, which at once comprises this and the good of all other beings also, and which, therefore, is far to be preferred — thus preventing the narrow and exclusive pursuit of our own well-being. And, as the impulse of passion was seen to be of an inferior order, when that of self-interest well understood appeared, so self-interest falls in the scale, when the motive of moral law reveals itself. But, because the moral motive is better than self-love, self-love is not therefore destroyed, any more than passion is rooted out because self-interest is seen to be superior. The desire and pursuit of self-interest still remain after absolute good is made known to us, as the impulse of passion



remains after self-interest is comprehended. When self-love, therefore, cannot see the prospect of private benefit in the course which respect for absolute good demands, as when passion is restrained from seeking its end immediately by the counsels of interest, disagreement enters among the various springs of conduct; and, though we still see what it is best for us to do, we are not always prudent or virtuous enough to do it. Behold what these contests between the three moving springs of conduct amount to! They are, in general, the effect of the blindness of passion, or of the mistakes of self-love; for, in fact, it is most for the interest of passion to sacrifice itself to self-love, and most for the interest of self-love to sacrifice itself to order.

Thus far I have spoken of the three states of the moral nature in man, as if they belonged to three different periods of life—as if they were produced in us successively. But this is not exactly a true description, and some further explanation is needed. First, then, no one of these three modes of determination destroys in its development those previously in operation, but only superadds its influence to them; so that, when once called into action, they henceforth coëxist. And, secondly, as to the order of their appearance, although it is true that the passionate mode does precede, chronologically, the other two, and reigns supreme in infancy, it would still be difficult to prove a like supreme control of the selfish and moral state successively.

Reason first shows itself at an early period; but no one would be bold enough to assert that she

risers at once to that high conception of order, which makes the moral law. Yet more; we all know that, in the larger part of mankind, this conception of the moral law is never distinctly formed at all. We are brought, therefore, to the conclusion, that there is no morality in any man until after a certain age, and that, in the majority of men, there is none at any time. But we must distinguish here a confused from a clear view of the moral law. A confused view of it is contemporaneous with the first appearance of reason: it is one of man's earliest conceptions; but in most persons the conception remains indistinct through life, and never becomes a vivid idea. Conscience, as it is called, is nothing more than this obscure notion of order; and hence, in its effects, it resembles less a conception of the reason than an instinct or a sense. Its judgments have not the appearance of being derived from general principles applied to cases as they arise; but they rather seem to result from a kind of tact, which, in each particular instance, makes it sensible of good and evil. The character of obligation, however, is never, in the phenomena of conscience, affected by the confused nature of our perceptions of good and evil. However confused our views, conscience still points out good as something which we ought to do, and evil as something which we ought to shun; and, when we have obeyed or disobeyed it, we feel as sensibly self-approval or remorse as if we had obeyed a more elevated conception and a clearer idea of the moral law. Thus conscience, or the confused view of order, is sufficient to make men

practically virtuous or vicious, criminals or heroes; though he, who conceives most distinctly the law and its sacred obligation, is the most culpable, because he transgresses it most consciously. Not without reason, then, does human justice make distinctions between culprits, and apply punishments proportioned in severity to the supposed development of intelligence, and consequently to the degree of knowledge of good and evil.

From these details you will see that reason, as soon as it is developed, introduces at one and the same time the motive of self-love and of morality; and thus that these two modes of self-determination, which I have separated for the sake of accurate description, are really contemporaneous. On the other hand, remember that reason does not abolish the passionate mode, which is supreme in infancy. Dating, then, from the birth of reason, human life is a series of alternations from one to the other of these three states of the moral nature, according to the degree in which passion, self-love, or the moral law, gains sway over our will, and presides in our decisions. No period of life is free from these alternations. Men are marked in character by the frequency with which one or the other of these motives triumphs. Some yield to passion habitually, and are passionate men; others follow interest well understood, and are lovers of self; others again obey the moral law, and are virtuous. According to the prevalence in our habits of mind, of one or the other of these modes of choice, does man assume a moral character. No one obeys, exclusively and constantly, one or the other; however strong the habitual predominance of either, the other two always

control some of our volitions. Yet more; in far the greater number of cases all three concur and coöperate through the force of that harmony which fundamentally unites them; and acts produced by one or the other exclusively are extremely rare. Thus man is never wholly virtuous, nor wholly selfish, nor wholly passionate; and whichever spring may seem to move his conduct, the secret impulse of the others is more or less blended with it.

Such is an outline of those facts of man's moral nature which I have in former courses exhibited to you. In the light of these facts, you will easily comprehend, I trust, the different systems of moral philosophy which have denied the existence of a law of obligation, and you will detect without difficulty the sources of their different errors. But so important is it that you should have a clear understanding of the psychology of man's moral nature, that I shall resume the consideration of these facts in my next lecture.

## LECTURE III.

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

As the ideas of right and of duty imply that of law, and as the idea of law implies that of obligation, it is plain that the question, Whether there are any rights or duties, returns to the question, Whether there is any law of obligation, or, to abridge the expression, any law; for the word law necessarily carries with it the idea of obligation. Before inquiring what our duties and rights are, and in what they consist, it is indispensable, then, first to consider these two questions — “Is there a law of obligation? and, if so, what is it?” It would still have been proper to decide these questions, even if there had never existed philosophers who have replied to the first in the negative, or who, in their attempts to answer the second, have disagreed as to the nature of this obligatory law, whose existence they yet recognized. But since certain philosophers have denied that there is any law of obligation, and since those who have admitted its existence have given many and diverse accounts of its nature, it is evident that the consideration and solution of these questions cannot be dispensed

with. For if the philosophers who deny the existence of the law are right, we need examine no further as to our duties and rights; and we can in no way determine what these rights and duties are, if, after having satisfied ourselves that there is such a law, we still hesitate as to its nature, and make no choice among systems which have arrived at different results, in this attempt to describe it.

The systems based on false principles of ethics may be divided into three classes. One class maintains that there can be no law of obligation, while a second asserts that there really is none. These two classes deny the possibility of ethical science. A third class destroys the law by altering its nature; it comprises the systems which, though they admit an obligatory law, yet do not recognize it as it is, but variously disfigure it. The common result of such mutilations is to destroy it; for there can be but one law of obligation, and every system that substitutes another, attributes to this false law the character of obligation, which, according to the nature of our minds, attaches only to the true law. Thus in different ways do these three classes of systems equally destroy the law of obligation, and consequently all duty and all right — the whole science of ethics.

Such, neither more nor less, are the classes of systems to be examined; and, for the purposes of this examination, we must solve the proposed question — “Is there a law of obligation, and, if so, what is it?”

It cannot escape you that these are questions of fact, and not abstract ones, to be solved by reasoning. Man exists; he chooses; he acts; he is impelled by such

and such motives. Among these motives is there one which has the character of a law? This is the first question. If there is, What is that motive, its nature and character? This is the second. Both are questions of fact.

Hence you will see, that to answer these two primary questions, on which the whole science of ethics depends, or, what amounts to the same thing, to estimate rightly the truth of these systems, which have denied or disfigured this science, we must observe the facts of man's moral nature; and therefore have I attempted to sketch the great outlines, though not the details of these facts.

Such was the single object of my last lecture. I owe you, before proceeding further, a short explanation of the expression, *the moral facts of human nature*. To avoid misapprehension, it is absolutely necessary that we should understand perfectly the expression made use of, and determine precisely the acceptation of the words.

There is no morality in human nature, unless man is free and subject to a law of obligation. Destroy duty, or the possibility of directing ourselves by it, and you destroy all morality; for a conformity of the resolves of the will to the obligatory law of duty is precisely what constitutes morality. Other than this there is none. Thus, in its true acceptation, morality signifies the conformity of our resolves to the law of duty. When this conformity exists in any act, the agent is moral; when it does not exist, the act and agent are immoral.

This is the exact meaning of the word *morality*; and

from this comes the epithet *moral*. It is in a rather more enlarged sense, however, that I call the facts which I have exhibited to you, *moral*. Analogy seems to me to justify my use of the word. If there is any thing moral in human volitions, it will be found in the phenomena which precede and are associated with them, or, in other words, which concur to produce them. All these facts may, then, in an enlarged sense, be called *moral facts*, inasmuch as among them are to be found those which especially constitute morality. In my last lecture, I described, as moral facts, all phenomena in any way connected with our volitions, not limiting the application of the term to those which constitute, strictly speaking, morality. And it is in this sense, as I have now defined it, that you will please, then, to understand the expression.

And now, gentlemen, after what I have said in the commencement of this lecture as to the impossibility of solving the two questions — “Is there a law of obligation? and, if so, what is it?” and the equal impossibility of correctly appreciating the systems which have replied in the negative to the first, and wrongly answered the second, without reference to the moral facts of human nature, that is to say, without knowing how the will is really determined in man — after this, you will feel that it is highly important to comprehend clearly the whole process of our volitions, and the function of each element which concurs to produce them. Unless you keep this process before your minds, and comprehend clearly all its springs, it is impossible that you should arrive at a satisfactory solution of these questions, or a correct understanding



of the systems. I wish, then, to go over again, though in a different manner, the grand outlines of the picture, which I have presented to you in my last lecture.

When I reflect upon the effect which my rapid sketch may have produced on the minds of those who have not attended my former courses, it seems to me a duty, if I wish to be comprehended, to draw these outlines yet more distinctly. Once agreed upon what really does pass within us in the process of volition, and we shall have no difficulty in distinctly comprehending the various systems. They will have no obscurity for you. You will see how, in the real facts of our moral nature, pretexts may be found for each and every system; how each and all have, in some way, mutilated these facts; and how, in different ways, and through various illusions, they arrive at erroneous results.

Were the principles of human nature which concur to produce our volitions all developed at birth, and were not some of them delayed, there would be but one moral state for a human soul. But as, among these elements, there are two, which are not developed until an advanced period of life, we do not, upon examination, find man's moral condition always the same; and thus are we enabled to distinguish different moral periods.

Hence, in my last lecture, I was led to describe a first, second, and third moral state; in other words, three distinct modes of volition — the primitive, the selfish, and the moral mode, properly so called; in which latter, the law of obligation, not

observable in the two former, first makes its appearance.

Notwithstanding the differences which distinguish these three states of the moral nature, their elements are neither numerous nor difficult to seize. Four principles of human nature alone concur to produce them, and if we can but disengage the functions of these different elements in each of the three states, we shall gain a sufficiently precise notion of the process of volition.

These four principles of human nature are, the instinctive and primitive tendencies, as I have called them; the faculties adapted to these; will, or the power of directing our faculties; and, lastly, reason, or the power of comprehension.

And now I wish you to see, clearly, which of these principles are active in each state, and what are the functions they fulfil. To this point, therefore, I now once more invite your attention.

Human nature, having an organization peculiar to itself, is, by this organization, destined to a peculiar end. Life begins with the instinctive movement which impels human nature towards its end. This instinctive movement is not simple, but complex; in other words, it is made up of several instinctive movements, each of which has its peculiar object, the aggregate of which objects forms the true end of man—his highest good. These instinctive movements are developed in our earliest existence; for, should a moment elapse between the commencement of our existence and their development, it would be

a moment when we were existing indeed, but not living. But man must live as soon as he exists, and it is his life to aspire towards his end. From the first moment of existence, we feel awakening within us all the instincts with which our nature is gifted; in other words, all the desires which result from our organization; and these instincts and desires seek blindly each its peculiar object. Such is the action of the instinctive tendencies of our nature; and not for one moment of existence is this development, which commences with life, suspended; it remains even in sleep; the moving springs of human activity are the same whether we sleep or wake; their action is unintermitted.

Thus, as I have said, are the primitive tendencies the moving springs of our activity; they constitute our moving force. In fact, it is by them that our nature is prompted, and its faculties put in operation; for the final end of the activity of our faculties is the satisfaction of the permanent and primitive desires, at once instinctive and blind, which manifest in the form of passion the cravings of our nature, explain its characteristic properties, and reveal the end for which it is destined.

It cannot be, then, that the element of our primitive and instinctive tendencies should be wanting in either of the three moral states described. It appears in all, though supreme only in the first.

Such is the first of the four principles which concur in producing our volitions; we may call it the *main spring* — the *moving force* within us.

The second element or principle of our nature which

influences our volition is that to which I have given the general name of *faculties*. Had the Creator assigned man an end, and implanted an irresistible desire to attain it, without having placed in human nature the faculties needed as instruments for its satisfaction, and fitted to realize the end, it would have been a contradiction of his own work. There is an absolute necessity, therefore, that, beside the primitive tendencies impelling us to our end, we should possess certain faculties or instruments enabling us to gain it. These faculties constitute the second of the four elements to which I am now directing your attention.

We must not confound the faculties which are the executive power within us, with the free will which controls this power, guiding its direction. There is a period in the life of man, and perhaps a prolonged one, when there is no sovereign power within him, if I may say so; that is to say, when the self-direction of our faculties, which constitutes liberty, does not as yet exist. During the early years of childhood, we exercise no government at all over our faculties, and to those succeed others, when we can hardly be said to govern them. These instruments are still, however, vitally acting; only they act independently of us, or, what amounts to the same thing, without our will's impressing upon them any direction, and under the sole impulse of our tendencies. Quite distinct, then, are our faculties, or the executive force, as I have called it, from the power of *will*, whose function it is to direct them. The faculties exist independently of the will in the early period of life; and this independence

is more or less manifested in every era of human existence.

The faculties of human nature never sleep ; never cease to act. As our instinctive tendencies constantly impel us to act, so our faculties are always in some sort of movement and action. But it is not thus with the will. Not only do we not govern our faculties in the early period of life, but we often intermit our control at all periods. Not seldom it happens, then, that even in the mature man, nothing intervenes between the passions which impel, and the faculties or executive part of our nature ; but the first acts directly upon the second. This phenomenon occurs in many cases when strong passions appeal suddenly to the faculties, or when our will, tired of its efforts, suspends for a time its oversight and government. The will is an intermittent power, while the faculties act incessantly with various degrees of energy or feebleness.

You see, therefore, that our faculties, or the executive part of our nature, like our primitive tendencies, are ever in movement ; but their power may take two different directions, according as they are acted upon immediately by the passions, as in the primitive state, or by the will—the sovereign part of our nature, which is not developed till later, and whose action, even then, is sometimes intermitted. Free will presupposes reason, and comes only with reason ; and when these two principles are introduced between the instinctive impulses of our nature and our faculties, our moral condition is wholly changed.

It remains now to be seen what part these two principles act in the process of volition ; for, adding these

two principles to our instinctive impulses and to our faculties, we have all the elements which concur to produce our acts of will.

We do not know *à priori* that we are endowed with the power of governing and directing our faculties. We are, indeed, wholly ignorant of it, and we should never learn the fact without experience. In the early period of life there are no signs of our capacity of self-control. Our faculties, as I have before said, are, then, wholly under the direction of impulse, which, craving certain objects, and aspiring to certain ends, impels them in the direction that will gratify their desire without our intervention. As one of our passions or another may be strongest, and may sway the others, so all our faculties take the direction which it prescribes; but the moment another, yet stronger, rises, our faculties quit their first direction, and obediently follow a new one.

In the conduct of children, this vacillation is constantly noticed. Nothing is more variable than the relative force of our different passions; and, as our faculties fall necessarily under the sway of the strongest, there cannot but be, in the choice of children, this unceasing fluctuation. It manifests itself in their looks, gestures, thoughts, and gives them their peculiar charm and character. Yet in this primitive life is it that our power over our faculties is first revealed, and in the manner described in my last lecture, which I will now recapitulate.

Whatever the object towards which instinctive tendency impels us, and which our faculties are constrained to seek, it cannot be obtained without

difficulty; always some obstacle prevents the immediate gratification of the passion. What then? Our faculties, finding themselves made powerless by this obstacle, concentrate themselves spontaneously to overcome it; or, in other words, their united power is brought to bear on this one point, where they have encountered resistance.

Hence is the revelation of our power of control over our faculties. When, in the depths of our nature, we become conscious that our diffused powers are uniting and concentrating upon a single point, we feel at the same time that we can at will reproduce and repeat that concentration. Feeling that we have this power, we exercise it, and our sovereign force, our will, appears. Experience has revealed to us our power; but for this we should never have learned it.

In the primitive state, which I have been describing, the power of the will then first shows itself. But this power, not being directed by the reason, which as yet has not awakened, produces only transient and slight effects. When passion demands eagerly its satisfaction, and our faculties find difficulties in obtaining it, then do our powers concentrate themselves. But when a yet stronger passion summons our faculties, or when the obstacle in the way demands fatiguing exertion for its removal, the spring is relaxed, and concentration ceases. In other words, will, being as yet only instinctive, and having no rational motive on which to rely, is uncertain and vacillating; it can endure but little; its efforts

are small; it does scarcely more than show itself; and, that it may be developed and produce great results, reason must come to its aid.

Here, then, are three principles concurring to produce volition;—first, the motive power, or the primitive tendencies of our nature; second, the executive power, or our faculties; third, the governing power, or the will, that is to say, the power of directing our faculties.

A fourth principle is that which I call reason, or the power of comprehension.

I have said, gentlemen, that, when reason first appears, it finds in us the three other principles already active. From the first moment of existence, man is conscious of desires, instincts, and passions, developing within him; his faculties begin to act under the impulse of his desires, and, whenever they encounter resistance, are concentrated spontaneously—thus betraying, by their involuntary action, the fact that they may be governed. But, thus far, they have been combated only by the passions; they have been enslaved by the strongest impulse; nothing has modified or limited the empire of the instincts over them. When reason appears, this slavery ceases; for in place of an impulse of passion is substituted, not a new impulse, but—observe the word, which in all languages is the same—a *motive*. Heretofore, our actions have been determined by a blind and mechanical impulse; but, from the moment when reason appears, whether it gives counsel or imposes laws, man acts from a motive. A new



principle comes in to take part in, and modify, the process of volition. The operation of this principle I will now proceed to show.

Reason does two things. In the first place, observing what passes within us, it comprehends that all our tendencies, as they develop, demand satisfaction; and, generalizing the idea of this satisfaction, it comprehends that this is our good. On the other hand, it remarks that, when abandoned to itself, our nature succeeds but ill in attaining the highest possible satisfaction of our instincts; both because it obeys all the various impulses of our passions, and because it does not persevere sufficiently in the effort to satisfy them. Reason must introduce rules, then, into the conduct of our faculties, by ascertaining the supreme end which they should seek, and the way in which they should proceed to reach it. This reason does; on the one side it rises to the idea of self-interest well understood, and, on the other, judges of the conduct most proper to realize it. In view of this end proposed for its attainment, and of the course to be pursued, the will prepares to act, sets free our faculties from the mechanical impulse of our tendencies, and governs them. Motive takes the place of impulse, rule succeeds to force, and our conduct, from being passionate, blind, instinctive, as it was at first, becomes deliberate and rational.

Such is the first result of the appearance of reason in the process of volition.

It is plain, that, if reason had no other function than thus to comprehend the end of our tendencies,

and to decide upon the best mode of accomplishing it, there would be no law of obligation for us. We do not feel ourselves obliged to satisfy our passions. When reason places before us as an end the greatest satisfaction of our tendencies, it counsels our self-interest to obtain this satisfaction; but its advice has not an obligatory character. In other words, interest well understood, as estimated by reason, is nothing but the satisfaction of our tendencies; and never does self-interest, to any mind, come clothed in the character of obligation. Self-interest is not, indeed, a mechanical impulse of passion. It is a motive; but it is not a law.

Reason, however, does not stop at this point of self-interest. It goes further, and introduces a second rational element into our volition. This second motive is the idea of good. Interest well understood is the conception of the good or well-being of the individual, but not of good in itself, absolute good. When reason first perceives that, as there is a good for us, so is there for all creatures whatsoever, and that thus the particular good of each creature is but an element of universal order, of absolute good, then does the idea of good, so disengaged and elevated to the sphere of absolute being, appear to our reason as obligatory. A new motive to action, a new principle of conduct, is revealed and introduced. This principle is an obligatory one—a *law*. Unless this principle did thus appear, unless this idea did become thus disengaged in our minds by the effort of reason, the word *morality* would have no meaning; there would be no duties,

no rights; the science of ethics would be a vain pursuit; and our whole object in life would be to pursue the course of conduct best fitted to realize interest well understood.' When I examine the opinions of those who assert that this selfish principle is the ultimate and final one, I at once see that it is impossible to deduce from self-interest any duty towards other beings. We cannot, in fact, refer to the idea of personal good an element which it does not include—the idea of the good of others; neither can we explain by it the motive which impels us to seek it.

You see, then, that four principles of our nature coöperate to produce our volitions. You see that, because two of these principles, the will and reason, are developed late, and because reason itself has two separate states, there are in human life different and distinct moral periods.

During the first of these, but two principles are active—the tendencies of our nature, or the moving power, and the faculties, or the executive power. In this period, impulse acts directly upon our faculties, and the latter cannot escape its influence.

At a later period, the empire over self commences, yet later becoming as strong as we could wish; and then, between our impulses and our faculties, comes in a power which controls the latter, and forbids them to yield to passion without its consent. But that this power, which is the will, may be able to refuse its consent to passionate impulse, it must have support. And it finds this support in a fourth prin-

ciple, which now enters; namely, a motive or reason for acting, which is not an impulse.

Reason is the source of this new element, thus introduced into the process of volition. But there are two motives successively brought in by reason. The first is only a general idea, a summary of all which the various tendencies of our nature desire, having no authority but theirs, and directing them only because it comprehends their end, and knows the best means to satisfy them. Interest well understood is the first motive that aids the will in gaining supreme control, by giving it support against the purely mechanical impulse of passion.

The second motive introduced by reason, or the second support afforded by it to the will, is much stronger. It is the idea of good in itself, an idea which is not the interest well understood of our impulses, the end of our instinctive tendencies, but an end, an interest, entirely impersonal, the universal end of the creation—absolute good, or order. It is only such an idea, such an end, such a good, that can have an obligatory character; for that which is personal, not being superior to the person, cannot in any way oblige him. The idea of law implies something exterior and superior to the person, something universal, which comprehends and controls the individual. Such is the idea of absolute good, or of universal order, to which reason ascends, and which appears to it instantly as a legitimate and obligatory motive. Henceforth, the will is not only aided to resist the mechanical impulse of passion

by interest well understood, but, resting on this idea, finds support in another yet more comprehensive and powerful motive, even that of producing good within and around us, of completing and reverencing order in the development of our own and other natures. In this idea of good is comprehended that of our own and others' good; and the realizing of these two kinds of good becomes obligatory, on the common ground that each is an element of order, or of that absolute good which is obligatory. Thus the good of another becomes an element in the determination of our volitions, and even our own good assumes a character of impersonality which it had not before. When the will finds this new source of strength, it not only becomes more powerful against mechanical impulse, but escapes altogether, if it chooses, from all motives of a personal nature. Morality now becomes possible; for the condition of all morality, which is to act from a motive or impersonal idea, or a law, is given; but, before this time, morality has had no existence whatever.

And now, gentlemen, unless I have succeeded very ill in analyzing the complex phenomenon of human volition, you must clearly comprehend both its elements and its operation. Such is the phenomenon in its threefold aspect. I have copied these outlines faithfully, I trust, from the facts of human consciousness; and, if the picture is not perfect in details, it is yet true, I am confident, in its main features and general air.

But whether we yield to the impulse of passion and instinct, or act from the motive of self-interest, or

finally obey the idea of good, we meet constantly with obstacles between ourselves and our end, which can never in this life be wholly surmounted. Hence, in every possible situation, a perpetual conflict is waged between our nature and surrounding circumstances; and this is the fundamental characteristic of the condition of humanity.

But, independently of this fundamental conflict, which is renewed in every possible moral period, each period has a conflict peculiar to itself. In the primitive state, where two principles of our nature only exercise their functions, — on the one side our tendencies, and on the other our faculties, — there is a conflict between the different tendencies of our nature; when one has supreme sway, it oppresses the others, while these in turn rise to power and subdue the first. A violent and perpetual strife goes on of necessity among our different tendencies; for each is exacting and exclusive, and often can be satisfied only by the sacrifice of the others.

In the period of self-love, not only is there a contest between our different passions, but yet another between our passions and the motive of self-interest. For we cannot direct ourselves according to the rules of self-interest, except by constraining and repressing the natural action of our different passions. Each moment must we sacrifice the strongest passion to a weaker one — a present passion to a future one, and this for the sake of our greatest interest, or an idea of our reason. There is, then, in the selfish state, a contest of motives against impulses; and we cannot sacrifice one to the other, without regretting it, if it is the



motive which is abandoned ; without pain, if it is the passion.

In the third, or moral period, properly so called, both these conflicts are continued, and a third commences between self-interest or personal good, and duty or absolute good. In a multitude of cases we must sacrifice self-interest to good in itself ; and in whatever way we may decide to act, we suffer either remorse, if we are influenced by the thought of personal good, or regret, if we sacrifice well-being to duty. The very root of all these conflicts is the fundamental one of man against nature. Were it not for this, the secondary conflicts would not arise at all ; but this is produced from the very nature of things, and from it spring the others.

Thus the province of moral volition is, if I may say so, a battle-field, where eternal war is waged. These combats make up our life itself, with all its varied griefs, and its grand fundamental evil, the strife of man with what is not himself. And yet, gentlemen, there is, nevertheless, beneath all this, the profoundest unity and harmony ; and now, having described the discord and strife of our nature, I will explain to you its accordance and peace.

Is it not true, then, that if we had the power of always directing ourselves according to the rule of self-interest, supposing this rule to have been perfectly estimated by reason, is it not true that the attainments of such self-interest would comprehend and include the greatest possible satisfaction of all our tendencies, that is to say, of all our passions ? Of this there can be no doubt ; for whenever we prefer the rule of

interest, well understood, to the mechanical impulse of passion, it is for the interests of passion itself, for the interests of our true well-being, therefore, and our greatest good. Thus, in yielding to the selfish motive, so far from sacrificing the passions, we do really serve them; in obeying it, we in fact obey our passions, that is to say, the tendencies of our nature; and the satisfaction of one implies the satisfaction of the others. There is, then, a harmony between our tendencies and the calculations of self-interest.

Experience proves that there is a like deep harmony between obedience to the law of duty and self-interest. Long has it been since philosophers, who admitted in principle the law of duty, in order to conciliate those over whom the considerations of self-interest exercised great power, have demonstrated, by experience and reasoning, that the best mode of being happy is to be faithful, in every case, to the law of duty. And, on the other hand, it has been long since those who have misconceived the nature of the law of duty have endeavored to explain it to such as denied it, by showing that the very conduct which men of elevated intelligence and consummate experience had determined to be for man's true self-interest, is precisely that which the moral law prescribes. Thus the partisans of self-interest, and those of the law of duty, have both agreed in recognizing the profound and ultimate agreement which there is between the counsels of the one and the rules of the other. And, in fact, it is impossible that it should be otherwise; for what does the law of duty advise? Its wish is, that we should fulfil our own destiny, and yet not hinder, but rather



aid others in fulfilling theirs. Now, this is just what our passions demand. Our passions are not all personal; they have not all for their object our private good; but we have also sympathetic, benevolent passions, which have for their end the good of others. When the good of others, then, is not attained — when others suffer — we suffer with them. Thus, when the emotion of pity arises in my heart, if the object of it is not solaced, I suffer; I too am unhappy. When I experience sympathy for a person — lively sympathy — if that person is unhappy, I suffer also, as with a grief of my own. Many of our primitive tendencies, then, aspire to the good of others and to the accomplishment of their destiny, as a final end. Self-interest includes, then, as a condition of our own good, the good of others. From all this you may see how profound is the harmony between the conduct which the law of duty, or the idea of absolute good, prescribes, and that recommended by enlightened self-interest, or the idea of personal good. And thus, as self-interest coincides with the satisfaction of our instinctive tendencies, it follows that each of the three motives implies the others, and that, notwithstanding conflicts on the surface, there is, as I have said, a perfect fundamental accordance. But, because they agree, they are not the less distinct; neither is it a matter of indifference which shall be obeyed. If you yield to passions, you debase yourself to the level of the brutes, for this is peculiarly their mode of volition. The nature of animals, like the nature of man, impels them to their end. They have, like ourselves, faculties by which to attain it; but no *motive* ever inter-

poses itself between the mechanical impulse of their desires and the faculties with which they are endowed for their satisfaction. When man yields to passion, then his mode of volition is wholly animal; and so long as he acts in this manner is his life that of the brute. It is only when he rises to the idea of self-interest, that he becomes a rational being; then he calculates the consequences of conduct, and becomes master of his faculties; he subjects them to a plan which he has marked out, and is now a man, though not yet a moral man; he becomes a moral being when he abandons this idea of personal good for that of absolute good; then he is moral, for he obeys a law; he rises now as much above the selfish state, as before he had done above the animal state; and, in a word, the phenomena of moral good and evil, for the first time, appear, and with them all that makes the glory and the greatness of our nature.

And now let us take a rapid review of what has been said of the different kinds of good, and thus fix, in a precise manner, our notions of them; for distinct notions on this subject are indispensable to a right understanding of all that is to follow.

I have told you, gentlemen, that good for man, as for every other creature whatsoever, is the accomplishment of his destiny; that his nature commands him forever to aspire and tend toward this; that it is this which alone can satisfy the instinctive passions. My nature is intelligent; knowledge, then, is a good for me. My nature is sympathetic; the happiness of others, then, is a good for me. Suppose that a being has neither intelligence nor sympathy; then knowledge and the welfare

of another would not be *good* to him. His nature does not seek them; they do not enter, as elements, into the final end of his being; for they are not adapted to wants of his constitution. Understand, then, what I mean by *real good*; you can determine what it is for any being when you have comprehended his nature, and learned what his nature craves.

Whenever I obtain my *real good*, I experience a *sensible good*, that is to say, pleasure. Here is a second kind of good, wholly distinct from the former; and, to produce it, two conditions must be fulfilled. First, the being must be sensitive; and, secondly, something which is a real good for that being must be attained. Agreeable sensations, pleasure, sensible good, is a consequence, effect, and sign of real good. Such is *sensible good*, or, as we usually call it, *happiness*.

Finally, there is a third kind of good, which as peculiarly belongs to moral beings as happiness does to sensitive beings; it is moral good. When my reason has discovered an obligatory motive—that is to say, a law—and my will conforms to that law, then do I experience *moral good*; and when, on the contrary, it violates that law, I experience *moral evil*. Moral good, then, is nothing else than a conformity of the volitions of a reasonable being to the law of obligation which reason prescribes. When I act from enlightened self-interest merely, there is neither moral good nor evil, except in so far as I consciously violate some commandment of the moral law.

Such are the three kinds of good and evil. You see, now, the fundamental distinctions between real

good and evil, sensible good and evil, moral good and evil, and the peculiar characteristics of each. Human nature is an impenetrable mystery to him who has not separated and distinguished three things so entirely distinct; and the explanation of false systems and erroneous doctrines is to be found in men's having confounded them.

Into each of the three states which I have described, real good and evil, and, consequently, sensible good and evil, enter; but to the third alone is moral good confined. I will recall to your minds, in passing, the fact that moral good and evil produce a sensible effect, as well as real good and evil; or, in other words, that we cannot obey a moral law, without experiencing, from that obedience, pleasure; and cannot disobey a moral law, without, as a consequence, suffering pain. Let me add that, as this pleasure and pain are accompanied by a judgment of the reason,—which says to the agent not only, “Thou hast done well or ill,” but also, “Thou art worthy or unworthy,”—they are the most vivid which human sensibility is capable of feeling.

It results from this analysis, that sensible good and evil could not exist without the other kinds of good, and also that moral good and evil could not exist without real good and evil; for if we had no end, we could have no law. Real good is, then, the condition of all good for us; real evil, the condition of all evil. It is accompanied by sensible good, if the being is sensitive; by moral good, if he is rational.

Such, gentlemen, are the principal facts of our moral nature.

After what has now been said, you can easily comprehend how a person, in surveying the rules of human conduct, may allow some of the facts of our nature to escape him. You can comprehend, for example, how a man may overlook the fact that, independently of sensible impulse and enlightened self-interest, reason perceives an obligatory law as a motive to action. Admitting that a philosopher has fallen into this error, the moral period that I have described is not a real one to him. Misconceiving the facts of our nature, he mutilates them in his system, and can come but to the one conclusion, that there is no law of obligation. You can comprehend, also, how, without entire ignorance of this third mode of volition, a man may yet form an incomplete and inaccurate notion of it, and thus substitute for the true law some other, and thus, by deforming, destroy it. You can comprehend, finally, how a philosopher may form to himself such an idea of the nature of things, or of man, as to make him think it impossible, *à priori*, that man should be subject to a law of obligation, and therefore useless to search among the phenomena of his nature for such a law. Thus, for example, Hobbes, not believing in the freedom of the will, ought, *à priori*, to have declared it impossible that there should be a law of obligation, had he reasoned strictly. Thus, too, Spinoza, considering all things as necessary because emanating from God, whose being and acts are necessary, should have denied, from the high ground of his system, the possibility of duty, or rules, or law, for man.

There are three ways, therefore, in which the law of obligation, which is the foundation of ethics, may be denied; first, by asserting, *à priori*, and as a necessary consequence, from a high principle, that the existence of such a law is impossible; secondly, by overlooking, in the analysis of the moral facts of human nature, the very facts in which this law is manifested; and, lastly, by mutilating the facts, although recognizing them; thus substituting a false law of obligation for the true one.

We are now in a position to pronounce judgment upon these systems; for we are acquainted with what really passes within us. I believe that the description I have given you is faithful, although it may have been rudely expressed; for I confess to you I experience great difficulty whenever I attempt to describe in words these phenomena of our nature. Words and phrases suggest to the mind images so little resembling the phenomena of which we are conscious, that all description seems feeble and imperfect. No one feels this more deeply than I do; and yet, gentlemen, I believe that the sketch which I have drawn is, in the main, correct. At least, what I have said will enable you to comprehend how incomplete views of the moral facts of our nature have given rise to various systems; and still, how these various systems, taken together, bear witness to the real existence of all these facts; for, though each system may exhibit only one part while neglecting another, yet, together, they present a complete picture of our nature.

## LECTURE IV.

## SYSTEMS WHICH IMPLY THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF A LAW OF OBLIGATION.

## SYSTEM OF NECESSITY.

GENTLEMEN,

IN a former lecture, I have told you that the philosophical systems which, in their principles, are destructive of ethical science, may be divided into three classes: first, those which, from reasons independent of the consideration of moral phenomena, deny that there can be a law of obligation for man; second, those which, having sought for this law by an examination and analysis of moral phenomena, declare that they have not discovered it; and, lastly, those which, though professing to have found it, have yet mistaken its nature, and which, variously disfiguring it, have substituted, for such a law of obligation as reason recognizes, a false law, more or less altered from the true one, and implying no obligation.

Such are the three kinds of systems, which, directly or indirectly, destroy all right and all duty, and, consequently, the whole science of ethics.

Having, in my last two lectures, presented a

picture of the different facts which enter into the process of volition, I am now prepared — these facts having been stated — to examine the three classes of systems which I have pointed out. And I will begin with those which deny that there can be a law of obligation.

There are four chief systems, which, as a necessary and immediate consequence of their principles, deny the possibility of a law of obligation, and, consequently, that there can be any rights or duties in a proper sense. These are pantheism, mysticism, skepticism, and finally, systems denying the freedom of the will.

My design is, to take a survey of these four systems; and, by a refutation of their principles, to escape their consequence, that is to say, their denial of the possibility of ethical science.

But before entering into a detailed examination of these four systems, it may be well to point out, in a few words, the way in which they each arrive at this common result.

It is evident, in the first place, that there can be no law of obligation for a being who is not free; for it would be a contradiction in terms, to say that any obligation could rest upon a being whose actions are determined by necessity. It is needless to develop so plain a truth; you will comprehend at once, that any system which denies human liberty, does, in so doing, deny that there is or can be any law of obligation.

This is equally true, in my opinion, of all systems of pantheism; whose doctrine is, that there is but one being, self-existent, necessary, whom pantheists,



equally with deists, call God. If there is but one being, there can be nothing in the universe but different modes of his existence. Men, all things animate or inanimate, which make up the creation, are only various modes and different manifestations of this one being; all causality is, therefore, in him; therefore no causality exists in his creatures; and where there is no causality, of course there is no free-will.

The consequence, then, of every pantheistic system, is the denial of all free-will in the creation, and of course in man. It is only through an inconsistency, therefore, that some pantheists have believed that they could recognize these two things; and have professed the twofold doctrine of the unity of being (which is the first principle of pantheism) and of human liberty.

As to the skeptical systems, they are of two kinds. The one class deny that certainty in knowledge is possible, on the ground that human opinions are every where contradictory; the other class, passing by this contradictory character of human opinions as a matter open for debate, question whether what appears to us truth is really truth in itself, for the reason that the perceptions and conceptions of our intelligence result from the very organization of that intelligence. They assert that we cannot prove that, if we had been differently organized, our views and conceptions would not have been different from those which we now have, or that what now appears to us true, might not then have seemed false, and *vice versa*.

Such are the two forms of skepticism; and both one

and the other lead to the same result — that man can be certain of nothing. If this is so, then, when we believe that we see, in a conception of our reason, a practical obligation to conform our conduct to it, this view may be as uncertain as any other, and we cannot put faith in it. It is, then, a matter of doubt whether we are obliged to do any thing whatsoever, and whether that which we call *good* or *ill* is really so. It is quite a matter of indifference, then, whether we respect this obligation or not.

Every system of skepticism, from whatever principle it originates, necessarily ends in throwing doubt over every idea of obligation, and consequently in a denial of human obligation.

Mysticism yet remains to be considered. I admit that there are various kinds of mysticism. But there is one chief mystical system, which is the source of all others: its leading principle is, that man cannot, in this world, attain his end; that he is, whatever he may attempt, powerless for good; and that, therefore, the only thing for him to do is to wait till the obstacles which impede him are removed, and till the human soul, set free from its present bonds, be transported into such another order of things as will permit him to accomplish his destiny. For one who thinks thus, all action appears absurd, and a passive state is the only reasonable one. Let man await the time when the hand of God shall deliver him from the bondage of his present condition; then will there be a sphere for action; but until then let him live passive, leave things to take care of themselves, and abandon himself

to the current of fate. Any other course of conduct would be an inconsistency; and the existence of any obligation, therefore, is impossible.

Thus you see how the four systems of necessity, pantheism, skepticism, and mysticism, equally deny that there can be any law of obligation for man.

After this summary review, I will now proceed to take up these systems successively, in order that we may examine more in detail the foundations upon which they rest; and, by showing you the falseness of the principle, I shall attempt to destroy the consequences which have been drawn from them. Let us begin with the system of necessity.

The number of philosophers who have thought that man is not a free being, is very great; but they have not all arrived at their conclusion in the same way. They have professed the doctrine of necessity, in view of different principles, and through various courses of reasoning. The common characteristic among these systems of necessity, by which they must be classified, is, as I have shown, that they all end in denying the possibility of any law of obligation.

I will describe the different reasons which have led philosophers to this strange denial of human liberty, and will endeavor briefly to refute them in succession. You can readily see that, as my wish is to come as soon as possible to a positive exposition of the laws of human conduct, I cannot give much time to a description or a refutation of these doctrines. As I am addressing myself to an intelligent audience, and as the system of necessity is in evident contradiction to the universal faith and the acknowledged facts of

human nature, a simple description of its leading traits will enable me to refute the reasonings of its advocates.

The first mode of denying human liberty which I shall describe, is one which overlooks our true liberty, and substitutes a fictitious one. This is what has been done by Hobbes. Hobbes confined himself to that signification of the word *liberty*, in which we all employ it, when we say of a man who was just now chained, but is set free, that he is at liberty. When a man is chained, he can will any act, but he cannot execute his will. The constraint is not on his power of willing, but on his power of acting. In a word, action, which naturally and immediately follows volition, is, for the time, impossible.

Hobbes understands by *liberty*, the power of doing what we will ; and well may he say, therefore, that human liberty is limited ; for it is evident enough that we can will a multitude of things which we cannot possibly execute. Within the limits of what we can possibly do, we are free ; but no further. This is liberty, as Hobbes has defined it ; and he asserts that there is and can be no other.

To support such a doctrine, is to deny, to all intents and purposes, that man is a free being. If by *liberty* is understood an absence of any such external constraint as prevents the exercise of any power within the natural limits of that power, then every being endowed with any power whatsoever is equally free with man ; animals are free ; vegetative force is free, rivers as they run, winds as they blow, are free. Now, this, evidently, is not what we mean by the

freedom of any power. The question of liberty or necessity turns altogether upon the mode in which any power is determined in its action; not upon the fact that there are limits, wider or narrower, to its exercise. In such a sense of the word, no part of our nature is less free than the power of acting. In truth, the necessary law of our being is, that a resolve of the will, when directed to what can possibly be accomplished, should be immediately followed by the act which executes it, and realizes the intent of the will. There is a necessary connection between willing and acting, if the thing willed can be done. If, then, by liberty is meant the power of doing what we will, *liberty* is ascribed to a power, whose very characteristic is necessary action. For the act, by which we fulfil a resolve, is a necessary consequence of that volition. If, then, Hobbes, supposing that he thereby preserves the freedom of the will, demonstrates or thinks that he demonstrates to his own mind, that the will has no liberty to form what resolves it chooses, but that all its resolves are determined by necessity, you can readily comprehend how, by thus denying liberty where it really exists, and admitting it where it does not, he does actually destroy it altogether.

I trust that you have a clear conception of this system. There is but one answer to it. Hobbes has placed our freedom where it does not exist, where we are not conscious of it; where, on the contrary, we are perfectly conscious of necessity. If it is true that, in common language, we do use the word *liberty* sometimes to denote our power of doing what we purpose, it is merely to describe a state opposed to

that in which the power of acting is for the moment suspended by external constraint. It is in this sense only that we, by analogy, call this state a state of *liberty*. But when we enter into ourselves, we feel clearly, that the necessary consequence of every resolve, when that resolve is directed to any thing within our power, is the act putting that resolve in execution; and that in this part of our nature there is, therefore, no liberty. If it sometimes does happen that, after having willed an act, we yet do not perform it, observe, it is always because in place of that first resolve is substituted an opposite one, destroying it; so that doing the act or refraining from it, are immediate, necessary, plain consequences of the last resolve we form. Wherein, then, does our liberty really consist? In our power of forming resolves. When we make a resolution, is it only the necessary consequence of some previous processes in our minds? or does it arise from the power which we have of forming this or that resolve, just as we choose, after having considered whether it is right or wrong, expedient or inexpedient, pleasant or painful? This is the question, and the real point to be discussed.

Another system, equally denying human liberty, has arisen from a different confusion of language. It is the system of Hume. Consider for a moment this philosopher's idea of a cause, in which, by the way, may be found the very basis of his skepticism.

As you well know, it is the object of students of physical science, of medical men and chemists, of all who seek to discover the laws of nature, to determine the circumstances which constantly precede the

appearance of any phenomenon or effect. When these circumstances are determined, a law of nature is discovered; and we can draw from the knowledge of this law many important rules for conduct. We are taught by it, that, whenever the circumstances occur, this event will follow; and, conversely, that whenever it does happen, these circumstances have preceded it. This is of great importance in determining the direction of our actions, and gives man immense advantage over the blind forces of nature. As we never can reach beyond ourselves to a perception of the true cause of any effect, because out of ourselves these causes are invisible, we are limited to a statement of the circumstances which have constantly preceded the phenomenon, instead of seeking for the causes which have really produced it; and as, in the minds of students of physical science, the efficient and unknown cause which produces a phenomenon is not confounded with the circumstances which have been observed to precede and accompany it, for convenience and brevity we are accustomed to say that these circumstances are the cause. The assertion of Hume is, that we have no other idea of a cause than this; and he supports his assumption thus:—

All our knowledge, according to Hume, originates in experience. If this is admitted, he must go on to explain, by experience alone, the formation of all the notions which are found in human intelligence; the idea of cause is one. Hume is bound to explain how this idea has entered the mind, whether from the senses or from consciousness. Now, as it is a fact that the senses can never reach beyond phenomena to causes,

and as Hume thinks that consciousness also can perceive phenomena only, it is plain that, if this metaphysical doctrine is once adopted, it becomes impossible to explain the true notion of a cause, such as we find it in our minds.

But there is a sense of the word *cause* before referred to, which this system is competent to explain. Though consciousness and sensation can never perceive causes, still, according to Hume, they can at least perceive the circumstances which have preceded the appearance of any effect. Meeting with this sense of the word, explicable by his system, Hume adopts it; and, being unable to account for any other idea expressed by the word according to his hypothesis, he declares that this is the only notion which the word *cause* really represents to the human mind. Thus, for Hume, a cause is merely the aggregate of circumstances constantly preceding in nature the production of any effect.

This being so, it is perfectly plain that nobody can in any case be entirely sure of what is the cause of any effect. Hume remarks, in fact, and with much reason, that, however constant may be the concurrence of certain circumstances with a fact, reason always distinctly comprehends that a possible case may arise, where this concurrence will cease, and where, consequently, what now seems to us the cause will cease. This is one reason why we can never be certain that what we call the cause of a phenomenon is the true cause.

In the next place, Hume remarks, and with as good reason, that observation cannot detect, among the cir-



cumstances which constantly precede the appearance of a phenomenon, the efficient force which has produced it. We see, in fact, certain circumstances; we see, next, a phenomenon: but the assumed fact of the production of this phenomenon by the circumstances which precede it escapes us entirely; and, if it always thus escapes us, we have no means of knowing whether it really happens. Thus the idea of causation as commonly understood, or, what comes to the same thing, the idea of the production of an effect by a cause, is and can only be an illusion of the human mind. The idea of concurrence observed between two facts,—this, according to Hume, is what the idea of causation in our minds really reduces itself to. Any thing more is an illusion and prejudice. Consequently, there is no such thing as a cause, in the common sense of that word; and, consequently, no such thing as an effect. There is nothing more in nature than a recurrence of phenomena, which precede and follow each other with some degree of constancy, but which in no case should be considered by us as eternal or necessary.

You see that the necessary consequence of such a doctrine is to destroy such ideas of cause and effect, and of their relation, as exist in the minds of all men; and that, therefore, any consideration of the question whether human causality, or the *me*, is free or not, is vain and idle. We may well discuss the question, if we consider human causality a true cause, really producing the acts which the man performs. But, if we assume that the causality of

this me is an illusion, the question becomes absurd; for it amounts to this: Is an efficient cause, which has no existence, free or not free? Hume does not admit the consideration of this question of human liberty at all, then; to him it is only trifling and foolish. I speak here of his metaphysics only; for, as to his moral philosophy, it is, like that of many other philosophers,—and like that of Spinoza even, the most strict and logical mind of modern times,—at variance with his metaphysical system. To conceive it possible that there can be any morality at all, we must admit, in the outset, and first of all, the very thing which Hume's metaphysics deny, namely, that we are causes. For, destroy this first and indispensable consideration, and it evidently becomes most absurd to inquire what the laws of human action should be, or what conduct should be recommended for man to pursue.

Such, gentlemen, in a few words, is the metaphysical doctrine of Hume. It can be answered in a most simple way, by saying that the human mind has ideas of cause and effect, and of their relation, which are wholly irreconcilable with it. The system of Hume, therefore, which pretends to explain all our ideas, is false.

A second reply to Hume is yet more direct. As a matter of fact, we feel that we are the cause of the acts which we produce. Thus, when I walk, I feel that I cause the motion of my limbs; when I think, when I fix my attention, when I reflect, I feel that I cause these acts of thought, attention, and reflection, which I perform. It is true that we

have no idea of cause, if consciousness perceives nothing more within us than sensation does in that; for it is certain that, out of ourselves, we cannot go beyond phenomena—we cannot reach to causes. But, when we attend not to what passes without, but to what passes within, we discover in ourselves, by consciousness, a cause, which does produce effects; and we have, whenever we experience this inward feeling, the feeling of cause, the feeling of effect, and the feeling of the production of the effect by the cause. Thus, for example, when I pay attention, I have the feeling of the me, which pays attention,—of the phenomenon of attention thence resulting,—and, finally, I feel that it is I, myself, who, as the cause, have produced this effect of attention. It is clear that a system, which denies all these facts, cannot explain the idea of cause. But, to conclude from this that the idea does not exist in the human mind, is to submit the mind to the laws of a false system, which philosophy has invented. The mind has the idea of cause; and for this reason, that it experiences in itself the feeling of a cause which does produce effects.

If only such opinions as these, which I have now refuted, had been brought against the faith in human freedom, the question would never have been seriously agitated by many minds. We must renounce the most familiar notions of good sense and experience, before we can admit these opinions of Hume and Hobbes which I have described; and, therefore, they are only partially dangerous. The strongest objections against human liberty come from

a system whose leading principle is wholly different. This system is complicated enough; that is, it opposes many objections to the doctrine of human liberty. These objections, however, are all connected with one main idea, which is this — that the motives from which the will makes up its volitions, really constrain the will to choose, and consequently destroy its freedom; in other words, the doctrine which I am now about to exhibit to you does not admit that man is a free being, because it thinks that acts of will are, in every case whatsoever, the necessary effect of motives preceding the volition.

The principal propositions of the supporters of this system are as follows: In the first place, they assert, as a fact, that every volition has a motive. In the second place, they say that, if the motive which acts upon the will is a simple and single one, the motive will necessarily determine it; but, if there are several motives operating at the same time, the strongest will determine it. Such, gentlemen, is the argument of the friends of this system. To point out the fallacy of such reasoning, we must take up and answer separately its different assumptions.

Perhaps one might, with Reid, deny the fact that all the resolves of the will have a motive. Reid states facts to support this position. He says that we often form trifling resolves without the slightest consciousness of having any motive; and, to the objection immediately raised, that the motive has acted insensibly on the will, he answers, that it is not then a motive, as a motive is a reason for acting, conceived beforehand, and acting on the will. A

motive which is not conceived of, that is to say, of which I have no consciousness, says Reid, is as if it was no motive—as if it did not exist. It is a contradiction, then, to say that a motive has acted on my will, and yet that I have been unconscious of it. Again, says Reid, I am placed in situations where different means to a certain end present themselves—means which will equally conduct me to it; now, if, in such a case, I select one rather than the others, it is without any motive whatsoever. For example, I owe a guinea to a person who has come for payment, and there are in my purse twenty guineas; why do I select one rather than another? Reid asserts that there is in such a case no motive whatever. He acknowledges that such actions are of no importance in a moral point of view. But he remarks that the question is simply to know whether it is possible that the will should ever make a choice without any motive; and, if any such instances can be brought forward, however few or trifling, we may still answer the question in the affirmative.

These are subtle trains of reasoning, and different minds will form different opinions as to their importance. For myself, I leave aside this discussion, and prefer, in a consideration of the subject which must be very rapid, to limit myself to decisive arguments.

I will admit, then, at the outset, that we never do act without a motive. This being granted, the question resolves itself into this: Is a motive something which constrains or compels my volition?

Now, in my opinion, this assumed constraint is contradicted by experience, and by our feeling of what passes within us when we form a purpose. In fact, if there is one familiar feeling, of which we are distinctly and vividly conscious, it surely is that which we experience when we make a choice. Whatever the force of the motive which we obey, we yet perceive a wide distinction between the influence of this motive and any thing which can be called constraint. Indeed, we feel distinctly that, in yielding to this motive, that is to say, in resolving in conformity with it, we are entirely able not to form this resolve. If, for instance, when standing at a window, I determine not to throw myself into the street, I feel that it depends wholly upon myself to form an opposite determination; only I say I should then be a fool; and, being rational, I remain where I am. But that I am free to be a fool, and to throw myself down, is to me most evident. If any of my audience are capable of confounding in their minds the fact, that a billiard-ball on a table is put in motion by a stroke, with the fact, that a volition is produced in my mind when I seek to know what is my reasonable course of conduct, and think I discover it,—if there are any here, who can see a similarity between the action of one ball on another, and the influence of a motive on my volition,—then have I nothing more to say. But no one can imagine a similarity between the two; at least, no one, who has not taken sides on the question, and given up his mind to some system, of which it is a consequence that some necessity must control

our volition and acts, can confound two facts in their nature so dissimilar as the action of one ball upon another, and the influence of a motive on the determinations of my will. The law, that every motion in material bodies is proportioned to the moving force which produced it, supposes a fact; namely, the *inertia* of matter. To apply this law to the relation which subsists between the resolutions of my will, and the motives which act upon it, is to suppose that my being, that I, myself, am not a cause; for a cause is something which produces an act by its own proper power. That which is inert is not a cause; it may receive and transmit an impulse, but it cannot originate it. Are we, or are we not, a cause? Have we, or have we not, a power in ourselves of producing certain acts? It would seem necessary for us to decide this question, before we can rightly apply the law of external phenomena to internal operations. Admitting, then, that every volition has a motive, as the advocate of the scheme of necessity asserts, — admitting even with him, that, whenever the will is addressed by only one motive, its volitions are always in conformity with it, — it by no means follows that this proves the truth of his system. It proves only this, that our will forms no volition without a reason for forming it; and that, when there is but one reason to be considered, it wills accordingly. But it by no means follows, that, whenever our will yields to a reason, it is compelled to do so by that reason. The whole question, — and I beg you again to remark it, — depends upon a fact which you must determine —

upon the fact whether you know that the influence, which the motive exercises over the will, is a constraining force or not. For myself, I say that my inward feeling answers in the negative; and that, under the influence of all motives, I retain, in every case, a distinct consciousness of a power of acting in opposition to what they advise and direct. I can admit, then, without difficulty, the two first propositions of the advocates of necessity. They prove nothing against the liberty of the will.

But I should not neglect to inform you, that Reid disputes the second of these propositions as he did the first, and does not admit, even in those cases in which only one motive addresses itself to our will, that we always decide conformably to the motive. He draws an argument from common language, and asks whether we have not such words as *caprice*, *obstinacy*, *wilfulness*, and whether they have no meaning. And what do they mean, if not that we resolve, at any given moment, in spite of, and in opposition to, all motives then acting on our will? These words bear witness to the fact that sometimes, under the influence of a single motive, we do not form any volition, or do not will conformably to the motive. But I repeat, I have not the time to enter into these arguments of secondary importance; I limit myself to the statement of direct and decisive reasonings.

Let us pass now, gentlemen, to the cases in which many motives act simultaneously upon the will; and let us consider them for a moment, not for the purpose of discovering whether it is true that the strongest motive always determines our volition,—



for even were it true, I have already answered the objection, — but to observe and wonder at the false logic, and confused notions, into which the advocates of necessity fall, in attempting to explain what takes place within our minds.

It is the strongest motive, say they, which determines the will. What is this strongest motive, I ask, and how do you measure the comparative force of motives? Is that the strongest motive, according to your idea, which determines the volition? If this is so, you are arguing in a circle; and, instead of showing that it is the strongest motive which decides the will, you are merely saying that, as the determination of the will is in conformity with such or such a motive, therefore this motive is the strongest. Arguing in this way, there certainly is reason enough for saying that the strongest motive determines the will, since that is designated as the strongest which does determine it. It is impossible, therefore, to judge, from effects in the scheme of necessity, of the relative force of motives.

But, if we cannot judge from effects, we must find some common measure by which to decide. Let us inquire, then, what this measure can be.

You understand, gentlemen, after the description given in former lectures, that there are two kinds of moving powers acting upon us; first, the impulses of instinct, or passion; and, secondly, the conceptions of reason. Thus, when I am excited to act from sympathy for another, this impulse is a simple natural emotion — a *momentum*; when, on the other hand, I am led to this act from the consideration that it is

conformable to duty or self-interest, this consideration is a conception of reason — a *motive*, properly speaking. That these two kinds of moving powers can and do act efficiently upon my volitions, there can be no doubt; it is evident that my resolves are often the consequence of a perception of my duty or interest; and it is no less evident that often, also, they are the issue of my desires, passions, and natural impulses. Suppose, now, that, in a given case, motives of both kinds act simultaneously, and in an opposite direction upon my will, and I say there is not, and cannot be, any common measure between them.

And, now, on what grounds can we declare, that a conception of the reason, or a conception of interest, which leads me to any act, is a stronger motive than the present passion, which impels me to do the opposite? As one of these motives is a passion, and the other an idea, I find a difficulty in comparing them; and I challenge the most ingenious to find a common measure, which can be applied to two things in their nature so different, or which can direct me to a true appreciation of their relative forces.

Of two impulses, manifestly unequal, it would be easy to determine the stronger: a vehement desire is distinguishable in our consciousness from one less so. And thus, merely from their vivacity and fervor, we may often recognize the stronger from the weaker passion. There is, then, if you choose to say so, a common measure between different impulses of our sensitive nature, which are peculiarly distinguished as *emotions*. On the other hand, of different courses of conduct which reason and self-interest bring into

contrast, I may see, that one is much more advantageous than another. There is, then, if you please, a means of comparing together different suggestions of self-interest : the suggestion which promises the most for my interest should have the most power over me. In the same way, among different duties which may present themselves to my judgment, there may be one which appears more obligatory than another ; for there are duties of different degrees of importance, and in many cases I must sacrifice the lesser to the greater. I perceive, then, that, strictly speaking, there is a possibility of comparing together the relative force of different motives originating from duty, and of different motives suggested by self-interest, or, finally, of different desires striving within me at a given moment. But between a desire on the one hand, and a conception of interest or of duty on the other, where, I ask, can you find a standard of comparison ? If I assume passion as the measure, then, evidently, passion will appear the stronger motive ; but if, on the other hand, I assume interest or duty as the measure, then desire becomes nothing, and duty or interest seems all in all. It depends, then, wholly upon the measure of comparison which I adopt, whether this or the other motive is strongest ; which proves that there is no common measure of comparison to be applied at all times to these different kinds of motives, when we would estimate their relative force.

Thus, in truth, in almost every case, to say that we yield to the strongest motive, is to say what has no meaning ; for in most cases it is impossible to determine the strongest motive. If I will to be prudent,

I follow the motive of self-interest; if I will to be virtuous, I follow the motive of duty; if I will to be neither prudent nor virtuous, I follow passion; and in proportion as I yield to passion, to enlightened interest, or to duty, does the merit of my conduct vary. And here is a marvel for the advocate of necessity, and something which, in the sincerity of his conviction, he well may wonder at. I, who am not free, — who, whatever resolution I have taken, have yet been fatally determined to take it by the strongest motive, — I feel that I am responsible for this resolution; and others, too, regard me as responsible; so that, according as I have been impelled to this or that act, do I believe myself to have merit or demerit, and pass sentence on myself as reasonable or unreasonable, prudent or foolish; and, in a word, apply to myself, although I have yielded necessarily to the strongest motive, certain expressions and names, all implying most decisively and forcibly that I was free to yield or resist, to take, at my option, this or the other course, and, consequently, that this, so called, strongest motive did not, after all, determine my act. Here, I repeat, is that which may well excite the astonishment of the advocates of necessity, and which they should do their best to explain.

You see that this doctrine, seemingly so simple and natural that, among many motives acting upon us, the strongest inevitably determines our volition, is so far from being simple, that it really becomes incomprehensible the moment we examine it more closely.

When I attempt thus to bring argument against

argument, for the sake of proving that we are free, and that motives do not exercise a controlling force over us, I feel as uncomfortable as if I were answering one who should deny our power of moving or walking. To employ arguments in refuting such an opinion seems like some game of logic; for I have to oppose to this opinion a plain and decisive fact—a fact, the consciousness of which I can never lose, and which is in accordance with common forms of speech in all languages, with the universal faith, and with the established practices of mankind. And I smile to think, that, when I can utterly destroy the system of necessity, by merely bringing it in conflict with this fact, I should yet be seeking superfluous trains of reasoning to oppose it with. This fact, which we cannot escape from, is one which consciousness bears witness to, when placed under the influence of the strongest possible motive, say self-preservation. I feel distinctly that it depends upon myself, and only upon myself, whether I shall yield to or resist this motive, and do or refrain from what it recommends. I can conceive, indeed, that a man may, in good faith, deny this evident fact; for to what lengths of delusion will not the spirit of theory and system carry us? But I will ask him, am I not justified in not admitting this peculiar opinion of a small body of men, when I see that even they act and speak as if they agreed in my opinion; when I see the most logical among them form a scheme of ethics, and give rules for conduct; when I find in every tongue the words *right* and *duty*, *punishment* and *reward*, *merit* and *demerit*; when the whole human race agree in being indignant against him who does

wrong, and in admiring him who does right; when, indeed, there is not an event in human life, which does not imply necessarily, and in a thousand different ways, this very freedom of will of which I feel so sensibly and deeply conscious? I have certainly some right to feel strengthened in my opinion by so many testimonies to its truth, and by its perfect accordance with what I see about me. And, were there no stronger objections against the doctrine which denies human freedom, than this universal contradiction which it offers to all human belief, conduct, and language, to all judgments and feelings, it would, even then, be more completely answered than it deserves.

I pass now to another argument against the freedom of the will, which I will endeavor to set before you in the simplest form.

If, it is said, man is really free; if he is not necessarily determined on every occasion by the strongest motive, — all the calculations which we make as to men's conduct would be ridiculous, and there would be no means of anticipating a result. And, in fact, to admit that man is a free being, is to admit that his resolutions, and consequently his actions, are not the consequence of the motives which influence his will. Now, when I seek to foresee what a man's conduct will be in any given circumstances, I begin with considering the motives which ought to influence his actions; I calculate the relative force of these motives, and, when I have found, as I think, the strongest, I conclude, without hesitation, that he will pursue the course which this motive prescribes. It is plain that this

reasoning, so constantly repeated, implies the truth of the doctrine that the motives do determine necessarily the volition, and that, of different motives, the strongest does determine the choice.

I will begin by the remark, that this reasoning upon the future conduct of men, even when we are perfectly sure of all the motives which will be presented to them when making their decision, carries with it by no means the same feeling of certainty with which we form our calculations as to physical events, whose laws of operation are known. When a law of nature is known, it is with complete certainty that we predict phenomena which will occur under that law; but instead of this, when we try to form a calculation as to the resolution that a man will come to under certain circumstances, the motives which can operate upon him being all supposed known, our reasoning never goes further than to a judgment on *probabilities*; and, in fact, nothing is more common in such cases than to find by the event that we were deceived. I might avail myself advantageously of this uncertainty, as making in favor of my opinion, and account for it in part by the very fact of human freedom, which the advocates of necessity deny. But I will not do this. I prefer rather to ascribe this uncertainty altogether to two most evident and unquestionable causes; first, that we can never foresee what motive among the many which may influence his conduct, will present themselves to the agent; and, secondly, that, having no measure of his sensibility, his selfish passions, or conscientiousness, we cannot calculate what motive will be the strongest. I will admit, then, that these two

causes are the only ones which render our foresight of conduct uncertain. But what follows? What consequence is to be drawn from this? This only, that, if we could know all the motives which will act upon a man's will, and, moreover, which among these motives will be the strongest, we could predict with certainty his conduct; that is to say, — to express it as it should be expressed, — if we could know all the motives which will act upon him, and the motive that will determine his choice, we should know what his resolve will be. We could predict his resolution beforehand, if we knew what it was! Upon this condition, uncertainty as to the acts of our fellow-beings would disappear. All this it is easy enough to conceive of; but does it not prove that the attempt to trace a similarity between volitions and events in the physical world is only a foolish playing upon words and nonsense?

Two things are certain, gentlemen: first, that we cannot foresee, except in a limited degree, the volition of our fellow-beings in any given circumstance; secondly, that such anticipations can never, even in the most favorable circumstances, rise above a high probability. Does this limited power of foresight of actions imply that man is not free? or is it reconcilable with the fact of human liberty? This is the question. Now, suppose a being who is perfectly master of himself, — that is to say, who has the power of disposing his faculties, directing them, and, consequently, of governing his conduct; place such a being in circumstances where there are two courses to be pursued — one evidently unpromising, the other



encouraging—and give him intelligence sufficient to see and comprehend this;—precisely because he is free, is it not probable, and almost certain, that he will use his freedom, that is to say, his power, of governing his conduct, in such a way as to avoid the course which threatens evil, and choose that which promises advantage? Without doubt. Thus supposing him free, we can form very probable conjectures as to his conduct. I ask, now, whether all the conjectures which we do or can form as to the actions of our fellow-beings, are not of this kind? They are, then, wholly compatible with a belief in human freedom. More than this, they really imply and suppose it; for they begin always with the supposition that the being is reasonable, and that he will therefore perceive the most agreeable, the most useful, or the most proper course of conduct; which implies that, after he has thus discovered what it is, he will be free to follow it. For where would be the good in reason's seeing the right, if there was no liberty of acting accordingly? I ask, again, is this the way in which we reason, when we attempt to foresee the operation of forces acting from necessity, as winds, waters, the atmosphere? Which, then, do our conjectures as to human actions imply, their liberty or necessity?

It is a matter of daily experience, that we resist the force of different motives originating in duty, self-love, or passion. Would such resistance, which cannot be denied, be possible in a being whose volitions were a necessary consequence of the action of motives or impulses? Does not this single fact

of resistance prove, on the contrary, that it is not by motives, as a cause, that volitions are produced, as the effect, but from the me, as a true cause, which deliberates before determining? and that, therefore, I am subject only to the influence, and nowise to the constraining force, of motive? But enough, and too much, on this subject. Let us pass to another form of the argument for necessity—the last which I shall offer to your consideration.

I take up, as you perceive, only the principal arguments by which the scheme of necessity is supported; because, if I should attempt to consider all the weak as well as strong, the incidental as well as leading ones, the limits of a lecture would be too narrow. I confine myself, therefore, simply to an exposition of the most important of these reasonings, and give to each as brief a discussion as possible.

There are philosophers who have denied the freedom of the will, chiefly on the ground that, if men were free, they would be incapable of being subject to control or government; and, as a matter of fact, say they, how are men governed? The condition of their being governed is, that the rewards and punishments which excite hope or fear should operate necessarily upon their volition; for, if they do not act necessarily, that is to say, if their wills are free, it is evident that they cannot be governed. Do not complain of the weakness of this argument. I find it as weak as you do. It is not my duty, however, to strengthen the positions of the system I am attacking.

In such reasoning as this, there is a manifest

sophistry and confusion of language. Government, as you well know, is of two kinds—physical and moral. Physical government acts by constraint, moral government by influence. If I have some puppets before me, and hold in my hand the strings which are attached to their limbs, I may truly be said to govern the puppets; there is nothing contradictory in the expression; yet every one feels that the expression is metaphorical. We say, too, that the puppets obey the impulse which I communicate to them; but we feel here, too, that this word *obedience* has a metaphorical sense, as the word *government* had before.

To pretend that men, before they can be subject to government, must be influenced in their actions by those who govern them, as puppets are by him who pulls the wires, is an opinion as utterly opposed to common sense as can well be imagined. The fact is, that when a legislator threatens with penalties those who infringe a law, or promises rewards to those who obey it, he has no thought of constraining, as with physical force, the will of those to whom he offers this twofold sanction of the law; his only intention is to give rise to hopes and fears which may, in the case proposed, act as motives on their volition. He takes men as they are; he shows them, if he is wise and just, what is their true duty, their real interest; he calls this a law; and then, to enforce the obligation which this duty imposes, and strengthen the desire which their interests awaken, he superadds promises and threats. Does this imply that he considers men as puppets? Just the contrary. If he thought men ma-

chines, he would not attempt to enforce the law by exhibiting to them its justice or expediency ; for these conceptions of the reason do not act like material forces, by necessary impulsion. He would not menace them with penalties, he would not promise reward ; for menaces and promises act only through the medium of reason and passion, and not as a constraining force. This is the way in which he who would govern men attempts it ; and when he secures their obedience, he knows that it is in this way he has done it ; and herein is discovered the true and proper meaning of the words *government* and *obedience*. These words, in their proper acceptation, imply the liberty of the subject of government ; and it is only in a metaphorical sense that we employ them when we speak of governing the puppets, or of their obeying us. Whoever, then, asserts that there can be no such thing as government, if man is a free being, places himself in direct opposition to common forms of speech, and to the only true meaning of these very words, *government* and *obedience*, which, far from excluding the idea of the liberty of the governed, necessarily implies it, and never could have been invented without this idea of liberty.

Such is the difference between physical and moral government. No man of common sense can fail to perceive a distinction which is clear as the day. To influence and to compel are two wholly dissimilar acts. To be subject to influence, a being must be supposed to have the faculties of comprehension and of choice — in a word, freedom of will. Compulsion supposes nothing of the kind. We compel beings who have no intelligence, no freedom of choice. We

influence beings who are endowed with these capacities. Suppress the ideas of liberty and of intelligence, and the word *influence* has no legitimate sense in which it can be applied, any more than the words *government*, or *obedience*, or a thousand others, with which all languages are filled, and which are all genuine products of our moral nature.

Do not ascribe this long discussion, into which I have entered, to any fear of disastrous consequences upon the mind of our age from this system of necessity. I am entirely at ease on that subject. And by what I have said, I do not suppose that I have either strengthened or weakened your clear conviction and profound consciousness of moral freedom. But these ideas, which we have been considering, enter into great systems of philosophy taught by distinguished men; and therefore it has been impossible wholly to pass them by. As you well know, a warm controversy was raised, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, by the most celebrated philosophers of that era, in which Clarke, Leibnitz, Collins, following Hobbes and Spinoza, whose strange doctrines had disturbed all the notions of common sense, took part. This controversy was a great event at the time; it seemed as if man's moral freedom would perish utterly, if it could not be saved from some empty sophisms. The result, however, was, that facts were so firmly established, the meaning of words so accurately fixed, and questions, before confounded in most minds, so separated and disengaged, that the work of establishing for the freedom of the will the same place in science that it

had always held in common sense became comparatively easy. By the mass of mankind this doctrine is never doubted; their words, acts, and thoughts prove that they admit it without a question.

## LECTURE V.

## SYSTEM OF MYSTICISM.

GENTLEMEN,

OF the four great systems implying the impossibility of a law of human obligation, I have, in my last lecture, exhibited the first—the system of necessity. You have seen this system under three different forms; that is to say, as arriving, by three different ways, at the common conclusion, that man is not a free being. Hobbes, displacing liberty from its rightful sphere, and denying that it exists where only it is to be found, while falsely affirming its existence elsewhere, preserves the name, while he destroys the reality. Hume gives up both; for, by destroying the idea of an efficient cause altogether, he makes it impossible that the question of liberty should be discussed at all. Other philosophers, too numerous to be named, arrive at the same result, by asserting that motives necessarily determine the will. Such are the three forms, under which I have successively exhibited the system of necessity, and which I have in turn endeavored to refute. I would here leave the consideration of this system, and pass

immediately to the system of mysticism, which I proposed as the subject of this lecture, were there not, among the forms under which the doctrine of necessity has been advocated, yet a fourth, sufficiently famous and remarkable to demand some consideration. I will give you a rapid sketch of it, and then pass to the system of mysticism, which, as I have said, will be the subject of the present lecture.

This fourth form of the doctrine of necessity is that which is based upon the seeming incompatibility of human freedom with divine foreknowledge. This is the argument of its advocates. There is but one alternative: either man is free, and then it must be impossible to foresee his volitions, or else his volitions can be foreseen, and then it is impossible that he should be free. We must sacrifice our belief in human freedom, or our faith in divine foreknowledge. We can choose for ourselves; but, for themselves, the advocates of this system do not hesitate to give up the idea of human liberty.

I remark, in the first place, that philosophy is by no means obliged to give a full explanation of all things—and for this very good reason, that the human mind being limited, it cannot explain all things. Philosophy does not explain, and is not bound to explain, more than the human mind can comprehend. The boundary of human comprehension is the boundary of philosophy. She has no need of carrying her explanation further. Supposing, then, that the mind cannot reconcile human liberty with the *à priori* conception of the foreknowledge of God,



it by no means follows that the fact of human liberty, or that the conception of the divine foreknowledge, should be sacrificed; it only follows that the mind, comprehending the idea that God must foresee the future, and finding, on the other hand, the fact that man is free, is not able to explain how these two facts can be reconciled.

The only condition which can make it necessary for us to sacrifice our faith either in human liberty or in divine foreknowledge, is, that there is an absolute contradiction between these two ideas; such a contradiction as there would be between the two propositions, two and two make four, two and two do not make four. In this case, gentlemen, but in this case only, where reason distinctly perceives it to be impossible that what we conceive of God and what we feel in ourselves should both be absolutely true, should we be bound to sacrifice the conception to the fact, or the fact to the conception; for then, and then only, would all chance of reconciling the conflicting evidence on which they rest be destroyed.

Suppose, for a moment, that this was really the case; then, for myself, I say, that, forced in this supposed extremity to choose, I should feel bound to sacrifice my faith in divine foreknowledge.

The fact of human liberty is something of which we are much more certain than we can be of divine foreknowledge. Why? For this excellent reason — the idea that God foresees the future, is but a consequence from our idea of God. Now, the idea which men form of God must evidently be a most incomplete one; for it is impossible that human reason should, in

its weakness, comprehend God, who is infinite. Should we place an idea, which is but a consequence of a most imperfect conception of a Being who is infinite, in comparison with a fact falling under our immediate observation? This would not surely be the part of good sense. If, then, we do perceive an absolute contradiction between the divine foreknowledge and human liberty, and feel ourselves obliged to give up one or the other, it must be our belief in the divine foreknowledge. For we are more sure that we are free beings, than we can be that God foresees the future. No such contradiction, however, really exists; it is but an illusion, as I hope I shall be able to prove.

To begin, then, with a very simple remark: if we conceive that foreknowledge in the divine Being acts as it does in us, we run the risk of forming a most incorrect notion of it, and, consequently, of seeing a contradiction between it and liberty, that would disappear altogether had we a truer notion. Let us consider that we have not the same faculty for foreseeing the future as we have of reviewing the past; and even in cases where we do anticipate it, it is by an induction from the past. This induction may amount either to certainty, or merely to probability. It will amount to certainty when we are perfectly acquainted with necessary causes, and their law of operation. The effects of such causes in given circumstances having been determined by experience, we can predict the return of similar effects under similar circumstances with entire certainty, so long at least as the present laws of nature remain in force. It is in this way that we foresee, in most cases, the physical occurrences, whose



law of operation is known to us; and such foresight would extend much further, were-it not for unexpected circumstances which come in to modify the result. This induction can never go beyond probability, however, when we consider the acts of free causes; and for the very reason that they are free, and that the effects which arise from such causes are not of necessary occurrence, and do not invariably follow the same antecedent circumstances. Where the question is, then, as to the acts of any free cause, we are never able to foresee it with certainty, and induction is limited to conjectures of probability.

Such is the operation, and such are the limits of human foresight. Our minds foresee the future by induction from the past; this foresight can never attain certainty except in the case of causes and effects connected by necessary dependence; when the effects of free causes are to be anticipated, as all such effects are contingent, our foresight must be merely conjecture.

If, now, we attempt to attribute to the Deity the same mode of foresight of which human beings are capable, it will follow, as a strict consequence, that, as God must know exactly and completely the laws to which all the necessary causes in nature are subject — laws which change only according to his will, — he can foresee with absolute certainty all events which will take place in the future. The certain foresight of effects, therefore, which is to us possible only in particular cases, and which, even then, is always liable to the limitation that the actual laws of nature are not modified, — this foresight, which, even when most sure,

is limited and contingent, must be complete and absolute certainty in God, supposing his foreknowledge to be of like kind with ours.

But it is evident that, according to this hypothesis, the Deity cannot foresee with certainty the volitions of free causes any more than we can ; for, as his foresight is founded, as ours is, upon the knowledge of the laws which govern causes, and as the law of free causes is precisely this, that their volitions are not necessary, God cannot calculate, any more than a human being can, the influence of motives, which, in any given case, may act upon such causes. Even his intelligence can lead no further than to conjectures, more probable, indeed, than ours, but never amounting to certainty. According to this hypothesis, we must, therefore, say either that God can foresee, certainly, the future volitions of men, and that man, therefore, is not a free being, or that man is free, and that God, therefore, cannot, any more than we can, foresee his volitions with certainty ; and thus divine prescience and human free-will are brought into direct contradiction.

But, gentlemen, why must there be this contradiction ? Merely because we suppose that God foresees the future in the same way in which we foresee it ; that his foreknowledge operates like our own. Now, is this, I ask, such an idea as we ought to form of divine prescience, or such an idea as even the partisans of this system, which I am opposing, form ? Have we any reason for thus imposing upon the Deity the limitation of our own feebleness ? I think not.

Unendowed, as we are, with any faculty of foreseeing the future, it may be difficult for us to conceive of

such a faculty in God. But yet can we not from analogy form such an idea? We have now two faculties of perception — of the past by memory, of the present by observation; can we not imagine a third to exist in God — the faculty of perceiving the future, as we perceive the past? What would be the consequence? This: that God, instead of conjecturing, by induction, the acts of human beings from the laws of the causes operating upon them, would see them simply as the results of the free determinations of the will. Such perception of future acts no more implies the necessity of those actions, than the perception of similar acts in the past. To see that effects arise from certain causes is not to force causes to produce them; neither is it to compel these effects to follow. It matters not whether such a perception refers to the past, present, or future; it is merely a perception; and, therefore, far from producing the effect perceived, it even presupposes this effect already produced.

I do not pretend that this vision of what is to be is an operation of which our minds easily conceive. It is difficult to form an image of what we have never experienced; but I do assert, that the power of seeing what no longer exists is full as remarkable as that of seeing what has as yet no being, and that the reason of our readily conceiving of the former is only the fact that we are endowed with such a power: to my reason, the mystery is the same.

But whatever may or may not be in reality the mode of divine foreknowledge, or however exact may be the image which we attempt to form of it, it always, I say, — and this is the only point I am desirous of

proving, — it always remains a matter of uncertainty, which cannot be removed, whether the divine foreknowledge is of a kind like our own, or not; and as, in the one case, there would not be the same contradiction that there is in the other, between our belief in divine foreknowledge and human freedom, it is proved true, I think, that no one has a right to assert the existence of such a contradiction, and the necessity that human reason should choose between them.

To what conclusion, then, does philosophy come in this grand controversy as to human freedom and divine foreknowledge? To this, gentlemen, that there are two things in which we believe — one, on the unquestionable authority of observation; the other, on the far weaker authority of our reasonings, without our being able clearly to explain how they coexist. And here we ought, by common consent, to leave the subject; for philosophy should know how to respect its true limits, under penalty of losing all claim to the respect and confidence of men.

I have now done with the system of necessity, and pass on to the consideration of mysticism.

Every philosophical system has its foundation and ground-work in human nature; the only thing difficult is, to have such a knowledge of human nature as will enable us to discover the root and source of each system. With this knowledge, we can understand, thoroughly, each opinion; and the principle once grasped, we easily gain a clear understanding of its consequences. Vague and obscure as is the system of mysticism, I will yet endeavor to point out the facts in human nature from which it originates and

which it attempts to express; I will invite your close attention, for the trains of thought to be followed are very subtle.

Mysticism rests on two facts, already described in the sketch that I have given of human nature. Let me recall them to your minds. In the first place, then, I showed how great the difference is between the absolute destiny of man, as it would result from his nature, and the actual destiny which an individual, placed under the most favorable circumstances, attains in this life. In other words, I showed you, that, with all our efforts, we cannot attain to more than a very small part of the good which our nature craves, or accomplish, except in an imperfect degree, our destiny. In the second place, I showed you, that we cannot, in this life, secure even that measure of good which is actually within our reach, except on the condition of substituting for the natural action of our faculties another mode of action, whose characteristic is concentration, and whose consequence is fatigue.

From these two facts it results, on the one hand, that human life can, at the best, afford but very imperfect good; and, on the other, that no human being can acquire even this good, without an effort which is not natural, and which is followed by a fatigue that can be relieved only by allowing the bent spring to be relaxed, and our faculties to return to their natural and primitive mode of action.

From these two facts springs mysticism. If the only means of obtaining any good in this life is an effort which is against nature,—and if, even then, a man, the most favored by circumstances, only secures the

shadow of good, — is it not plain that the pursuit and acquisition of good is not the end of the present life, and that to hope or search for it implies an equal delusion? What? can a thing not to be found in life really be the end of life, — a thing, whose shadow even we cannot reach, without doing violence to our nature, and submitting all our faculties to an insupportable constraint? Man has truly an end and destiny to attain; but to seek it here is folly, for our lot in life is disappointment. To resign ourselves to our weakness, — to renounce all effort and action, — to await death, that it may break our fetters, and place us in an order of things where the accomplishment of our end will be possible, — this is our only reasonable course, our only true vocation.

It may be proved that this is the true origin of the system of mysticism, by the fact that the historical eras, when it has been most fully developed, have been precisely those in which human efforts were most discouraged, by profound experience of their fruitlessness.

Ages of tyranny, of skepticism, and of moral degradation, have been those in which mysticism has been professed most earnestly, and actually appeared in practice on the largest scale. The greatest development of mysticism was in the age which immediately succeeded the introduction of Christianity; and you well know what the state of the world then was. A skepticism, the most universal in philosophy, coöperated with an utter corruption of morals, and a most degrading tyranny, during this decline of the Roman empire. Truth, virtue, liberty, seemed only words;



every thing united to prove to man the futility of effort, and thus to discourage it. Why, if truth could not be discovered, should he seek it? Why, if there were no moral distinctions, should he prefer one course of conduct to another? Why, indeed, should he act at all, if ages of heroism and victory had but served to introduce an era of society wholly wretched and inglorious, under the sway of weak and bloody tyrants? Such was the lesson to man which this era seemed to utter. On the other hand, a flood of barbarism roared round the gates of the empire; and this threatening sign of fatal and inevitable ruin declared the vanity of earthly things, the emptiness of human power, yet louder, perhaps, than the voice of the past and the aspect of the present. Add yet further, that the exalted spirituality of the Christian faith gave a new impulse to those minds, already filled with contempt for earth, by its visions of heaven, and you will readily see that, if I have truly pointed out the principle of mysticism, never were circumstances more favorable for its growth.

Hence that wonderful passion for seclusion which peopled the deserts, which led to the solitudes of the Thebais one half the population of Egypt, and, developing all the elements of mysticism contained in Christianity, perverted the true spirit of this religion, and merged it in effeminate asceticism. This ascetic spirit did not, indeed, triumph, but it sowed in the bosom of the Christian church the fruitful seeds of monkish principles — seeds so long-lived and prolific, that fifteen centuries have not sufficed to exhaust them,

and which were developed with redoubled energy in the disastrous era of the middle ages.

You can conceive how the mystics were led to form the views of life which I have described. Grounds for such misconceptions exist in the facts of our nature, and in the circumstances of our present lot. But they did not rest here. For, with such conceptions of the present life, they had to explain how our lot became what it is; the mystery was to be penetrated in which a being is involved who thus sees his end and destiny, is endowed with faculties necessary for its attainment, and yet sees himself placed in the midst of external circumstances which present insurmountable obstacles. This state of being is intelligible to those who see in the present life a necessary scene of probation for the creation and education of a moral nature, whose trials, therefore, are to be courageously met, and actively surmounted; but, for those who see only evil in our lot, without perceiving its use and object, it is but an extraordinary phenomenon, whose cause must be sought in some anterior scene of existence. Thus the doctrine of mysticism brings with it inevitably either the doctrine of Manicheism, or that of the fall of man. Only one or the other view can explain the evils of life, if we have not embraced the idea that the purpose and effect of these is to produce a moral greatness in man which can exist on no other condition. Thus we see both doctrines strangely allying themselves with mysticism, in the faith of the hermits of the Thebais. The world,

in their view, is a place of punishment, where man is placed to expiate the sins committed by his progenitors, whom God had destined at first for a life of perfect felicity. To bear with resignation this chastisement during life, and wait for the hour of deliverance, they thought man's highest duty. But the principle of evil, the devil who tempted Eve in Paradise, was yet laboring to turn him away from this course of patient submission, and to seduce him into the follies of worldly activity, by the promise of all the goods which life presents, and thus was constantly deceiving and tempting our nature. Hence the trials by which the sainted anchorites were beset in the desert, and the state of perpetual warfare in which the legends represent them as living. These two dogmas, so closely associated with the fundamental principle of mysticism, have maintained their hold with it in the midst of Christendom. By a strange contradiction, they remain side by side with the doctrine of probation, although directly opposed to this great view of Christian truth, which has exerted upon humanity so powerful and useful an influence, and has produced so happy and grand a revolution in the whole science of ethics.

Such, gentlemen, are the three leading principles of mysticism. Let us look now to its effects on conduct. The principle once established, these consequences flow naturally and spontaneously from it, and no sect of mystics has escaped their influence. I will take, as an illustration, the grand school of anchorites, who introduced the monastic life into the practices of the church. You will thus compre-

hend the peculiar characteristic of that singular mode of existence, which presents one of the most remarkable phenomena of Christian civilization, and which we meet with in a greater or less degree of development wherever mysticism has prevailed.

I have explained at length, in the courses of the preceding years, two classes of obstacles which here impede human nature in its attempts to accomplish its true destiny. This world, far from being a place where all its constituent vital forces work together harmoniously, is, in fact, the battle-ground of their contention. Each force, in its process of development, finds itself limited and restrained by other forces, and, in turn, restrains them. All development here is incomplete, and, even in this imperfect degree, it is the result of the contest forever waging. Such is the real condition, in this world, of every power, whether free or necessary; such is the condition of human power, one of the weakest of all; and hence its limited influence. The very organization of this world which surrounds us, the very world itself, in other words, is a source of the evil of the present state, and renders fruitless all efforts to attain our real end.

But what is it that makes us thus subject to the outward world? What is it that causes these various forces to conflict with our will, to restrain and check it? It is the body. Nothing external could exercise any influence over us but through the body. As our body is at once material, and, at the same time, the necessary instrument by which our faculties act, the external world has power over us by influencing the

organs which we are obliged to use. The body is doubly an evil, then, by weakening our faculties through the external conditions it imposes, and by giving all other forces in nature control over the development of those faculties. Thus, then, the first source of our want of power is the influence of the external world; and the second is our bodily organization, by which we are subjected to this influence. The world and the body are the two great principles of evil here below; these are the two grand obstacles which oppose, in this life, our progress toward that final good for which we are fitted, and which our nature craves.

Admit this, and what follows? We must expect to find, in the creed of mystics, an irreconcilable hostility to the world and the flesh. And this is, in fact, the very most prominent and striking characteristic of the mystical doctrine and course of life.

The anchorites, who, in the era which we are considering, peculiarly represented the system of mysticism, used every possible means to destroy the influence of the body; they declared against it a perpetual and merciless warfare; not only would they not gratify its lawful desires, but they macerated it, scourged it, and sought to weaken and prostrate it by every means in their power; they went further, and yet more to testify the contempt in which they held it, and to show external symbols of their hatred, they clothed themselves in garments which concealed its proportions, as if it were not worthy to appear in the sight of man, or to occupy his attention for an instant. And, in acting thus, the anchorites not

only endeavored to manifest their hostility to the flesh, they sought also to weaken the hold of the world upon the soul, by annihilating, as far as they were able, the medium through which its influence was felt. They believed that the spirit would become freer, and more independent of the fetters which bound it to earth, in proportion as the body was weakened; while, at the same time, as the carnal appetites were eradicated, one avenue was closed through which the most attractive temptations of the external world gained entrance to the soul. In a word, they endeavored, with all their strength, to burst the ties which, by uniting the soul to the body, produced the evils of the present life; and the more they succeeded, the more did they feel this separation taking place, and that emancipation of the soul for which they sighed commencing, although it could be completed only in the hour of death.

This hostility to the body they extended to the world, as the true source of the evil of which the flesh was but the instrument. They therefore separated themselves from it, now by placing between them and it the impassable barrier of the desert, now by immuring themselves in walls from which there was no escape, thus artificially producing that isolation which they had not the means of seeking in distant solitudes. In the desert even, far from living together, they fled each other's presence; and the greatest saints avoided all neighborhood of man, and retreated further and further into the wilderness, as they saw neophytes appear in the vicinity of their retreats.

Within the monastery, it was the same. Narrow cells separated each from his fellow, and prevented all possible approach or contact with human beings. The monk despised every interest, pursuit, and affection, belonging to that world which he avoided thus anxiously. Glory, ambition, love, the purest and most natural emotions, all the occupations of life, all ties which bind man to his race, all forms, and laws, and movements of society, were by him detested and proscribed; proscribed as empty and delusive; detested as snares for the credulity of imagination, and for the blindness of instinct. But solitude was not enough; he sought to increase its horrors in proportion as he pushed to the extreme the mystical doctrine of hatred to the outward world, and feared leaving himself open to a single temptation from desire, affection, or activity; he dreaded lest he might be seduced away from hostility to the present life; from this painful effort of breaking every tie which bound him to earth, and from that contemplative longing for a better world which seemed to him the only true state of being here below.

Another consequence of the principles of mysticism, not less direct than hatred of the flesh and of the world, was contempt for action—for action in every shape and mode. And the lives of the mystics were as true to their principle in this particular as in the others which I have described.

We are impelled to action, gentlemen, as you know, by the instinctive tendencies of our nature demanding gratification. Each tendency has its peculiar end, and these different ends determine the different objects

to which human activity is directed. Different modes of action are to be distinguished, then, in our nature. Knowledge is one object of pursuit; hence the first mode of our activity — *intellectual activity*. The exertion of our energy on the external world is another object; hence *physical activity*. Union with beings who have life, especially with those of our own race, is an end also; hence arises a third mode, which we call *sympathetic activity*. Thus the seeking of knowledge, the exercise of our energies on the external world, and loving, are forms of human activity, as our nature aspires to the end for which it was made, and which it is impelled to pursue in these three directions. Life is passed in this threefold pursuit and effort, in the search for these three kinds of good; and such is the force of the instincts impelling us, such the natural energy of the faculties with which we are endowed for their gratification, that, however much men strive to subdue them or restrain their action, they cannot wholly succeed.

And yet this was the wish of the mystics; for, according to their convictions, it was not the will of God that these instincts should be satisfied in this life; and any attempt on the part of man to realize their satisfaction was, therefore, worse than error and folly; it was rebellion to the commands of the Deity, a concession made to the everlasting adversary of the human race. Complete passivity — that is to say, an absolutely impossible state — was the ideal of perfection to which they aspired with all their power. With such an end proposed for their pursuit, really more unattainable than the perfect happiness which they



rejected, it is curious to observe the practical modes by which the mystics sought its accomplishment. Let us begin with intellectual activity.

We arrive at knowledge, in our present state, as you well know, by attention; and attention is the concentration of intellect, that is to say, an intellectual effort. Despising the end, the mystic of course despised the means; and looking upon science as a dangerous deceit, he was bound to take all means to repress both the natural curiosity, which makes us desire it, and the intellectual efforts through which we seek it. But how destroy this faculty of intelligence? It cannot be destroyed. Of all modes of human activity, that of intellect is the most difficult to repress. It acts even when we wish most to check it; for it must act before we can form such a wish. Fortunately, there are two modes of the development of the intelligent faculty. At one time passive, with senses open to impressions from the world, floating on the tide of surrounding influences, giving itself up to passing images, it receives a knowledge which is vague, confused, and uncertain; at another, becoming active, and uniting all its forces, applying them, as it wills, to different objects, it examines, analyzes, distinguishes, acquiring precise information and clear, consecutive ideas. In the second stage only is there effort. In the contemplative state there is none. Intellect is, then, idly following its natural bent; active indeed, because activity is its essence, but still as little active as it possibly can be, because no act of the will sustains, directs, or concentrates its energies. It depends upon ourselves to suppress this act

of will or not, and, consequently, to confine to the contemplative mode, to which we ourselves contribute nothing, all action of the intellect. This the mystics attempted and succeeded in. All, especially the anchorites, forbade all intellectual effort, and recommended a life of contemplation as the only lawful sphere of mental activity. In other words, a contemplative life, and contempt for all scientific research, have been the two characteristic traits of every mystical sect, without exception.

Now, to what does contemplation lead? Abandon yourself for a length of time to this passive state of the intellect; give yourself up to all ideas and images which come confusedly and pass away, and soon you will feel your mind become clouded and perplexed, amid this ever-fluctuating series of impressions; a stupefaction and delirium, in which truth and error, illusion and reality, can no longer be distinguished, will come over you; and let this state be prolonged, especially in the night season, when nothing occurs to interrupt it, no motion, sound, or external event, and soon you will be unable to tell whether you wake or sleep, and will become a prey to the phantoms and chimeras which throng our dreams. From the state of contemplation to revery, hallucination, and delirium, is but a step; this step all sects of mystics boldly took. And do not suppose that they disavowed these consequences. It was a principal doctrine of mysticism, that the human mind could, through contemplation, arrive at views of truth and of actual being, which it was quite incapable of, in its ordinary condition, and could thus hold communications with

the future, with unseen spirits, with God himself. Theurgy is the daughter of mysticism; and, far from avoiding these hallucinations and ecstatic states, mysticism sought them as elevated stages of that contemplative life which all should strive to attain, and as signal marks of the favor of Heaven extended to the saints. Whence, now, this predilection of mysticism for contemplation? The mystic loved it, because, in this state, the mind was as passive as it could in its nature be, and more and more passive the nearer contemplation approached the ecstasy which was its consummation. On the same ground, and for the same reason, the mystics asserted that their intellects were more clear-sighted when they slept than when they were awake, infinitely nearer to truth and to God; and hence the respect they paid to dreams, and the care with which they endeavored to interpret them; whence you see that mysticism ended, necessarily, in substituting the visions of reveries for science, as the result of intellectual action, as it had first substituted contemplation for attention, in its mode of operation.

Another trait of the mystics, immediately connected with those I have already described, was their contempt for precise language; and this consequence of their principles, if not so immediate and direct, is still a necessary one; for a precise mode of expression implies precise ideas, and these presuppose intellectual effort; while, on the other hand, in the state of contemplation, all ideas are suggested under the form of images, and images are confused; their knowledge, then, was rather a sentiment than a clear

view, and sentiment forbids definite statement. Precision of language was, therefore, repugnant to the mystics; hence the obscurity of style, and the fondness for symbolic expression, which is peculiarly their characteristic. This trait, trifling as it may appear to be, deserved, nevertheless, this passing notice.

Intellectual activity cannot be wholly subdued. The mystics were forced, therefore, to treat with it, and, since they could not wholly expel it, to diminish, as they could, its power. Not so, however, with physical activity. Depending wholly, as this does, on the will, it is only necessary to will its suppression to effect it. Here, then, the system could be put fully in practice; and the mystics did not fail to do so. Physical inaction has been always considered, recommended, and practised by them, as one trait of the ideal life. To escape from the sphere of physical activity, it was necessary only to withdraw to deserts and monasteries, and thus set themselves apart from all the motives to action which prompt men in society. Even in these retreats, it was not without repugnance and regret that they performed even the indispensable acts of life, and usually intrusted the discharge of them to neophytes, who had not reached the state of perfection. The most saintly anchorites jealously sought this glory of pushing to extreme the habit of physical inactivity; and in the lives of the most famous may be found instances of excesses of this nature which can only be equalled by the Fakirs — the mystical sect of India. Together with this inaction, the annals of the desert and the monastery show us their habit of performing the most painful toils, arbitrarily imposed or volun-

tarily undertaken; and they were dictated by the same spirit of desire to weaken the strength of the body and show the vanity of human effort. For this end, the anchorites of the Thebais imposed upon themselves, and upon those who came to unite with them, the duty of traversing vast distances, beneath the burning sun, to draw water from the Nile. And for what object, think you? To water a stick planted in the sand, which could not grow. What keener satire on human activity, I ask you,—what more striking symbol of the fruitlessness of effort could be given, than this painful toil for an object so frivolous? Thus, even in their activity, did these hermits seek to manifest that contempt for action, which was a necessary consequence of the system of mysticism, and which the lives of its votaries manifested in a variety of forms.

Need I show you how contempt for the sympathies and affections, the other grand spring of human action, equally appeared in their conduct? Is it not plain, that, to withdraw from the world, and live alone in the desert or the solitude of a cell, was to burst at once all social ties, and voluntarily to renounce them forever? There, as you know, were none to love; no parent, spouse, nor child; no brother, no friend; and there these affections, thus rendered powerless, were to be utterly extirpated from the heart. This was a condition of mystical perfection; and they were the greatest saints, who had best succeeded in extinguishing every sympathetic affection in their nature. Is it not plain, too, that this mutilation of their spiritual being was a necessary

consequence of their opinion as to the present life, and the proper course of human conduct?

And now, gentlemen, sum up what remains of human nature, thus perfected and sanctified by the mystical creed, and you will see that it is all absorbed and condensed into one single state of mind — contemplation; and, if I might use the expression, I should say that all issues and outlets of active powers, desires, and faculties in the mind were wholly closed, save this single one of contemplation. And this is left open, only because it is beyond human power to close it.

In fact, mysticism, availing itself of the power which God has given us over our faculties by the exercise of will, used this power to condemn them to inaction, that is to say, to suppress all our activity. One faculty only, in one mode of its action, resisted the attempt — the intellect; and mysticism, going to the utmost limit of its power, suppressed the one mode of its action which it could reach, and tolerated the other only because it could not accomplish an impossibility in its destruction. Thus was all human activity reduced to one mode of intellectual action, namely, contemplation. But still our faculties are the necessary instruments for the satisfaction of our natural instincts. If, then, you reduce these instruments to a state of inaction, all satisfaction of our impulses becomes impossible. But, if one of these instruments is left in action, this, and this one alone, must labor for their gratification. By thus absorbing the whole of human activity in contemplation, mysticism forced our whole nature — the mind, the affections,

even the body—to seek in contemplation the gratification of their desires. All activity, I might say all human vitality, finding this only outlet, and seeking vent in this single act, raised it at once to its highest stage of ecstasy and trance; and as, on the other hand, all the desires of human nature sought in it their satisfaction, the state of ecstasy was believed to include all kinds of good to which human nature involuntarily aspires. Ecstasy, to the eye of the mystic, was true science, moral perfection, union with God; science, virtue, knowledge, all were combined in ecstasy. It satisfied the intellect, by bringing it into communication with the world of truth which was only revealed in the state of trance. It satisfied the activity of our nature, by exhibiting to it the state of perfection to which it aspired. It satisfied the affections, by the communion it offered with God, the Being most amiable and lovely of all beings,—a communion to be yet closer in another life. Thus the state of ecstasy satisfied all wants, and mysticism, though appearing to destroy, really destroyed no power; our activity, the tendencies of our nature, though turned from their natural pursuits, were not eradicated, but, concentrated in contemplation, they put forth all their energy there, and there found the satisfaction they craved.

The most perfect symbol of mysticism was the anchorite who conceived the idea of living upon the top of a column, and who passed long years there in total inactivity. Maceration of the body, isolation from the world, absolute passivity, entire

absorption of all the faculties and all the energies of the soul in a trance of twenty years,—here was mysticism imbodyed; and, as if to render the symbol complete, this column was reared upon the very borders of the East,—that land which, from all ages, has been the home of mysticism.

I feel sure, gentlemen, if you have understood what has now been said, that you will find nothing strange in the lives of the mystics, to which you have now the key and the ready explanation. I hasten to consider such consequences of this system as are more peculiarly moral.

What is the strict consequence of this principle, that man cannot accomplish his destiny on earth, and that his highest duty is to be resigned to his condition, and to wait patiently for the hour when God will deliver him? It follows, necessarily, that man is to submit, and not to act; and, as all actions are equally fruitless, that there is no moral distinction between them. As a matter of fact, this is the consequence to which the mystics, who carried out their opinions fully, did actually come. Plotinus professed boldly this consequence of mystical doctrines. He affirmed that there was no difference between actions,—that there could be no good nor evil,—and why? Because man has no end to pursue on earth, and therefore no motive to determine him. What, according to him, should man be? A wholly passive creature, resigned and submissive, surrendering himself to a course of events not controlled by himself, but emanating from God. Thus you see, that,



by the confession of mystics themselves, their system led directly to a denial that man could have any duties in the present life.

If any further proof is needed of the truth of this assertion, it may be found in the conduct of another class of mystics, which, for the honor of humanity be it said, was infinitely smaller than the austere class. Setting out from the principle that there is no moral difference between actions, these men were led, not to inactivity, but to licentiousness, and scrupled not to gratify every passion, whether bodily or mental, and abandon themselves without restraint to the grossest indulgence. Of what importance, in truth, is the conduct we pursue here on earth, if we have been placed here only to exist for a time, while awaiting a higher life? Why, with such convictions, should we desire a man to resist the invitations of pleasure, and prefer a virtue of which he has no conception, when he feels himself under no obligation, present or future, to do one thing rather than another? Obligation is destroyed utterly by the principle of mysticism; and it is therefore one of the most remarkable of the systems of belief through which the human mind has been brought to a misconception of the law of obligation.

It remains for me to show, in a few words, that, if such are the legitimate consequences of mysticism, the principle itself is false, and consequently inadmissible.

It is true, then,—and once again observe, that every system has some truth for its foundation,—it is perfectly true, that man cannot attain the highest

good, and the complete destiny which his nature promises; and that the degree of good which is accessible must be gained by effort, that is to say, by painful, self-imposed restraint. This is true. But the consequence which the mystics deduce from this is false. Let us suppose that man, as he came from the hands of his Maker, had been placed in circumstances entirely different from those of the present life, which presented no obstacle to the full satisfaction of his nature, and the complete development of his faculties, — in circumstances, that is to say, which would have allowed of his becoming immediately and completely happy, without any exertion on his own part, — what would have been the consequence? Man would have always remained a *thing*, and would never have become what now it is his chief glory to be, — for it renders him like to Deity, — a *person*. His condition would be as follows: by the mere fact of existence, his natural tendencies would be developed, and, impelled by them, his faculties would begin to act, and, without effort, would secure for the passions the good they craved. His nature would be happy, I will grant; it would never know the pain which it now experiences from the privation of good, nor the fatigue which now is the condition of existence; but man would have no part in determining his own destiny. Never would he know its true glory, never deserve its fulfilment. It is this very difficulty which we meet with, in attempting to accomplish our destiny, that awakens us, — makes us comprehend our real end, discover the means of attaining it, take command of ourselves, govern our

faculties, and restrain our passions, that we may succeed in the attempt,—it is this very difficulty, in a word, which calls out the *personality* of our being; for all these acts are acts of our personality—the elements which constitute us persons. And it is in becoming a person that we become a *cause*—a cause properly so called—a free cause, intelligent, having an end and plan, foreseeing, deliberating, resolving, capable of merit or demerit, and responsible for acts,—in a word, something like to God—a moral and rational agent—a man. If any one prefers, to such a destiny as this which the present life affords, the state of a watch, endowed with sensation, and enjoying the pleasure of feeling within it the operation of unimpeded movements; in which it has no agency itself, I will not dispute the point with him. But, for myself, I cannot hesitate; I prefer infinitely the first, and thank God that he has allotted it to me. From this view of life, it would appear that our present condition is not one of punishment, in which we are placed to expiate some unknown sin committed by our sires, but a place of probation, into which we were brought that we might become like God—moral persons—intelligent, rational, and free. If we could conceive of a condition different from our present one, exempt from its miseries, in which, nevertheless, this moral creation could take place, then might we doubt this explanation of our present lot, and accuse God of severity. But, as it is impossible to conceive how this admirable creation of personality could take place, except under such conditions, the explanation

holds good, and God's ways are justified. If this is so, gentlemen, then are there duties in our present state of being; life is not intended for rest and inaction, but for the creation of personality, by the exercise of intellect and energy, that is, by virtue. The system of mysticism is, then, completely erroneous and false, although it had its origin in two actual facts of human nature.

## LECTURE VI.

## SYSTEM OF PANTHEISM.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE exhibited to you two of the systems, whose principles imply the impossibility of a law of human obligation—the systems of necessity and of mysticism; and have told you that there were two other systems which tend to the same conclusion, namely, pantheism and skepticism.

In the present lecture, I wish to direct your attention to the first of these—the system of pantheism. It has appeared under different forms, both in ancient and modern times, and in every era has received various modifications from the different philosophers who have advocated it. It would not be difficult to distinguish, under all these different forms, the essential principles of pantheism; and this, perhaps, would be the proper course; but I cannot resist the temptation of giving you an idea of the form under which the genius of Spinoza has presented it. And I will attempt, therefore, by an exposition of the system of Spinoza, to introduce you to a knowledge of the general principles of pantheism. Two reasons

determine me to take this course: first, Spinoza's doctrines, which all speak of, though few have taken the pains to study and comprehend them, are exceedingly obscure; and, secondly, no one among the philosophers who have professed pantheism, has developed its principles with such an exact method, and in so original and perfect a shape.

One work only of Spinoza's was published during his life-time, which bore the title *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. This was not so much an exposition of his system, as it was a half-philosophical, half-historical treatise, based on its principles. But after his death, under the title of "Posthumous Works of Spinoza," several of his writings were published; and in these it is that we find his doctrines fully set forth. His system is particularly unfolded in the *Ethica, Ordine Geometrico demonstrata, et in Quinque Partes distincta*. This work comprises, in five books, the most rigorous and complete, and, at the same time, the most obscure exposition of pantheism ever given. In the First Book, *De Deo*, Spinoza has defined the idea which we should form of God. In the Second, *De Natura et Origine Mentis*, he has deduced, from the idea of God, the idea which we should hold of man. In the Third, *De Natura et Origine Affectuum*, the philosopher has explained the mechanism of the passions, which, in his view, embraces the operation of all phenomena in human nature. In the Fourth, *De Servitute Humana, seu de Affectuum Viribus*, taking for his point of departure the laws of human nature which he had

before described, he shows the necessary order of its development, and the degree in which necessity influences the will of man. And, finally, in the Fifth Book, *De Potentia Intellectus, seu de Libertate Humana*, Spinoza has endeavored to show the nature and operation of free-will. This portion of the work is extremely weak, and goes further, if I mistake not, than the principles of his system, admitted in their strictness, will allow. Such is the plan of the work. First, God; next, man; then, the laws of his nature;—these established, the influence of necessity first, and, next, the operation of free-will, in this nature;—such is the plan of the *Ethica*. On this foundation he has reared a system of politics and ethics, in a second work, also published, which is, unfortunately, but a fragment. It is entitled *Tractatus Politicus, in quo demonstratur quomodo Societas, ubi Imperium Monarchicum Locum habet, sicut et ea ubi Optimi imperant, debet institui ne in Tyrannidem labatur, et ut Pax, Libertasque Civium inviolata maneat*. In these two works, especially in the first, are we to look for the system of Spinoza.

Spinoza's method is as follows:—He begins, as geometricians do, with the explanation of certain definitions and axioms; he then proceeds to announce, successively, different propositions, which he demonstrates, and thence passes in course to the scholia and corollaries; as he advances, each new demonstration implies the preceding one, and refers to it; so that, unless the propositions already proved, and the demonstration of them, are distinctly kept in mind,

it is impossible to comprehend what follows. This is the cause of the difficulty in understanding the work. And it would be somewhat presumptuous, even after the most attentive study, to assert that we understand Spinoza thoroughly. In this case, as in all cases where the attempt is made to apply mathematical forms of reasoning to subjects for which they are unsuitable, the geometrical method serves only to render the exposition complicated and obscure. In the summary sketch of the system which I am about to give, I can touch upon only the principal points of the system; it would require a course of many months to give you a thorough and detailed description of it. In thus limiting myself, I cannot promise that what I say will be perfectly clear and exact. Such a promise would imply that there was nothing contradictory in the system itself, which is not my opinion; and it would suppose, also, that I have a perfectly distinct idea of it myself, which is not the case; for I am obliged to confess that, after the most attentive study that I have been able to give it, there are several portions of the system which still leave me in doubt, and to which I must give a yet longer examination. But it will be sufficient, for the object we have in view, that you should seize the chief outlines of the system; and I shall have done something towards enabling you to comprehend its grand and obscure doctrines, if I awaken in you the desire to become acquainted with it, and put you in the right way to approach the study of it.

Spinoza distinguishes three classes of existences. The first class are those which appear to us to have



a real existence, while yet they can subsist only through and in some other being. The qualities of body, and whatever we call *attributes, properties, phenomena, effects*, compose this first class; they are never seen isolated, and possessed of independent existence, but always associated and united with something else, through which they have their being, and separated from which we cannot conceive of them as having any being at all. It is not thus with the second class. These do appear to have an existence of their own, and seem independent of other beings; they are actual being, as Spinoza says; they are, for example, all bodies which we see around us—man himself. But, when we reflect upon it, we find that all such things have once begun to exist, and that they cease to exist; in a word, we discover that it is not by themselves and of themselves that they hold and continue their existence. Man, for example, feels that he did not originate his own being; that he does not preserve it; that he has not the power of continuing it; and that, therefore, existence is not essential, but accidental in him. Although, therefore, such things do appear to exist independently, yet it is but an appearance; and we find that, in truth, the existence which is in them is not of them.

Existences of these two classes are all which fall within the sphere of our observation. But reason goes beyond them, and, reflecting that the existence of all such beings as we gain a knowledge of through observation is a derived one; that it is accidental and transient in them; that none of them possess

it as their essence;—concludes that somewhere there must be a self-existent being. Hence the idea of a third class, the peculiar characteristic of which is self-existence.

It is this third class which Spinoza first considers; and he proves at once that there cannot be more than one such being. For, says he, beings are distinguished by their attributes. Now, what do these attributes manifest? The essential nature of the being. If, then, two beings had the same essence, they would have the same attributes, of necessity; they could not then be distinct from one another; they would not be two, but one. We cannot suppose, therefore, that there are two beings whose essence is self-existence. The being whose essence is existence, then, is *one*; and, as we can only properly call that a *substance* which is self-existent, there is but one *substance*, which is *God*.

The unity of substance being thus proved, Spinoza demonstrates successively that it is *necessary* and *infinite*. It is necessary, because, to conceive of that which is self-existent as not being, is to annihilate it; and it is infinite, because, as it is possessed of all being, nothing can exist beyond itself. To be finite, it must be limited by some other being; and, as it contains all existence, nothing which does exist can be exterior to it, or limit it.

Unity, necessity, and infinity of substance, being thus demonstrated, Spinoza proves yet further that being is *eternal*, since it is necessary and infinite; *independent*, since it is one and infinite; and, finally, that it is *simple* and *indivisible*. For, if it was

composed of parts, he says, these parts would be of the same nature, or of a different one. If they were of the same nature, then there would be several beings essentially self-existent, which has been proved impossible; and, if its parts were of a different nature, taken together they would not be equal to the whole, and would not produce it. Spinoza enters fully into a discussion of these essential properties of the one substance, and demonstrates them successively. Obligated as I am to limit myself, I cannot follow him in the developments of his reasoning.

God being thus self-existent, his essence being existence, and the *one* substance being endowed with all the properties which I have mentioned, Spinoza next proceeds to inquire whether the being, thus proved to have extension, has also thought; and he shows that it is impossible to attribute to him exclusively either extension or thought. For, he argues, if the self-existent being was in his essence exclusively thought, then it would follow that there could be no extension; and, on the other hand, if his essence was exclusively extension, it would then follow that there could be no thought. Consequently, thought and extension must be considered as attributes of the same being. Since this being is infinite, all his attributes must be so too; and thought and extension, therefore, are the infinite attributes of this being.

Spinoza admits, that it is not according to the common idea to attribute thought and extension to the same being; but he does not respect this prejudice. What can be more different, he says, than a round form and a square one? And yet both are modes

of the same thing, namely, extension. The idea of substance implies only one property, that of existence; and existence is as necessarily implied by extension and by thought, as extension is by a round form or a square one.

We have an idea of these two attributes of being, because our observation embraces extended substances and thinking substances. But these cannot be the only two attributes of the self-existent being, for as he is infinite he must have an infinity of attributes. It is, then, a characteristic of the self-existent being, that he has an infinity of attributes, which are infinite, each in its own sense, and which all manifest, in a peculiar way, the essence of this being, which is existence. Thus a being who is one, simple, eternal, infinite, with an infinity of attributes, which all express in some particular manner, the essential character of this being, — existence, and among these attributes, extension and thought, the only two of which we have any knowledge; — such a being, according to Spinoza, is God, in the only idea we can form of him; and this idea is the fundamental one of his system.

God being the only substance, and comprehending in himself all existence, it follows that nothing exists except through him and in him; or, in other words, that he is the inherent cause of all, or rather the substance of all which has being. There is not, and cannot be, then, more than one being, which is God, and the universe is only an infinitely varied manifestation of the infinite attributes of this being. Nothing then, which includes existence, says Spinoza, can be

denied of God ; and whatever includes it appertains to him and comes from him. God is not only, then, the cause which originates all existence ; he is also the cause which sustains it in being ; in other words, he is at once cause and substance of all that is. Beside God — if any thing can be said to exist beside him — are only his attributes ; and beside these attributes, there can be nothing except different modes of their manifestation. God, therefore, who is the only substance, the infinite attributes of this substance, and the modes of manifestation of these attributes, are the only possible existences. There is and can be nothing more.

Spinoza next inquires as to the manner in which this necessary being, whose essence is existence, develops himself ; and proves that, being in himself necessary, he can only act through and by the necessary laws of his nature, and, consequently, that he cannot be free in the sense in which we understand that word. He ridicules the idea which we form of God, as of a being who acts for a certain end, and because he wills to accomplish that end, but who could yet prefer another, and, consequently, act in another way. He finds this idea wholly incompatible with the idea he has formed of such a being, which he regards as the only legitimate idea ; and he affirms that it inevitably follows, from the necessary nature of such a being, that all the acts and ideas, which are successively developed in him, arise necessarily ; so that nothing which originates from him is produced by free choice ; and the word *will*, therefore, in its common acceptation, cannot be attributed to him. And

yet Spinoza asserts that, in another sense of the word *liberty*, the sense in which he always employs it, God is the only free being. In truth, he says, all thoughts, acts, and possible developments of God, emanate from his own peculiar nature, and not from the influence of another nature acting upon him. God is, then, free, in the sense that whatever he does is determined solely by the laws of his own nature and essential character. The nature of man being limited, as we constantly see it, his acts are determined by external causes, and not by himself; and those causes depend on others, and yet others, till they are traced back to God, while the acts of God are determined only by his own nature. The acts of God, therefore, are at once free and necessary, and free, for the very reason that God is a necessary being. But, as you readily see, there is no similarity between this liberty which Spinoza attributes to God, and liberty as we have conceived of it.

It follows, from this view, that in God there can be neither moral good nor evil. For moral good and evil imply a choice between different courses of conduct; and, since God acts through the necessary laws of his nature, he cannot but do what he actually does; cannot, consequently, act with a view to a certain end, therefore, nor with a purpose to accomplish it; and he cannot, therefore, be either morally good or morally bad; and, in attributing to him, in an infinite degree, the moral qualities which we are conscious of ourselves, we indulge fancies wholly unworthy of the dignity of God, and incompatible with his nature. God wills not; acts not from de-

sign; has no desire, passion, nor disposition. God is; and, this once admitted, all that originates from him is a necessary consequence of his being.

If God's nature is developed thus necessarily, and if nothing exists which does not spring from him, it follows that nothing which is accidental can exist or occur. In other words, all finite existences and their acts, are made and caused by the necessary laws of the divine nature, — God producing directly whatever is derived immediately from his nature and infinite attributes, and indirectly the finite modes of being of these attributes. We call that *contingent* and accidental, says Spinoza, of which we cannot comprehend the necessity; but all which does happen, must happen, and happen, too, exactly in that way. Hence, from the same principles, it appears that the world is eternal, and that the idea of creation is chimerical; for that which at any time did not exist, could never have begun to exist, and there can be nothing beside the being who is one and infinite.

Perhaps, from this one might be led to suppose that, therefore, the universe is God, and that God is only the universe. This opinion Spinoza earnestly repels. The universe, he says, is not God, but only the necessary modes of being of his attributes. God is one, simple, infinite; his modes of being are diverse, complex, finite. God is a necessary being in a twofold manner; because he is self-existent, and because he cannot be conceived of as not existing; his modes of being are necessary, only because they are derived necessarily from his laws; but in one sense they are contingent, that is, they

can be conceived of either as being or not being. God is equally distinct from his attributes; God is infinite, in the absolute sense of that word; his attributes, although infinite, each in its own way, are really finite, since they are many, and one limits the other, each expressing, under one face only, the essence of God, which is existence. The modes are to the attributes what the attributes are to God; and as these attributes are only manifestations of God, and finite in relation to him, so the different modes of each attribute express only that attribute, and are finite, not only in relation to God, but also in relation to that attribute.

It follows, from the relation here described, between God and his attributes, that, as each of them is only a manifestation of God's nature, which is in itself one, God can be conceived of now under one of these attributes, and now under another, but still as remaining himself, simple, and unchanged, amidst the diversity of attributes, which are only different manifestations of one nature, and different developments of one cause. If this is so, there must be a perfect harmony and correspondence between the series of the successive modes of one of these attributes, and the series of the successive modes of all the others. This Spinoza affirms, and he demonstrates it in the case of the two attributes of God, with which alone we are acquainted — thought and extension.

The modes of thought are ideas, and the condition of every idea in God, as in us, must be something objective. What can be objective to the thought of God? Only his own being, that is to say, his



essence, and all which necessarily arises from it. The idea of God, then, is one and infinite, considered in relation to the essence of God, which is one and infinite; but it is manifold in relation to the different attributes of God. Hente the modes of the thought of God, or, in other words, the series of his ideas. As the series of the ideas of God represent the successive modes of his different attributes, the order and connection of the one must be reciprocally the same as that of the other. What God does as a being having extension, he thinks as a being possessed of intelligence; and what he thinks as an intelligent being, he does as a being having extension; the series of his acts and that of his ideas being determined by the same necessity, or, to speak more correctly, the idea and the act being only the same phenomenon under a twofold aspect, as thought and extension are one being under two different manifestations. The circle is a mode of God as he is possessed of extension; the idea of a circle is the corresponding mode of God as thought; and to these two modes there must be a corresponding mode in every other possible attribute of God. Whether we conceive, therefore, of God's nature under the attribute of extension or of thought, or of any other attribute, there will always be the same series, order, connection, and necessary development.

But the thoughts of God have not only the property of representing all his other attributes and their modes; they can also represent themselves. God, in other words, thinks not only of his essence, and

of all which issues from it, but also of his own thoughts; and this must be so, for otherwise his ideas would be less extensive than his nature, and he would be ignorant of one of his own attributes — intelligence. The divine thought, then, is conscious of itself and of its modes, in the same way that it has knowledge of all the other attributes and modes of God. And this property of self-consciousness which belongs to thought it preserves universally. It is essential to its nature.

These considerations, as to the nature and being of God, and much else on the same subject, which I omit, are exhibited in the First Book of the “Ethics,” and, in the first part of the Second Book. I will now proceed, having thus given you an idea of his reasoning as to the laws and necessary nature of God, to show you how all bodies and man are viewed in Spinoza’s system.

We have seen the manner in which Spinoza, abstracting the idea of existence from those of extension and of thought, proceeds to the idea that God is a being whose essence is existence, of whom thought and extension are only attributes. By the same process of reasoning, applied to what we call *body* and *spirit*, he shows that these two pretended entities are only modes of thought and of extension.

Let us take, he says, any body; for example, some wax. It has this, in common with all other bodies, that it is extended; but, evidently, this is not its characteristic, and, consequently, not its constituent element; for then it would follow that whatever is extended is wax. Extension, then, is simply the

ground-work of body; and that which constitutes each particular body, is a certain manner of extension, or of this something which all bodies have in common. A body of any kind, then, is not extension, but a certain mode of extension; and, as extension is an attribute of God, it follows that all bodies are only different modes of this attribute of God.

It is exactly the same with spirits. The common property of all spirits is thought; but it is not this which distinguishes and constitutes different spirits. For, if any supposed spirit was thought, and thought only, it would follow that all thought was this spirit, which is not and cannot be true. All spirits, therefore, are only different modes of thought, which is an attribute of God.

It is easy now, these positions being once established, to understand the idea which Spinoza forms of the aggregate of bodies and of spirits, which makes up the world as it falls under our observation. The basis of all possible bodies is extension, an attribute of God; the basis of all spirits is thought, also an attribute of God. A body or spirit is, then, only a portion and definite mode of the twofold development of God, as a being of intelligence and a being of extension. A body, in other words, is a portion of the divine extension, or of the infinite series of movements which arise out of it; and a spirit is a portion of the divine thought, or of the infinite series of ideas developed from it. Extension and thought are two parallel streams, of which each separate body and spirit are the waves; and as, in streams, each wave is determined by that which impels

it forward, and this by some other, and thus backward to the source, so the series of movements or ideas constituting each body and spirit is determined by anterior movements or ideas, — anterior while themselves depending on others which preceded them, — and thus upward to God, who is the sole cause of all that happens, as he is the sole substance of all that is.

Hence is it, says Spinoza, that, when we attempt to discover the cause of any material change, or of any idea, we find it always in some antecedent change or idea, and this in the degree in which we are enabled to advance, until we reach the point where the succession of effects and causes is lost to view.

You can readily see the notion of man to which such a doctrine leads. Man is composed of body and of spirit. What is this body? what is this soul? The reply is easy. That which I call *myself*, or my soul, is not a substance, as we imagine — for there is but one substance; and if my soul, therefore, is a substance, then all substance is me. And neither is it thought; or else all thought would be me. It is only, then, and can only be, the succession of those ideas which we are accustomed to say it has, but which really constitute it. My soul, at any one moment, is the sum of the ideas which are then in me. If the wax had the power of perceiving itself, it would believe itself to be the substance subjected to different forms, while it is only these very forms.

My body, in the same way, is neither a substance

nor extension, but merely a succession of certain definite modes of extension. It grows from smaller to larger dimensions, from youth to age, and undergoes perpetual changes, like the soul, only not so apparently. It is but the stream and course of these modifications which are moving on, as the soul is but a current of ideas.

But this body and soul, which are apparently two, really are but one; in other words, what we call the body and the soul are but two aspects of one and the same thing. As, in God, the series of developments in one of his attributes corresponds perfectly with the series of developments in all the others, so, in that portion of the development of the Deity which man is, the series of ideas constituting the soul corresponds exactly to the series of motions constituting the body. Yet more; one of these series is but the image of the other. There can no more be ideas without an object in us than in God. Now, what is or can be the proper object of human ideas, if not the human body? If there is, then, in us a series of ideas constituting our spirits, it is because there is also in us a series of transformations, changes, and affections, constituting the body. The idea which is in us at any given moment is nothing more than the intellectual form of the material movement then taking place. Form to yourself an idea of God, as developing himself through the two attributes of thought and of extension, and arrest by thought a definite portion of this infinite development, which may endure for a time, and you have a man. Now, as all the attributes of God are but different mani-

festations of the same thing, and as the development of one is only the development of the other in another form, it follows that it must be the same in that portion of the divine development which constitutes us. We are, then, one simple thing under a twofold aspect—the intellectual and material; and that which is an idea under one aspect is always a movement under the other, and the reverse.

We have seen that, in God, the attribute of thought represents all the real or possible modes of the other attributes of God, and yet more the modes peculiar to thought itself; for it is the very nature of thought to represent its own modes, as well as all other modes. This peculiar nature of thought is preserved in us. As, in God, thought comprehends itself, so, in us, our thought is self-conscious. At the same time, then, that the series of ideas constituting our minds represents the series of our corporeal emotions, do these ideas also represent themselves; hence our minds have knowledge of themselves, in addition to a knowledge of the peculiar object to which they are directed—that is, the body. This is the phenomenon of self-consciousness, by which we become acquainted with ourselves, while, at the same time, we gain knowledge of what is not ourselves; and this phenomenon is reproduced necessarily among all beings who are modes of the divine thought.

What, then, gentlemen, are we, according to Spinoza? We are a mode of the divine thought, corresponding to a mode of the divine extension, which determines the thought, and is its proper object. The mode of extension is our bodies; the mode of

thought is our minds; and these two perfectly corresponding modes are one and the same phenomenon, which we call man.

The peculiar characteristic distinguishing man from bodies, properly so called, is, that these latter are modes of divine extension only. The modes of extension do not necessarily include the corresponding modes of divine thought. This we see by the beings around us, which are simply extended. Man, who unites in himself these two modes, has twice as much real being as bodies simply extended, and including but one mode.

Having thus explained Spinoza's idea of man, I might leave my consideration of his metaphysical system here, and enter into no further detail of his opinions upon the body and soul. But there are a few more points, which I feel I ought not to leave untouched.

Our bodies, according to Spinoza, are not simple, but are composed of a number of other bodies, which are all different modes of extension. When several bodies are united together, so as to experience the same impressions and emotions, they form an individual; and, so long as the form of the individual exists, the individual exists, however much the parts of which he is composed are changed, increased, or lessened. The human body depends upon the form it assumes rather than upon the elements which compose it. And it is through this form, which is but a result of the union of several bodies, or complex modes of extension, that it is distinguished from other compound bodies.

All changes occurring in our bodies may be resolved, according to Spinoza, into movements; and these movements are determined by other bodies impressing it; and these again are put in motion by yet others; and so on. Spinoza calls these movements *affections*; and says that the nature and number of these affections depend both upon the nature of the body experiencing them, and upon that of the bodies producing them; so that the nature of each affection indicates the nature both of the subject affected, and of the causes which affect it.

As our ideas have no other object than the affections of our bodies, it follows that the more susceptible the body is of affections, the more susceptible the mind is of ideas; and, therefore, that our minds acquire more ideas, in proportion as our bodies are affected by a greater number of external bodies. In other words, the ideas which constitute the human mind are more complex and rich, in proportion as the affections of the body are more and more various.

Every simple idea is, according to Spinoza, an idea of some corporeal affection; but this idea includes several other ideas, besides this one of the affection: first, an idea of the body which is affected; secondly, an idea of the body which has produced the affection; thirdly, an idea of the mind, since every idea is self-conscious, and forms one element of the mind, which itself is only the succession of ideas.

We see from this how it was that Spinoza was led to say that we have no immediate knowledge except through bodily affection, and that it was from



the idea of our bodily affections that all human knowledge took its origin. This idea is, you see, full of instruction, as it leads directly to the ideas of our own minds, of our bodies, and of other bodies. I beg you to notice that this is exactly the opinion of Condillac; and we need only substitute the word *sensation* for *affection*, which represents the same thing, in the following passage from the *Ethica*, and we should think we were reading from the *Traité de Sensations*. "We know our own bodies only through its affections, we know external bodies only through the affections of our own, and we know our spirits only through the idea of these affections." This resemblance to Condillac's system, which you may trace in the opinion of Spinoza, that *the soul is the sum of the ideas which are brought together at any one moment*, will continually strike you as I present other points of his metaphysical system.

If the whole of intellectual effort was limited to the operation now described, we should, according to Spinoza, have only confused and inadequate ideas. The knowledge that we obtain of our own and other bodies, from the ideas of our affections, is indirect, and, as such, incomplete, and therefore confused; and, for the same reason, the knowledge that they give us of the affections, which they represent, is equally imperfect and obscure. For an adequate idea of these affections would suppose an adequate knowledge of the subject affected, and of the causes producing the affections. And, finally, since the

idea of the affections of our body is inadequate and obscure, the idea of these ideas, which is the idea of our own minds, must be also obscure and inadequate. So that if human knowledge remains always in the state in which *simple perception*, to use the words of Spinoza, gives it to us, we should have only such confused ideas, as all the ideas of our affections, of our minds, of our bodies, and of other bodies, must be.

Fortunately, according to Spinoza, our ideas are not limited to those which we receive when we are made *to perceive* (*ad percipiendum*) *by the current of external movements*. We obtain ideas having a very different character, *when we are determined from within to conceive* (*ad intelligendum*) of agreements and differences, by a simultaneous contemplation of several ideas. In this case we can arrive at adequate and clear ideas.

Spinoza admits, then, that, after the particular and immediate ideas of the affections of our body, and all others implied by these, have been introduced, they are submitted to a process by which we are enabled to form general ideas, which are adequate and clear. Thus three points are established in the system of Spinoza: first, that all our knowledge comes from the affections of our bodies; second, that all simple ideas, and all such ideas of our mind, of our own body, or of other bodies, as naturally rise out of these simple ideas, are essentially inadequate and obscure; third, and last, that the only ideas which can be clear and adequate are general ideas, such



as we deduce from the former kind of ideas, by an inward effort, subsequent to perception, and distinct from it.

The nature of this process of mind is the most obscure part of Spinoza's doctrine; and I think I do not deceive myself in asserting, that here is the source of the whole difficulty which is felt in understanding his system. All other portions of it become intelligible, if we give them attentive and patient study.

It has been a question whether Spinoza considers this mental process as a necessary and spontaneous one, or whether he thinks that we must contribute our own efforts to aid it, thus ascribing to man some influence and power in the formation of his own ideas. If we consider only the principles of the system, and the expressions which Spinoza employs to describe this process of the mind, obscure as they are, we shall be led to the first opinion. Since all our ideas are determined by the series of the affections of our body, and since these are determined by external causes, which are determined by God, it is evident that all our ideas must be determined by God. But there is a still greater objection to the idea that they are determined by ourselves. Our minds are only the sum of our ideas; before we can suppose that the mind has any influence over the formation of our ideas, we must suppose it distinct from them; for it is impossible to imagine that a mind, which is but an aggregate of ideas, can aid in the formation of those very ideas of which it is itself the effect, result, and product. If true, then, to the

principles of his system, Spinoza could not, without a strange contradiction, attribute to the mind any participation in the process to which the simple ideas of perception are subjected; and, as I said before, in his description of this process, there is no expression which would authorize us to say that he had fallen into this contradiction. But when he comes to the moral part of his system, which I shall describe in my next lecture, we are induced to adopt an opposite opinion; for in this portion of his work, Spinoza evidently ascribes to man a certain kind of influence over the formation of his ideas. He there says that *liberty* is this power exerted by us over our ideas; he recommends that we should turn away our minds from certain ideas, and fix them upon others; and he gives an essay upon the proper conduct of the mind; and it is upon this idea of their power to direct and form certain ideas, that Spinoza's whole system of ethics is founded. Had Spinoza been a less exact reasoner, we should not hesitate to say, that he had here, like many other philosophers, been inconsistent, and had contradicted his own principles; but we must be more cautious in making this charge upon such a writer as the author of the "Ethics;" and when we reflect upon the enormity of such a contradiction, we can hardly escape the impression that this vigorous mind was deceived by some logical illusion, which it would be very desirable to discover. If there was, to his mind, such an illusion any where, it was, doubtless, in his idea of the intellectual process by which general ideas are produced. And it is for this reason, that I call this portion of his system the most

obscure; for it is here only that we meet with real difficulties in the way of comprehending it. I confess, gentlemen, that I have not been able to surmount these difficulties; the illusion by which Spinoza was deceived, I have not been able to discover. The opinion he seems to have formed, and which I will now describe, of the nature of the intellectual operation by which the mind is raised from particular and immediate to ultimate and general ideas, is perfectly consistent with the principles of his system, and leaves wholly unexplained the contradiction into which, as I shall show in the next lecture, he has fallen.

Human knowledge would be reduced to the immediate notions of perception only, if, after these ideas were obtained, there was no mode of preserving or recalling them. But this can be done, and in this way: The action of external causes upon the body has the effect of modifying the state of those parts of the body upon which they act; and the impression produced by them does not disappear altogether with the action of the causes; when this action is strong or frequent, the impression remains after the action, and the parts affected finally acquire a permanent disposition for receiving these impressions. These remaining influences on the affections become ideas in the mind equally with the affections themselves.

The ideas corresponding to these surviving impressions of the affections Spinoza calls *images* or *remembrances*—ideas, properly so called, which represent the affections themselves; and they constitute what he denominates the *imagination* or *memory*.

One other fact in our nature completes the explanation of the operation of memory, and that is the analogy existing among the corporeal dispositions which constitute certain affections. By reason of this analogy, whenever we experience one kind of affection, analogous to others which we have often felt, and which have thus left in the body a disposition to reproduce them, the former affection causes the body to replace itself in a condition to receive the latter, so that these last are renewed mechanically; and, since they in turn may awaken other analogous ones, it follows that one single affection may produce the impression of a thousand different ones; and hence the mind experiences, subsequent to the reception of an idea, long trains of images and remembrances; and this constitutes the phenomena of the association of ideas, of imagination, and of memory.

Thus our minds, at any one moment, are made up, not only of the ideas of the affections which have been impressed, and of other ideas which these imply, but also of a greater or less number of remembrances, that is to say, of ideas of past affections.

But these ideas are, as we have said, self-conscious. And consciousness, while comprehending them, comprehends also the agreements and differences between them, and, consequently, between whatever objects they represent. Hence a new class of ideas—ideas of relation, or general ideas—ideas which are ultimate and wholly distinct from the immediate ideas acquired from perception.

Such, gentlemen, is that intellectual effort which I before alluded to: perception gives us the materials,

and the operation consists wholly in bringing together these materials, by the influence of memory and making a comparison.

But this comparison is wholly mechanical, and Spinoza has taken care to state that it is so. There are not ideas recalled and compared on the one side, and a mind recalling and comparing them on the other. The impressions left on the affections are necessarily awakened in the body, and these are necessarily represented by ideas in the mind, and these ideas are necessarily compared by their mere juxtaposition, whence result ideas, necessarily formed, of their agreements and differences; and this is all. There is nothing here in any way resembling the intervention of the mind. The mind continues to be the sum of our ideas, and this sum is only increased by a new class of ideas. This is all.

I need hardly say that these general ideas, once formed, are subject to the same law with immediate ideas; that is, they can be recalled like them, and can produce, as they do, when brought together, ideas yet more general, which, in turn, may give rise to others yet more general, and so on; let it be remarked, however, that all these ideas, however general, have one characteristic, which is, that they are not immediate, that is, not simple *perceptions*, but derived, or *conceptions*, as Spinoza calls them.

We have seen that Spinoza considers all immediate ideas as essentially inadequate and confused. It is not necessarily so, according to him, with derived ideas, whose formation we have now explained; these may be clear and adequate, and for this reason,

What is the truth of an idea? asks Spinoza. It is the conformity of the idea to whatever it represents; but since the condition of the origin of an idea is the existence of the object awakening it, there can be no idea without something of which it is the representation; every idea has, therefore, some truth; the only difference between ideas is this, that some represent completely their object, while others do not; the former are adequate ideas, the latter are inadequate; ideas then are false only from their deficiency in not representing the whole of their object; so far as they do represent it, they are true; their truth is positive, their falseness is negative.

There is an identity, therefore, between an adequate idea and a complete or true idea, on the one side, and between an inadequate and false idea, on the other. But how can we tell whether an idea is adequate or inadequate? By what sign or criterion shall we judge? By its clearness, says Spinoza. Whence, then, comes the confusion of some ideas? Solely from their incompleteness, that is to say, their inadequate representation of their objects; for if they represented the whole of their object, they could not be obscure. Every clear idea is, therefore, an adequate one, and every confused idea an inadequate one. It is by their clearness or their confusion, then, that we are to determine whether our ideas are true or false, adequate or inadequate.

If our immediate ideas cannot be adequate, it must be as Spinoza has proved, because they correspond to particular objects, all the circumstances and details of which we cannot fully know; and it is in conse-



quence of their inadequacy that they are all essentially obscure and imperfectly true. On the contrary, our derived ideas may be adequate, and, consequently, clear, for the reason that they represent not particular objects, and, therefore, very complicated ones, but general ones, much less complex than particulars, and becoming less and less so as they become more general.

Let us take, for example, the particular facts which we call the *affections* of the body. We cannot perfectly know any one of these affections, precisely because it is a particular affection. But suppose several inadequate ideas of many affections brought together by memory; the agreement of these different ideas will then appear, and create a general idea of whatever is in common among these affections, that is to say, of that particular characteristic which constitutes them affections. This common and constituent characteristic is infinitely more simple than either of the particular phenomena in which it is manifested; and we can, therefore, for this reason, form a much less inadequate idea of it, and, consequently, a much less confused and false one.

Bring now this general idea of an affection into comparison with other general ideas of the same kind, analogous to it, and there will evidently arise an idea, the object of which will be still simpler, and which will have still greater chance, therefore, of being adequate, clear, and true. Whence it may be seen that our ideas are more adequate, true and clear, in proportion as the object is more general, and as they, consequently, become more general themselves.

Such, gentlemen, according to my understanding of it, is the logic of Spinoza. It is, I should say,—and you will easily see that it is,—perfectly consistent with his ontology. For, if there is but one substance developing itself under an infinity of attributes, of which the particular objects around us are only infinitely varied modes, that which is the most general, that is to say, the whole itself, or God, is also the most simple and real, and that which is the most particular and complex, that is to say, bodies and minds, must also be most complex and phenomenal; so that what is most simple and real, according to the common notion, is precisely what is least real and most complex, according to Spinoza; and real being and unity increase, in his view, in the same proportion as abstraction and multiplicity do in ours. The world, to him, is only the multiplied developments of a single being, while, to us, this being is the collection of a multiplicity of individual beings. Real being, to our minds, is in the elements of the whole, while the whole itself is an abstraction. To Spinoza, real being consists in this whole, which is itself being, while all else is only phenomenal, and more and more phenomenal as it is more and more individual.

I have now said, gentlemen, all that I proposed to say upon the metaphysical portion of Spinoza's system. In my next lecture, I will unfold and exhibit its moral part.

## LECTURE VII.

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture, I finished what I had proposed to say of the metaphysical and logical system of Spinoza. I proceed now to attempt to give you some general idea of the moral part of his system. The long developments into which I allowed myself to be led, at our last meeting, warn me to limit myself in this discussion, unless I intend giving an undue place in my course to the doctrine of this philosopher.

You will remember that, in the view of Spinoza, the human soul is only a succession of ideas, and that these are only the representation of different changes taking place in the human body. You will remember also, that we are not thence to conclude that man is composed of two parts, one of which we call the body, and the other the soul; for, according to Spinoza's idea, these are but one. Man is one being under a twofold aspect—the aspect of mind, or his ideas—the aspect of extension, or his body;—so that all which happens to a man appears necessarily under the two forms of affections and ideas

which express, in two different and yet corresponding ways, one and the same phenomenal development, which is man. But you know also, that, in the system of Spinoza, the human body is only a definite mode of extension, which is an attribute of God, and the human mind a correspondent mode of thought, which is another attribute of God. The extension, constituting our body, therefore, and the idea constituting our souls, are only portions of the development of divine thought and extension. You will understand, therefore, these two definitions of Spinoza, that the human mind is God, considered as constituting the soul; and the human body is God, considered as constituting the body. God is at once, then, finite, in so far as he constitutes our body or soul; and infinite, in so far as he does not constitute it. Under the first view, his power and knowledge are limited; under the second, they are not. All the mysterious phrases of the *Ethica* become clear, when we once know that, according to Spinoza, the ideas which constitute our minds, and the movements which constitute our bodies, (for body, be it remembered, consists in its form, and not in its material,) are only fragments of a twofold development of God — the development of his thought and of his extension. In this point of view, it is speaking truly, to say, that God constitutes our bodies and our minds, and that his power and his knowledge are finite, in so far as he does constitute them. We have not all ideas, but only some ideas; and, because we have only these few, most of our ideas are inadequate and confused. God, therefore, in so far as he constitutes us, is

limited in his knowledge, and has, consequently, inadequate and confused ideas; but in himself it is not thus; for in so far as he does not constitute us, he has all the ideas which we have, and all other ideas which can serve to render these clear and adequate. Again, the power of our bodies is limited by the resistance of other bodies. God, in so far as he constitutes our bodies, is limited in his power; but he is not thus limited in himself, for all the causes which limit our power are modes of the divine power, even as our power is itself. So far, then, as our body is finite, God is limited by himself; consequently, he is not limited in his own being, but only in so far as he constitutes our body. It follows from this, that ideas which are inadequate in us, are not inadequate in God, except in so far as he is considered as constituting our minds; and that our finite power is not finite in God, except in so far as he constitutes our body. These distinctions may seem frivolous to you, but it is absolutely necessary that they should be made, if we would understand Spinoza's system.

As our minds are made up of ideas, it is plain that the more ideas we have, and the clearer and more adequate they are, the more real and living will be our minds. This proposition is proved by arithmetical calculation in the system of Spinoza. The soul being at every moment the sum of its then present ideas, of course a soul made up of twenty ideas will have more life, more perfection, more real being, than another composed of six. If the twenty ideas are clear, adequate, and true, the mind will be more per

fect, real, and living, than if they were inadequate and confused. As the essence of the soul is ideas, it is these ideas which constitute its real being; and it will be more and more perfect, in proportion as it has more ideas, and as these are more and more clear. Applying this same principle to the body, that is to say, to the mode of extension, which is constantly impressed, restrained, and limited by other bodies acting upon it, we shall find that the body, too, has more and more real being and perfection, in proportion as it is less and less limited by external bodies, that is to say, in proportion as it develops itself with the greatest fulness and freedom through its own natural energy.

In the moral part of his system, Spinoza wholly leaves out of view the body, and makes the soul, that is to say, man, considered under the aspect of thought, the chief object of his attention. The three last books of his work are occupied altogether with his opinions upon the real life, perfection, and well-being of this portion of human nature.

The laws of its growth or decline, the means by which the real life, perfection, and well-being of the soul are increased or diminished, engages his whole attention; and it is here that we must follow his course of reasoning most closely, if we would gain an insight into the fundamental ideas of his ethics, politics, and religion.

Every being has, necessarily, a tendency and desire; and this necessary tendency and desire is to continue in the condition for which its nature fits it.

The essence of God is existence, and his necessary

desire, therefore, is to remain in existence. And, since God includes all existence, and his existence, therefore, is not and cannot be limited by any existence beyond and out of himself, it follows, that God is absolutely perfect, and, consequently, is completely happy. But it is not thus with the human soul.

As an emanation from God, the human soul participates in the fundamental desire of God, and also aspires to a continuance of existence, as a created being. And, as the constituent element of the soul is knowledge, and this knowledge is limited, it follows that this fundamental desire of continuance in its own state of existence, which every being feels, must in the soul become a desire to remain intelligent, and, since its knowledge is limited, to extend and enlarge it. Such is and must be, necessarily, the fundamental and peculiar tendency of the human mind. And it is for this reason that Spinoza confines exclusively to this tendency the name of *desire*; it is the only desire which he acknowledges and recognizes.

But the ideas constituting the human soul are limited by external causes, which determine their number, and render them inadequate and confused; in other words, the fundamental desire of our nature meets abroad with influences, both favorable and unfavorable, whose whole operation, however, is to limit and fix bounds to our knowledge. These influences, coming into contact with our fundamental desire, give us joy or pain, and awaken love and hope, hate and aversion. Hence the secondary emotions of the primitive

and fundamental desire existing from the first within us, which Spinoza denominates the *passions*. The reason for the use of these two different names is this profound observation, that the secondary emotions proceed from the action of external causes, and, consequently, that we are passive in experiencing these emotions, while, on the contrary, the tendency to preserve, unchanged, our original nature, is innate, arises from the very depths of our being, and develops itself even when no external cause affects us. Here is a difference well expressed by the terms *desire* and *passion*, as applied by Spinoza to these two kinds of emotions.

Spinoza, however, while distinguishing passion from desire, points out the tie which unites these two orders of facts; it is indeed plain that if the desire of continuance in being did not exist, external causes could not excite the emotions of joy or sorrow, love or hate, hope or fear, now constituting our passions. All the passions which are awakened within us presuppose, therefore, the fundamental desire already existing and active. Moreover, it is plain that these passions are only different expressions of this desire; all the passions are, in truth, composed of the same elements, that is to say, of a sorrow or dislike, of a joy or love, of a hope or fear; they are distinguished from each other only by the causes which excite them. Now, all these emotions of aversion or love, of fear or hope, of joy or sorrow, denote equally a desire to remain in being, and in intelligence. All the tendencies of our soul are reduced



therefore, to this single one, and have all of them but one single object, which is the preservation and increase of our being or our knowledge.

As knowledge is the constituent element of our soul, the desire of knowledge is the desire of enlarging our actual being, and of lessening our imperfections. Nothing, then, can be more proper, more conformable to reason, than the end to which our desire and passions tend. This end is the greatest degree of real existence, the highest perfection of our being. All that we can do, therefore, to attain this end, is lawful and right, and the pursuit of it is *virtue*. There is entire harmony, then, between virtue and happiness, since both consist in the greatest possible satisfaction of our fundamental desire, and of all the passions which are excited by it, and which express it. Thus Spinoza arrives at the conclusion, which he lays down as a principle, that the satisfaction of passion is the end of virtue, and that we are virtuous in proportion as we extend this satisfaction, that is to say, as we are happy.

Thus knowledge, existence, real being, perfection, virtue, happiness, are all but one and the same thing, under different aspects. As the soul is composed of ideas, and as the legitimate end of every being is self-preservation, the proper end of the soul is the most complete and extensive knowledge possible. To this end, approved by reason, all the passions of the soul aspire; to strive to attain it is virtue; to succeed in acquiring it is happiness, that is to say, the perfection or real life of the soul. Such are the fundamental principles of Spinoza's ethical system.

It remains now for us to examine what means we have at our disposal, according to Spinoza, for the attainment of this end, which includes at once our real life, our perfection, and our happiness; and it is here that the difficulties, alluded to in my former lecture, appear — difficulties which show the contradictions with which, as it appears to me, this system must be charged.

Spinoza has, in the first place, said, that all the ideas which can arise in our minds are only determinate portions of the ideas of God, and that they all, whether immediate or derived, are produced by necessity; and yet he affirms that we can influence their development. In the second place, he lays down the position, that our ideas are the very component element of our minds, and yet asserts that the mind exercises a control over the formation of the ideas of which it is composed. Here is the radical contradiction lurking throughout his whole system. All who have attempted to describe his doctrines have perceived it; no one has succeeded in explaining it, and I have not been more fortunate; I limit myself, therefore, to a simple statement of the contradiction, and pass to the mode of moral progress which Spinoza marks out for the soul to pursue, in attaining its final end and destiny.

If the perfection of the soul consists in the extent and truth of its constituent ideas, the object of moral effort evidently must be to diminish, as much as possible, our inadequate and obscure ideas, and to multiply, as much as possible, our clear and adequate ideas; and the mode of accomplishing this, according

to Spinoza, is to withdraw our minds from one mode of acquiring knowledge, and to direct them towards another. Now, what is the most desirable kind of knowledge? And why is it most desirable? I will endeavor to answer these questions, by recalling to your minds some of the principles of Spinoza's logical system, already exhibited in the former lecture. They are, at once, so important, and yet so obscure, that perhaps it may be well for me to review rapidly what I then stated upon the subject.

The primitive ideas of our minds, you will remember, are nothing, according to Spinoza, but the images of the affections of our bodies; and these affections themselves originate in the action of external causes upon us. These ideas are essentially inadequate, and yet they comprehend in themselves all the ideas which we can have immediately. They are inadequate, in the first place, because it is necessary, before we can have an adequate idea of an affection of our body, that we should understand the nature of that body, and of the causes which affect it. But we gain a knowledge of external causes, and of the body itself, only through these very affections; we have, therefore, only indirect and essentially incomplete ideas of the body, and of outward objects; and yet more, if this is so, the idea we have of the affection itself is confused and inadequate; our ideas, then, of our bodily affections, and of our own and other bodies, are, by necessity, confused and incomplete; and, finally, our consciousness of these ideas must be so too; — so that all the ideas which we receive immediately are

inadequate. It is from this very fact of the inadequacy of our ideas, that our passions arise; for, if all our ideas were clear and complete, our desire of knowledge would be entirely satisfied; and, consequently, we should not experience the joy or sorrow, the love or hate, the hopes or fears, which constitute all passion, and originate in the imperfectness of our ideas. And whence springs all evil within us? From this same imperfection, and from the passions caused by it, which disturb our peace and prevent our happiness. Inadequate ideas are, therefore, at once the source of all passion, and of all pain; and all the simple ideas of perception are of this nature.

And now, what shall we do to acquire clear and adequate ideas? If we had no other mode of gaining knowledge, and of obtaining ideas, than the perception of our corporeal affections, we should be indeed perplexed, and all virtue, all perfection, would be evidently impossible. But, independently of these ideas, received from the affections of the body, we can, as I have already said, attain to a higher order of ideas, drawn from these simple ideas by a subsequent effort of the mind. The impressions of corporeal affections do not disappear when the external cause which produced them ceases to act. The parts of the body which are affected contract a disposition to reproduce the emotion which characterizes these affections; and they do reproduce them, whenever any analogous affection is excited;—so that an affection of the body is accompanied by the reproduction of a number of kindred affections, associated by analogy; and an idea in the mind is accompanied

by a series of images and remembrances corresponding to the affections thus awakened; or, in other words, by the simultaneous presence in our minds of a crowd of different ideas; some, *ideas*, properly so called, and others, images and recollections.

From this concurrence of our ideas arises the fact of a comparison passed between them; and, from this comparison springs a wholly new class of ideas, not representing, as before, a particular affection or external object, not our body or spirit at any given moment, but, instead, the common element of many affections and external objects, of many states of our bodies and minds.

Observe now, that the element which our affections have in common, is the essence itself of affection; that the common element of different external bodies, and of different states of our own body, is the very essence of body; and that the common element of different states of mind, is the essence of our mind, and of all mind.

It is not true in relation to these essential elements of all affections, and bodies, and spirits, as it is of particular affections or bodies, of particular states of our own bodies or spirits, that we can have only inadequate and obscure ideas, on account of their complexity. The characteristics of the essence of any thing are few, and are constantly reappearing in every particular idea of it which may occur to us, however inadequate this may be, and are easily distinguished by a comparison of many particular ideas; so that it is easy to have an adequate idea of these characteristics, and, consequently, of the essence

of which they are the component parts. This class of ideas, representing the essences of things, and arising from a comparison of particular and immediate ideas, or, in other words, these general ideas, may easily, therefore, become adequate and clear. And it is for this reason that, while we can never form an adequate idea of any particular affection, or external body, or given state of our minds and bodies, we yet can have perfectly adequate ideas of affection in general, of the constituent element of body, which is extension, or of that of mind, which is thought. If this, now, is true of general ideas, arising from the comparison of particular ideas, it is much truer of the more general ideas which arise from the comparison of less general ones; so that the property of adequateness, clearness, and truth, constantly increases in proportion to the general nature of our ideas, and becomes absolute and complete when the ideas are universal.

By applying this law to the progress of mind, we shall obtain the following method of logic and of ethics.

If we allow ourselves to be wholly occupied by the particular ideas, which the moving current of things suggests, our knowledge will be always inadequate and confused, and we shall remain at the lowest stage of real being and of possible perfection: yet more, since these ideas, in proportion to their inadequacy and obscurity, excite in higher and higher degrees all the passions which agitate us, we shall be utterly wretched.

To elevate ourselves above this state of extreme imperfection and misery, we must turn our thoughts

to those general ideas, which spring from a comparison of particular ideas, and, representing the essences of things, may, with more probability, be adequate and clear; and this course we must pursue to the utmost possible extent. Our first step will be to attain to general ideas of the attributes of God, and next to the universal idea of God himself, which is the ultimate limit of human knowledge; for this idea embraces at once all that is most simple and most complete — the eternal, necessary, and immutable substance of all existence.

This view naturally leads Spinoza to distinguish three degrees of human knowledge. The first degree of knowledge comprehends the particular and immediate ideas, which arise from the perception of bodily affections. The multitude of men seldom rise above this, and hence the confused notions, the passions and the misery of the mass of mankind. The second degree of knowledge comprehends the general ideas which result from experience, and which, in proportion as they are more or less clearly conceived, represent, more or less adequately, the infinite, eternal, and immutable attributes of God. In its third degree, knowledge concentrates itself into one idea, which presupposes all general ideas — the absolute and universal idea of God. Sages alone, who devote their lives to meditation, can attain to this height of knowledge and of peace. Here, and here only, is peace. For since God is the first principle and cause of all things, the idea of God is not only more simple than all other ideas, but a light to make them clear and perfect, so that they can become fully adequate

only through this idea. He who has not comprehended God, in other words, can comprehend nothing perfectly; each particular is included in the general, and the general in the universal; and, therefore, the conception of God is implied in all other conceptions, and every conception remains incomplete and obscure, until the idea of God is conceived. We can attain perfectly adequate and clear knowledge only in the idea of God; here the mind finds the highest reality, the fullest existence, sovereign perfection, entire repose, and complete felicity; with this it can destroy passion, and wholly satisfy our fundamental desire of knowledge; so that absolute perfection and happiness would be possible for man in this life, if he could here attain to a complete idea of God. But to this his power is not equal. We may form an adequate idea of the essence of God; but the infinity of the attributes through which this essence is developed, and the infinity of the modes of these attributes, escape us; of these attributes, two only are accessible to us, and we know only a small part of the modes even of these two attributes. Thus, while the complete idea of God would be universal science, since God contains all that is or can be, yet for God alone is this science possible, because he alone can know himself completely.

Such, gentlemen, is the path, marked out by Spinoza, for man to reach his highest possible perfection and happiness. You will see that he has thus, at the same time, shown what course the soul should pursue to arrive at the most complete knowledge, and what it should itself become; for, since,

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in Spinoza's doctrine, the soul is made up of ideas, science and the perfection of the soul are one and the same. Logic and ethics are identified, therefore, in this system, and the method which leads to good, is precisely that which leads to truth.

It remains for me to show you how this same path leads to immortality. Here, perhaps, is the most singular and original point of view of this vast system; and it is the last that I shall mention.

I have already told you, that the condition or the origin of every idea is the existence of an object: as an idea is only a representation, there can be no idea without an object represented. It follows, as a strict consequence from this principle, that, so long as our ideas represent only the affections of the body, and imply these affections, or, in other words, our own body and external bodies, our ideas exist only through the existence of these affections, which themselves presuppose the body. If, then, our body ever ceases to be, since its affections will also be destroyed at the same time, all our ideas will be destroyed; and, as the soul is only the collection of our ideas, the soul will be, together with them, utterly annihilated. It follows from this, that in men who have only ideas of particulars, or those of perception, the death of the soul will result from that of the body, and be its necessary consequence; for them immortality is impossible.

But suppose that, by intellectual effort, we disengage from our ideas of particulars the general ideas which they imply, and thus obtain clear views of that which is at the foundation of all objects and of all

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particular phenomena; that is to say, clear views of the essence of things, or of those attributes of God which we are capable of conceiving, then, although our body is destroyed, objects will yet remain for human thought, and ideas will still be possible. The ideas composing our soul will not all vanish with the body, according to this hypothesis; that part only of the soul will disappear which represents particulars; the rest will remain and survive.

But let us go yet further, and suppose that, from the idea of God's attributes, we have ascended to the idea of God himself; here is an eternal, infinite, immutable object for human thought, remaining forever as the material of ideas, and of adequate and numerous ideas; for from the depth of the idea of God spring up a host of other ideas contained in it, which are multiplied in proportion as they are contemplated for a greater length of time. Hence a multitude of ideas remain possible, even after the death of the body, and an amount of existence for the soul, which cannot be destroyed or undergo a change.

But upon what does it depend whether this shall be our condition in the hour of death? It depends upon ourselves, gentlemen, because we can, if we choose, turn our thoughts away from particulars, and raise them to generals, and fix them there. Our immortality depends, then, upon ourselves, and is the fruit of virtue, as perfection and happiness are. It is for us to create for ourselves, during life, an object of thought, separate from our bodies, and from all bodies which surround us,—an object which may

remain when our bodies shall disappear, and with them all possibility of affections, and with these affections all possibility of perceiving external bodies; and we shall attain this end, and reach this object, if we turn away our thoughts from transient things, and raise them to those which, having eternal existence, will abide forever; and, by this everlasting endurance, will preserve also in existence a portion of our souls, that is to say, of the ideas of which they are composed.

Such is the singular opinion of Spinoza, relative to the immortality of the soul; and you see how far it is a necessary consequence of his doctrine, when the possibility of our giving direction to the mind is once admitted. It follows from this, that human souls have real being in very unequal degrees, and that this varies with the nature as well as number of their component ideas. Souls made up entirely of immediate ideas have only a feeble reality, and will perish with the body. The sum of the constituent ideas of other souls may, at each moment, be divided into two parts; the one, perishable, composed of ideas, representing individual and particular objects, and wholly inadequate and confused; the other, immortal, composed of adequate and clear ideas, representing unchangeable objects, that is to say, the attributes of God and God himself. At any given moment, our real being, our perfection, our happiness, are in direct proportion to the number of these last ideas, and in inverse ratio to the number of the former. Our perfection, happiness, and

real life, therefore, increase with the sum of our adequate ideas; and, since this increase depends upon our virtue, our measure of existence during life, and our immortality, depend upon it also. In pursuing our true end, therefore, we increase, not only our happiness and perfection, but also the sum and duration of our existence.

Such, gentlemen, are the principal points of Spinoza's moral system. I feel that I ought once again to say, that I am unable to reconcile this portion of his opinions with those principles which he has professed in relation to God and man, and which I have described in a former lecture. Still it is undeniable that these two portions of his system do coëxist, and, therefore, it was my duty to give you an idea of the second, as well as of the first, if I would not leave incomplete this rapid exposition. It was necessary, also, to prepare you for an understanding of the ethics of Spinoza, which I shall exhibit to you hereafter, and to explain the existence of any such thing as ethics in the most vast, most absolute, and, notwithstanding this contradiction, the most rigorous system of pantheism, which the hand of philosophy has ever reared.

I have now completed my sketch of the particular form which Spinoza has given to pantheism; but I should neglect the original and principal design of this exposition, if I did not, before passing on to other systems, disengage, from this particular form, the specific character of pantheism itself, and show you how, by reason of its essential quality, it always

leads, by a strict necessity, to the denial of human liberty, and consequently to the belief that a law of obligation is impossible.

One essential and constituent element of pantheism is the suppressing of all particular causes, and the concentrating of all causality in a single being; that is, in God. This arises from another element of pantheism, yet more essential, which consists in suppressing all particular beings, and concentrating all existence in one sole being, which is God. If there is but one substance, there is but one cause; for without substance there can be only phenomena; and phenomena can only transmit action; they cannot produce it. Pantheism, laying down the principle, therefore, that there can be only one being and one cause, and that the universe is only a vast phenomenon, necessarily concentrates in God all liberty, even if it attributes liberty to him, and necessarily denies it every where else. Man and all other beings, therefore, lose their quality of *being* and of *cause*, and become only attributes and acts of the divine substance and cause. Deprived thus of all proper causality, man is also deprived, at the same time, of all liberty, and, consequently, can have neither a law of obligation, nor a controlling power over his own conduct. Such are the evident and necessary consequences of pantheism; and the pantheist, who does not adopt them, either does not comprehend his own opinions, or is voluntarily false to them.

Thus, wherever pantheism manifests itself in a practical form, — as in India, for example, — it leads directly to passiveness or licentiousness. Men brought

up in this faith, considering themselves as phenomena, and their acts, whatever they may do, as the acts of God, view all conduct with indifference; and this leads them either to commit the most detestable acts without remorse, or to abandon themselves without care or thought to the currents of that mighty ocean, on whose bosom they are but insignificant drops. Such are the fruits which this system has always produced in the East, and they are its legitimate results; pantheism should never disavow them.

You will thus see, gentlemen, that I had reason for classing the system of pantheism among those which render, *à priori*, the existence of a law of obligation impossible; and, if it is ground enough upon which to condemn any doctrine as false that it leads to such a result, pantheism must be condemned. Does it deserve this sentence? Does pantheism, like necessity and mysticism, rest, for its foundation, upon error? To my mind, it is undeniable that it does; and a few words only will be needed to point out to you the source of this system in human nature, and its radical defect.

We have two kinds of knowledge, derived from different sources. When we direct our perceptive faculties to that portion of real being which is actually before us and within our reach, there arise in our minds ideas or notions, which are images of what we have observed. Hence the first kind of knowledge, given by observation, whose characteristic it is to represent whatever observation has grasped—or, in other words, whatever actually is. If all our knowledge was of this kind, we should

possess, indeed, particular and even general truths, representing a portion of what actually exists and happens; but it is plain that we should possess nothing which reached to or represented what ought to be: that is to say, we should know only a portion of that which now is and now happens, and not all which can be and can happen. Now that we have knowledge, — the truth of which does reach to all possible cases, — does embrace all times, — and represent not only the portion of real being observed by us, but all reality, — this, gentlemen, is undeniable; and equally undeniable is it, that observation could never have given us such knowledge, for observation extends only to a determined and circumscribed portion of real being, and, consequently, can never produce more than particular and limited notions.

Universal notions, therefore, must spring from another source, and that is reason. The observation of certain facts, now existing, is the occasion when reason conceives at once of other facts, which cannot but be, and which, having thus a necessary existence, must always have been, and will always be; and hence arise truths, limited to no time nor place, and applicable to all possible cases. Such, for instance, is the truth, that every effect has a cause — a truth which reason instantly conceives when a fact is seen to occur, and which, when once conceived, extends to all cases, all times, all places, appears to us universal, absolute, without possible exception, and seems, in a word, to represent and express not only that which is, but also that which must be and cannot but be.

There are, therefore, in our minds, two kinds of knowledge, and two distinct sources of knowledge, first, particular and general knowledge, representing what now is, and obtained by observation; and, secondly, universal and absolute knowledge, representing what ought to be, and which is the fruit of the *à priori* conceptions of reason.

And now, when we apply to truth of this latter kind, that is to say, to the absolute principles, conceived *à priori* by reason, the reasoning, which is quite another thing from reason, and draw from these principles the logical consequences flowing from them, we arrive at an idea of the world, which does not agree at all with the idea obtained from observation; reason conceiving, *à priori*, that which ought to be, and observation testifying to that which now is.

It is to the former of these two modes of obtaining knowledge, that pantheism trusts. The pantheist takes, then, absolute principles, conceived, *à priori*, by the reason, and the notions of cause, of being, of time, space, &c., comprehended and implied in these principles; and then applying reasoning to these premises, he determines, by logical deduction, what real being must be, without taking any count of the testimony given directly to all men, by observation, of a portion of what actually now is.

Such is the manner in which pantheism acquires knowledge; and here we discover the source of the false idea given by it of all things. Had God willed that we should become acquainted with his works



by reason only, he would not have endowed us with this other faculty, which we call observation; and as he has given us this latter faculty, and inspired us also with a faith in the notions which it produces, these notions cannot be useless, and must be destined to enter, as an element, and play some part in our acquisition of the knowledge of real being; in a word, these notions must be intended to modify, in some sort, such notions of real being as are given by simple reasoning, when applied to the *à priori* principles conceived by reason.

This coöperation of observation with reason, pantheism slights; this correction, applied by it to the wholly ideal system given by reason, pantheism rejects; it finds nothing in the idea which observation gives of the world. Here is the error, the radical error of pantheism; and, if we would attack the system, here is its vulnerable part. We must examine the contradictions between the results of pantheism and of observation, and the ground of the pantheist's contempt for observation; and, if such contempt is groundless, and he yet will not admit the correction which observation brings to the pure ideas of reason, then have we a right to reproach him with not respecting the whole of human intelligence; but, with mutilating it, by demanding of one of its faculties that representation of the world, which can be given correctly only by a coöperation of all the faculties with which we are endowed. I limit myself, now, to this simple observation: we must follow out this view, and attack pantheism upon this side, would we refute it.

Such, gentlemen, — and I must ask your indulgence for it, — is the only refutation which the plan of this course will permit me to present of pantheism. When I come to systems which have drawn from the analysis of the moral facts of our nature, opinions destroying or altering the true idea of ethical science, I shall refute them at full length; for they are, truly, systems of ethics, and, in a course having ethics for its object, they must be thus examined and refuted; but in relation to systems, which, like this now discussed, destroy ethical science, by opinions foreign from the moral facts of our nature, I must be more brief. If it was my plan to refute these doctrines in a manner at all proportioned to their importance, there is no one to which I should devote more time than to this of pantheism; but this would destroy the proper plan of my present course, and prolong, indefinitely, your attendance. I can only, therefore, in regard to such systems, point out to you the moral consequences which they imply; and, then, having disengaged clearly the fundamental idea on which they are based, limit myself to an exposure of the radical error of the idea, and to a specification of the precise particulars in which it is at variance with the actual condition of things. Within these limits I have confined all my observations upon the systems of mysticism and necessity, and within the same limits I have felt bound to comprise the discussion of pantheism.

I cannot close this lecture, gentlemen, without apologizing for having detained you so long upon such subtile ideas as these of which Spinoza's system is composed; but so much is said of this system, and it

is so often cited by those who have never even opened the works of this great metaphysician, that I have been glad to avail myself of the opportunity of giving some idea of it to those who attend this course. You will see, even from this succinct description, complex and difficult of comprehension as it has been, how guilty he must be of levity, who appeals to Spinoza, on all occasions, with an air of confidence. For myself, I declare I know no labor so difficult in metaphysical study, as to form a precise idea of the system exhibited in the ethics of Spinoza; and, if I should be asked to give a detailed and complete exposition of this system, I should require not a few lectures, but a course of six months.

## LECTURE VIII.

## SYSTEM OF SKEPTICISM.

GENTLEMEN,

IN the two preceding lectures it has been my desire, first, to exhibit the system of pantheism under the form in which it was presented by Spinoza, and then, putting aside the peculiarities of this form, to disengage the essential and fundamental principles of the system; and I have attempted thus to show the manner in which these principles sap the foundations of morality, and the radical error which justifies all sound philosophy in rejecting them. I have now done with pantheism; and in this lecture I proceed, therefore, at once to the system of skepticism, the fourth and last that I proposed to examine.

It is not in the nature of European nations to slight real being, and to substitute for it the pure conceptions of reason, or the chimerical visions of imagination; for they are endowed in general with a spirit that is practical, exact, and observing. Not so with the nations of the East. Opposite dispositions incline them rather to mysticism and pantheism. Skepticism has, therefore, occupied, in the progress of European philosophy, since its birth in Greece to

the present time, a far larger space than pantheism; and, while few adherents only have been added to the latter, skeptics have been innumerable. Again, there is but one way for becoming a pantheist, but a thousand for becoming a skeptic. The certainty of human knowledge may be attacked in a thousand different ways; and, satisfied with the one that we have followed, we may suppose ourselves victorious, and become skeptics. For these two reasons, a complete exposition of the foundations of skepticism, as they have been exhibited during the two thousand years of European philosophy, is far from being an easy undertaking, and would require a much more detailed discussion than I have given to the system of pantheism. But I will endeavor, in the present lecture, to consider, in a rapid and concise manner, not, indeed, all the arguments of skeptics against the certainty of human knowledge, but still the main principles upon which those arguments rest. I invite, therefore, your closest attention.

Human knowledge is something intermediate, between the mind that knows and the thing known; or, in other words, it is the representation, the image of real being in the intellect. Three elements, then, are to be distinguished in the phenomenon of knowledge—the subject of knowledge, that is to say, the intellect acquiring it; the object of knowledge, that is, the real being represented; and lastly, the knowledge itself, or the representation in the intellect of the real being. This being premised, knowledge is true, if it is a faithful image of the object; it is false, if it is an unfaithful one

The efforts of those, therefore, who desire to prove that we know nothing with certainty, must be directed wholly to the point of showing that human knowledge is not a faithful representation of its object; and those who wish to maintain the certainty of human knowledge must prove the contrary.

Such is the battle-field, where skepticism and dogmatism contend. The controversy between them reduces itself to this question — Is human knowledge, or is it not, a faithful image of real being? And, as in every act of knowing there are three elements, — the knowledge itself, the subject attaining it, and the object represented, — skeptical systems pretend to prove, by an analysis of human knowledge, of the real being represented, and of the intellect, that it is impossible to answer the question in the affirmative.

The nature of knowledge, the nature of the object of knowledge, and the nature of the subject of knowledge, are the three sources whence all arguments of skepticism must necessarily and do actually proceed. You will see how all these arguments fall successively under one of these three great heads. I shall limit myself to the principal ones, and will begin with those which are drawn from the nature of knowledge itself.

The first defect to be observed in human knowledge is its incompleteness; and this is a defect which cannot be denied. No one has ever had the boldness to assert, that man is capable of arriving at complete knowledge; it is evidently impossible; it is an achievement to which humanity has never had the presumption to aspire. Yet more; we acknowledge at once that even such knowledge as we are competent to gain,

is but small in comparison with our ignorance. Our knowledge, therefore, must be incomplete.

Now, if human knowledge is necessarily incomplete, and so very incomplete, what faith can we repose in it? That any element of knowledge may be perfectly conceived and comprehended, is it not necessary that all other elements of knowledge should be present also to the intellect? Each portion of real being has relations to every other portion; and, if we are ignorant of these, and of the relations connecting them with what we do know, then even this knowledge must be imperfect, and, consequently, not to be depended on. Thus, from the consideration that human knowledge is incomplete, comes the first argument against the faith which we blindly repose in it.

But let us forget, for a time, this imperfection of our knowledge, and consider its characteristics. And what do we see? We see that this incomplete knowledge has no durability nor permanence. On the very same question, the human mind in successive ages passes from one opinion to another, and never attaches itself firmly to any. This mutability of human opinion is displayed in the history of every nation. That which we call the life of a nation is nothing more than the perpetual transformations of its ideas upon the most important subjects. This mutability, however, goes yet further; it reaches to individuals as well as to nations, and the human race: however short life may be,—however rapid the passage of man across this earthly scene, from infancy to youth, from youth to mature years, from maturity to old age, from year to year, from month to month,

from week to week, — his opinions alter and are modified or changed on every point ; so that there is mutability in individuals as well as in communities, and in communities as well as in the race.

This is not all, gentlemen; this mutability of human opinions in time becomes, if I may say so, diversity in space. Take the human race, in any given age, and consider it in the different nations which compose it, and you will find, among these different nations, the greatest diversity of opinions upon the most important points. You will see that Americans do not think about them like Europeans, nor Europeans like Asiatics. You will see that neighboring nations, divided only by a river, a mountain, or an imaginary line, profess wholly different opinions upon the same points; and this diversity you will find in the bosom of each nation, throughout every family, whose members will differ one from another. And these opinions, which succeed each other in time, or coëxist in space, are distinguished not only by faint shades of difference from each other, but often the diversity approaches absolute contradiction. Hence the faith of one place or age is precisely opposite to that of another age or place. And the same questions about real being are forever agitated anew.

If human knowledge, in its natural development, presents to the observer such a spectacle, what follows? Does it not follow, that this very real being, which is the object of knowledge, — and which knowledge, to be true, must faithfully represent, — offers different or contradictory appearances to human intelligence, ac-



cording to times, places, circumstances, and individuals? To which, now, of these impressions and representations, shall I give the name of truth? To which shall I trust? Shall I believe in the opinions of the Greeks and Romans, or in those of our own times? Shall I prefer our own opinions to those of the Chinese, or those of the Chinese to those of the American Indians? Are not all these opinions equally human knowledge? Do they not equally exist in human intelligence? On what ground shall I prefer one to another? For what reason shall I put faith in one, and refuse it to all others? There is evidently no legitimate ground for choice; and yet I can believe in them only on such a condition. I ought not, then, to believe at all; for I have no right to believe.

Let us pass now from the spectacle offered by human knowledge itself, to the object of knowledge, and the motives for doubt will appear equally strong.

The object of knowledge, or real being, is made up, partly of that which is within the reach of observation, and partly of that which is beyond it. The surface only reveals itself; the depths are hidden.

There are, therefore, if I may say so, two elements of the object of knowledge—the apparent element and the hidden element—the surface and the depths,—qualities and effects on the one side, substance and causes on the other.

Now, of these two elements, the one actually within our reach is, of all things in the world, most mutable. You know what modifications and transformations all bodies, all beings, animate and inanimate, which people the vast creation, perpetually undergo. There

is not a body that is not incessantly subjected to the action of a thousand different causes, which, from moment to moment, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, alter, change, transform it, and leave it not one instant the same. The surface of objects, then, with which we are acquainted, is not a stable and permanent object. Far from it, gentlemen; it is something forever fluctuating and never abiding; it is the successive waves of a passing stream; a fugitive appearance, replaced each moment by others, which, in turn, give place to others which succeed. What, now, can the knowledge given by observation represent, except some one of these ephemeral appearances? To-morrow, an hour, or a minute hence, this knowledge will represent what has already passed away, and no longer exists. The notions which we have acquired and laid up in our minds, then, are faithful and true only for the moment when they are first received; the next moment they have ceased to be so, for that of which they were the type has already gone, and something else supplies its place.

If this is true of our knowledge of surfaces presented to the eye, what can our knowledge be of the depths of being which are hidden? We can explain the acquisition of this latter kind of knowledge only in one of two ways; either we infer it from the knowledge of the surface, or our reason conceives it *à priori*. If we admit that it is in the former mode, then, I ask, is the induction from the variable to the constant, from the accessory to the principal, a legitimate one? The portion of real being observed is not only



the smaller portion, but it is the least important, and is essentially secondary. What are qualities when compared with substance, or effects when compared with causes? What is the finite, the transient, the variable, when compared with the infinite, the durable, the immutable? Evidently, the premises on which we reason cannot support, or make legitimate, the conclusions which, it is pretended, we can deduce from them. But have we even these premises themselves? Have we not just seen that we neither have, nor can have, any true knowledge of the surfaces of things; and, that such knowledge as we think we have, neither does nor can represent any thing, except for the moment when it is received? Were the pretended premises, then, sufficient to sustain our reasoning, it might still be said, with truth, that we had no such premises.

If, on the other hand, we conceive *à priori* of that portion of real being, which is beyond observation, what authority have we for such a conception? What else is this but a divination, a presumption, the exactness and authority of which we cannot prove? When my reason conceives necessarily of what my observation cannot reach, — when it forms an idea which it cannot but form, a necessary, an irresistible idea, — I immediately conclude, it is true, that this idea does faithfully represent real being; but where are the demonstrative proof and authority for this? Singular reasoning, indeed, which determines the truth of an idea from its necessity, from the blind instinct producing it! Be it, then, that human intelligence does

draw conclusions as to the depths of being, from its surface, — be it that it does form conceptions of it *à priori*, — it is still impossible to establish, in any thorough manner, the certainty of such knowledge. And, since the knowledge representing the surface of things, and derived immediately from observation, is liable to no less weighty objections, it follows, from a careful analysis of the *object* of knowledge, that, so far from being led to any convincing proof that human knowledge is true, we seem to be furnished with a thousand reasons for thinking that it is not true, and that it cannot and ought not to be trusted.

But, gentlemen, such objections as these are slight, are nothing, in comparison with others which skepticism has drawn from the very nature of human intelligence itself, or, in other words, from the *subject* of knowledge.

We have just seen, in analyzing the *object* of knowledge, that it is not fixed, but essentially mutable and variable. The same may be said, and with yet more reason, of the *subject* of knowledge, that is, of man himself. When we consider man only as to his corporeal frame, a perpetual transformation, like that which we observe in all things else, is equally observable in him. The human body remains for no two successive moments identically the same; the particles composing it are every moment giving place to others; and yet this body, which is forever thus incessantly renewing itself, is the instrument used in acquiring knowledge; as it changes, the apparatus of the senses

change; and, if the senses alter, our knowledge must be affected, even if the intellect itself remains immutable.

But yet more, a crowd of circumstances, a multitude of various influences, tend, in addition to the body, to modify our knowledge. Man is changed by years; he is neither intellectually nor physically the same when old, as when young, when mature, as when a child; he is changed, and his faculty of intelligence, also, by sickness and by health: that a sick man sees nothing as a well man does, every one knows; and between these two extreme states there is an infinite number of intermediate bodily states, each producing analogous states of mind, which, by coloring every object with varying hues, introduce new changes in our knowledge. How shall we choose, with any degree of certainty, between ideas received during sleep, and when we are awake? Are not the faculties acting when we are asleep, the same which we employ when awake? And, if the same, have they not the same authority? And what a difference, too, do we find between impressions of real being, received at different times! Of two images of the same thing, shall reason prefer one, and reject the other? If there is any sure, unquestionable criterion, let us know what it is. Such a criterion can be no more found, than one authorizing us to prefer the knowledge of a man, who has retained his reason, to that of one who has lost it. For, in such a case, what do I see? Only two different states of the same human intelligence. And, I ask, on what ground am I justified in declaring, or by what signs

can I determine that the ideas acquired in the one case are true, and in the other false? The only objection that can be brought against the insane man is, that he sees things differently from the great body of mankind. But a majority is no criterion of the truth; and no more will this criterion avail to determine between the ideas of sleep and waking.

Independently of these causes of change, which by modifying the subject modify our knowledge, there are many others, affecting, in a no less evident manner, all our ideas and opinions. For instance, does not education determine, or at least contribute much towards determining, our ideas, upon the most important matters? Do we not receive these ideas ready made from the persons who surround us in infancy, and from all who may accidentally compose our family? And what shall we say of that education, more powerful and extensive than that of family, to which we are all subjected, and which influences us in spite of ourselves, and without our knowing it, the education of the religion, laws, institutions, customs, prejudices, and manners of our country,—in a word, of all circumstances contributing to form the intellectual atmosphere under which our intelligence is developed? Must not all these causes modify prodigiously, and in a thousand different ways, human ideas, without any change in real being? And now, if we add the influence of the passions, and of interest, upon our judgment, of rank and profession, of physical conformation, and of character, of climate, food, and a thousand other causes, we shall find that their influence is equally various and great. These infinite diversities in our ideas of real being are not produced by

real being itself; it is not real being that introduces the different ideas, notions, judgments of the fool and of the sage, of the sick and of the well, of the child and of the aged, of the idolater and of the Christian, of the Chinese and of the European, upon the same subjects, where real being is the same for all. This difference of ideas is owing to the mutability of the subject itself. And how, then, can we trust to the truth and fidelity of these ideas?

In order that knowledge may be faithful, is it not a necessary condition, that it should be the pure result of the impression of real being upon the intellect? Human intellect should therefore be a calm, clear mirror, in which the image of the reality may be reflected. But if the mirror is subject to the action of a thousand causes which modify it, and thus alter the image, supplying its place by thousands having no resemblance to the reality, what confidence can we feel in these images? And even when one is faithful, how can it be separated and distinguished?

But we must go yet further; we must analyze the operation of the various faculties of this intellect, which we have thus far examined as a whole, and see if they act separately in so regular a manner as to authorize us to place confidence in such results as they may give. And to begin with the senses; we all know that they do often deceive us; no philosopher has ever disputed it. No one doubts that each sense gives, at different times, different representations of the same object, and that the different senses contradict one another. The various elements of our faculty of intelligence, therefore, contradict each other, and contradict

themselves. What confidence, then, can we feel in it, and to which of its opposing testimonies shall we trust? And again, who can assure us that the eye sees, or that the ear hears, or that the touch feels, in one individual as it does in another? That which is yellow to me, may be blue to another, to another red, to another black. And how can I determine whether this is the case or not? These names signify only that to each person the same objects appear constantly of the same color, but by no means that all who use the same word have a sensation of the same color. We should still agree in the language used, even if what I saw as yellow should be red to you. The senses may be, therefore, faculties quite peculiar in each individual, and may give wholly different reports to different men; and yet it is upon their testimony that the greater part of knowledge derived from observation must rest.

Our immediate knowledge, derived from the second source, reason, is based on no better authority. I have already said, gentlemen, that reason does not believe in any thing from a perception of it, as observation does, but from a judgment that it ought to be, and because she cannot conceive of its not being. But is this a proof that what she believes in really does exist? What, because my reason cannot but admit the existence of something, does it follow that it really has existence? Will a proposition express a universal law of real being, simply because my intellect feels itself forced by a blind necessity, and without proof, to admit it? This is the only and sole motive for believing in the truth of the *à priori* principles of our reason; for that they do not prove themselves, all philosophers agree in acknowl-



edging. But what is such belief as this, except an act of blind and instinctive faith? What else is it except believing without proof, that is to say, without reason for believing? This would be true, even if men were agreed as to the number and nature of the principles which we are obliged to believe in thus blindly. But no such agreement is to be found in the system of philosophers. The list of these principles given by Aristotle, is not the list given by Kant; and Kant's differs from that of any other philosopher. It is enlarged or reduced arbitrarily. In one list are elements not found in another; and yet worse, even those may be disputed which are found in all. Many have been rejected, for strong reasons, by different philosophers. Hume, for instance, has dissected the principle of causality, seemingly so evident a one, and, in the judgment of many, has succeeded in showing that it has no sound foundation, but is a simple illusion of the human mind. Condillac has done the same with the principle of substance, by virtue of which we believe that there can be no such thing as whiteness, without something that is white. The substance of bodies, according to this philosopher, is nothing more than the aggregate of the qualities of bodies. Some have denied the existence of space, others that of duration; so that, admitting the fact of this blind faith, on which they are founded, the *à priori* principles of reason are still open to controversy and denial.

Thus much of the two faculties, which are the sources of our immediate knowledge. And now it may be added that the intellectual processes, going on within

us in relation to the information thus given, will bear critical examination no better.

These processes may be all described by the one word *reasoning*. Observation having supplied us with certain representations of real being, and reason having furnished us with what appear to be necessary principles, intellect is capable of only the one act of arranging this knowledge, and of drawing conclusions from these premises, that is, of reasoning. If we add to these premises the consequences deduced from them by reasoning, we have the whole of human knowledge.

And since it has been shown that observation and reason give us nothing upon which we can surely depend, it follows that the conclusions drawn by reasoning from such uncertain and fluctuating information must have the same characteristics, and be uncertain and fluctuating too. But the very reasoning itself, even if we should suppose the information given to be sure and fixed, — the very reasoning itself is a fallible and variable instrument for acquiring knowledge. You well know that, as a matter of fact, there are constantly great mistakes in reasoning, and that it is thus proved that the faculty of reasoning is not infallible ; for, if you give the same premises to two persons, you know it is possible that they will deduce from them, though they are identical, diametrically opposite conclusions. Nothing is easier, as people of all times, ancient and modern, have acknowledged, than to find arguments of seeming equal strength for or against any given proposition. Carneades, and the sophists before him, and advocates all over the world since, have succeeded perfectly in this

game, which would be impossible, if reasoning was not a deceptive instrument.

This sad view of our faculties, gentlemen, is disheartening enough; and yet I must not omit the consideration of memory, playing, as it does, so important a part in our acquisition of knowledge.

Memory lends its aid in all the operations of our minds, and performs an important part both in observation and in reasoning; as both of these proceed by successive steps. If memory, then, is fallible, and its communications uncertain, the authority of all our knowledge must be destroyed at once. What, then, is memory? It is the faculty which represents the past. Who now is ignorant, in the first place, that memory differs exceedingly in different persons? In some it is more, in others less, complete and sure. Even if memory, therefore, is incapable of altering the elements of the past, that is, of deceiving, yet this single fact of its greater or less degree of completeness, is sufficient to invalidate the truth of all the intellectual results, which it aids in producing. But who can satisfy us that memory cannot deceive? Does it not often happen that it represents the past quite otherwise than as it actually was, and as we know it to have been? And if it is said, that this is because it confounds and mistakes, not because it deceives, it may yet be asked, whether the result is not the same in the one case as in the other, and whether a mistake does not equally with a falsehood lead us to believe what is opposite to the truth; without adding the consideration, that the only guaranty we can at any time have of the veracity of memory, is the blind faith that we repose in it.

If, now, to all these reasons for doubt in the certainty of our knowledge, originating from the fallibility of the very faculties which communicate it, we add such accessory causes as tend to introduce new elements of error into their action ; if we take also into view the illusions, imaginations, and prejudices of all kinds which are sown so thickly and spring up so rankly in the mind, and all the various passions of our nature, creating, as they do, so many predispositions and predilections, will there not result from such a host of reasons for doubt, apparent on all sides, and mutually supporting each other, a complete demonstration of the uncertainty of human knowledge ?

But supposing that what we have thus far said is without foundation ; supposing that our faculties are not subject to variation and error ; that they never contradict themselves, and are perfectly in harmony with each other ; that they never give opposing testimony ; that our passions and imagination never confuse our reasonings and mental vision, — let all this be true, and yet the supporters of the certainty of human knowledge have not advanced one step.

For, gentlemen, there is a skepticism yet deeper than this which we have now been considering, and which, as we have seen, grows up from such strong and multiplied considerations. There is a skepticism which doubts of human intelligence itself, even when admitted to be a faculty consistent with itself, and free from contradictions ; even when admitted to be, as we say, infallible.

If all men, in all epochs of society, should arrive at the same ideas on the same subjects ; if each man, at different periods of life, and in different circumstances,

should obtain always the same results, when applying his faculties to a consideration of the same questions; if all the people of any one country, or of all nations on the face of the earth, should agree entirely and unanimously in their sentiments and opinions, upon every subject whatsoever, — even if this should be the case, what, then, would follow? What more would all this be, than simply the testimony of human intelligence in regard to real being? Well! how do we know that human intelligence is not so constituted, as to see things quite otherwise than as they actually are? How do we know that it is not so organized as to see as square that which is truly round, and as yellow that which is truly red, or as good that which is bad, and as true that which is false? Had God willed, as he might have done, so to organize our intelligence, that the image given by it of real being should be an untrue one, like that which water, when agitated, gives of objects reflected from its surface, it would have been enough, gentlemen; by this simple hypothesis, the certainty of all human knowledge is utterly and irremediably destroyed. To this final objection of skepticism there can be no possible answer, because such an answer would suppose a faculty in man enabling him to judge between his own intelligence and real being; but this is in itself inconceivable; and even if it were not so, the supposition would avail nothing, for this new faculty would at once become liable to the very objection which it had been summoned to remove.

From this rapid sketch of the various objections which skepticism has brought against the truth of human knowledge, you will see that they all originate

from a consideration of human knowledge in itself, or of the nature of the object and subject of this knowledge. Mutable and unstable as are its object on one side, and its subject on the other, knowledge cannot in itself be either fixed or trustworthy; not fixed, because its object alters, as soon as knowledge is obtained; and not trustworthy, because no true image of the reality can be reflected in so unstable a mirror; and even were this not the case, even were the intellect and the object of knowledge equally immutable, it would yet remain a question, whether the intellect is fitted to give a true representation of real being. All considerations tend, therefore, to this same conclusion, that there is no ground for confidence in human knowledge.

What, now, is the immediate consequence of such opinions? This, gentlemen; that nothing can give us assurance of the fact, that what we consider good is really good, or that what we consider bad is really bad, or that what we consider obligatory is really obligatory, or that really forbidden which we think forbidden. No consequence could follow more immediately or evidently from a principle. Skepticism destroys at once, therefore, all morality and all right. For a skeptic, moral truth exists no more than mathematical or physical truth; all truth vanishes at once, if every means of distinguishing it from error is proved to be of no avail.

But, admitting the consequence to be just, one thing yet remains for the skeptic to explain; and that is, the existence of those ideas of good and evil, of justice and injustice, which are found in human minds. And skeptics have explained the existence of these

ideas in a variety of ways which do not contradict their system.

Skeptics, in ancient times, considered all such ideas as the invention of legislators, intended to sustain the weakness of the laws which they enacted, and to restrain those who had no fear of threatened penalties. The greatest skeptic of modern times, Hume, asserts that they are the result of an inward sense, which, brought into relation with human actions, is agreeably affected by some, and disagreeably by others, as taste or smell is by flavors and scents. It is on account of these agreeable or disagreeable impressions that we apply to actions the qualities of good or bad, and love the one while we dislike the other, and prefer the former to the latter. It is evident that this explanation does no more to establish moral obligation than that of antiquity did, and that it is equally in harmony with all the consequences of skepticism. There was not a skeptic of ancient times who failed to draw from the system such moral consequences as I have described. Archelaus, the sophists Aristippus, Arcesilaus, Pyrrho, Carneades, Sextus Empiricus, all professed that there is no sure distinction between good and evil; that good and evil are altogether the effects of legislation; and that their character is determined by the greatest interest of the legislator and of society.

This *consequence*, inevitable as it is in the view of reason, has, then, been fully admitted in all time. And more than one skeptic of antiquity appears to have united practice to theory; at least, there are some evidences that such was the fact. Incredible stories, for instance, are told of Pyrrho's complete indifference

to the distinctions between good and evil; and as he extended this indifference to all other subjects, it was not in him a want of morality so much as a logical adherence to his principles. In other skeptical schools, morality has been resolved into pleasure, and by a process quite simple and natural. For although there is no truth or error for the skeptic, there are yet agreeable and painful sensations; and for want of the higher good, which he has lost sight of, he adopts the greatest gratification that sensibility enables him to enjoy.



## LECTURE IX.

## REFUTATION OF SKEPTICISM

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture, I had two objects in view ; first, to make you acquainted with the foundation on which skepticism is based ; and secondly, to show you that this system, in destroying all faith, destroys, also, moral obligation, the very foundation of ethics. There remains one further duty to fulfil ; for I must not pass by the system of skepticism without pointing out its radical errors. The refutation, however, must be as rapid as the exposition. It might be developed indefinitely. I shall not attempt to examine, separately, the various grounds for doubt proposed by skeptics ; but will limit myself to the statement of such general views as may be used in their refutation. And as the subject is one of a complex and subtile nature, I beg you to give me your strict attention.

I have told you that skeptics draw their arguments for doubt either from the nature of human knowledge, of the subject which knows, or of the object known. Every skeptical objection may be ranged under one of these three categories. Of the three classes of objections, those arising from the nature of the subject are

without comparison the most grave; indeed they are the only ones which are truly unanswerable; and with these, therefore, I will begin.

But, in order that the nature, weakness, and error of these objections may be comprehended, it is indispensable that you should have a clear idea of the part performed by intellect, in the acquisition of knowledge. Without this you will be unable, except in a very imperfect degree, to feel the force of the objections of the skeptic, or of such explanations as I shall give. I will first, therefore, describe in a few words the process by which our knowledge is acquired, and the faculties employed, and will hastily lay bare the mechanism of the wonderful operations from which human knowledge results. And I trust that my exposition will be intelligible and clear.

However numerous and various the kinds of human knowledge may appear to be, they are all to be referred to two classes of notions, the one elementary, and communicated immediately, the other secondary, and derived from the first. We recognize, also, two orders of faculties; the former of which acquire directly a knowledge of the reality, and form those notions which I call elementary; while the latter, acting upon the elementary notions already acquired, deduce from them our secondary knowledge.

Our elementary notions are all derived from two sources — observation and reason.

As you well know, gentlemen, the whole of real being is not exhibited to us, but only that small portion with which we are brought directly in contact. We have a faculty fitted to acquire a knowledge of this.

It is the faculty of observation; and we are accustomed to call the knowledge obtained from it empirical. These notions represent only what we have observed; that is, only a portion, and a very small portion, of what actually is. They form the first class of the elementary notions of human intelligence; and I shall have said all that it is necessary you should bear in mind, in asking you to remember, that observation can be applied in two different directions—outwardly by the senses, inwardly by consciousness; so that all the knowledge which we can obtain through observation is reduced to that perceived out of ourselves by the senses, or within ourselves by consciousness.

But these are not the only sources of our direct information as to real being. Independently of observation, we have another faculty that communicates knowledge. This faculty is reason, which does not, like observation, see what actually is, but conceives, from what observation has communicated, of that which must and cannot but be. Hence a second class of elementary notions, called indifferently *conceptions of the reason*, *rational truths*, *à priori principles*, whose characteristic is, that they express something which cannot but be, which consequently is in harmony with the whole of real being, and represents universal notions; while, on the other hand, empirical notions represent only the portion of real being subject to observation, correspond and refer only to that portion, and never, therefore, go beyond a certain degree of generality.

Such are the two classes of our elementary notions. They include all the materials of human knowledge.

And there is not, and cannot be, in human intelligence, any elementary notion which is not derived either from observation of what actually is, by the senses and consciousness, or from the conceptions of what must be, by the reason.

And here an important remark should be made — it is, that reason never rises to the ideas which it is her function to introduce into human knowledge, unless the communications of observation first supply the occasion. Thus, to give an example, it is absolutely necessary that observation should meet with something which has just begun to be, in the portion of real being open to its view, before reason can attain to the absolute idea that there must be a cause for whatever begins to exist. It is only after unconsciously, and in a thousand particular cases, applying this universal idea, which is secretly contained within it, that reason suddenly disengages it, and conceives it under its universal form. We say, a thousand times, when observing something that has just begun to exist, “This has a cause,” before we rise to the conception of the absolute and necessary idea implied by the expression, that is to say, to the conception of the principle of causality in itself; so that, although these universal ideas are not derived from what observation gives us, yet, nevertheless, they do not arise without the communications of observation. Observation lends her aid, therefore, if I may say so, at the birth of the universal and absolute conceptions of reason.

On the other hand, reason operates in every acquisition of observation. Whatever the element of real being which observation meets with, whether external

or internal, there is always superadded to the simple notion it acquires, a supplementary idea from the reason. Thus, when observation perceives a quality, intellect could not form the judgment, "This is white, this is red," unless beyond the mere quality reason conceived of something to which observation cannot attain, namely, substance. Thus, again, when observation has communicated the notions of any two facts, we could not judge that they were successive to each other, unless reason added to the mere notion of these two facts an idea of something more, beyond the reach of observation; that is, of duration, which alone makes succession possible, and the idea of which is consequently implied in that of succession. Again, when, in view of any object we pronounce that simplest of all judgments, "*This is*," it is because reason superadds to the simple notion of the object, supplied by observation, the idea that observation does not deceive us, and consequently that external reality is conformed to the internal idea which observation has communicated; so that we may say, with equal truth, that observation is the occasion of every conception of the reason, and yet that no notion of observation can become a judgment, or become knowledge, without the coöperation of an *a priori* element which reason supplies. But enough of this coöperation of these two faculties in the acquisition of all human knowledge; all that it is important we should bear in mind is, that our elementary knowledge is derived exclusively from these two sources.

Thus, then, gentlemen, are obtained the materials of all our ideas. And now another faculty begins to act, which works up these materials, and deduces from them

our ulterior knowledge. This faculty is reasoning; and we must distinguish between reasoning by induction and by deduction; for reasoning has two modes of proceeding.

This is the process of reasoning by induction: when several particular cases, which are analogous, have been ascertained by observation, and stored in the memory, reason applies to this series of analogous observations the *à priori* principle, that the laws of nature are constant; and, at once, what was true through observation in only twenty, thirty, or forty observed cases, becomes, by the application of this principle, a general law, as true of other cases not observed as of those which observation has ascertained. From the results of observation, and solely by the application to these results of a conception of reason, the mind arrives at a consequence that transcends them. Such is the method of reasoning by induction. Its characteristic is, that it proceeds from certain results, communicated by observation, to a general principle within which they are included.

The process of reasoning by deduction is as follows: a truth of any kind, particular, general, or universal, being made known, reason deduces from it whatever other truths it includes; sometimes the deduction is complete, in which case reason only presents the whole truth under two different aspects; at other times the deduction is imperfect, and then reason passes from the whole to a part. But in either case, if we compare together the results of our reasoning and the premises from which we drew them, we shall always find that these results, and a part or the whole of the premises

are perfectly equivalent. This is the special characteristic of deductive reasoning.

Such, gentlemen, are the important transformations to which intellect subjects the primary notions immediately communicated by observation and reason. There are two faculties by which we acquire our elementary notions—observation and reason; and two modes of reasoning by which these elementary notions are converted into ultimate notions—induction and deduction.

One other faculty coöperates in the formation of human knowledge. It is the faculty that preserves and makes durable the notions acquired; I mean memory. Without this faculty, human knowledge would be forever limited to the present moment. Memory treasures up the successive results of observation, and thence comes experience. Memory is interwoven, indeed, with the texture of all reasoning; for we could never arrive at a conclusion, without remembering at each step both the premises from which we set out, and the intermediate steps already taken. Memory enters, therefore, as a necessary auxiliary, into the formation of all the notions derived from observation or reasoning, and it alone preserves these notions. Not so, however, with ideas supplied by reason. In their acquisition memory has no part, because they are formed spontaneously. Neither does it aid in keeping them, for this is not needed. As reason acquires these ideas because it is impossible not to conceive them, this necessity continues to be felt, and reason conceives them anew, whenever they are required in the process of obtaining knowledge

there is no need of the employment of memory, therefore, to preserve them. Reason alone, of all our faculties, is independent of memory, and demands not her aid.

Such, omitting innumerable details, are the positive results, to which long study of the origin and formation of knowledge has led me. Such, in my view, is the whole process of intellectual creations; and it is, as you see, most simple.

Thus much having been explained, we are now in a situation to examine the grounds upon which the truth of human knowledge, thus acquired, is questioned, and those upon which it may securely rest. We are acquainted with the materials of this knowledge, and the mode in which its various elements are formed. We shall be able to see, therefore, the exact tendency and real force of objections urged against it.

And in the first place, gentlemen, when any one of the four faculties, which coöperate in the formation of our knowledge is brought into action, and communicates any notion, such as it is fitted to introduce, it is evident enough that we neither should nor could believe in the truth of this notion, except upon one condition — that we have faith in the natural veracity of this faculty, that is to say, in its ability to see things as they are; for if we have any doubt of this, it is evidently impossible that there should be any truth or belief at all for us. And yet there is not, and cannot be, any proof of this natural veracity of our faculties. When reason says, "This must be, of necessity," what proof have we that in reality it is so? We have absolutely none. When memory has a clear,



precise, undoubting recollection of having seen such a person in such a place, what proof have we that it represents the past as it really was? None, none whatever. When observation, directed attentively and steadily upon any object, says, "Here is something which is not round, but square, which is not white, but red, which has such or such a quality, and not some other one," what proves that our senses do not give representations different from the objects? Again I say, we have no proof. To torment ourselves in seeking to prove that the faculties through which we receive our notions are not so constituted as to give false, but true representations, is to torment ourselves most foolishly. For it is unquestionable, that any proof of this, such as can be imagined, must be the work of these very faculties, and consequently must be proved itself.

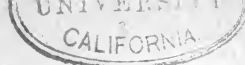
Thus, then, it appears that the principle of all certainty, and of all belief, must be, in the first instance, an act of blind faith in the natural veracity of our faculties. When a skeptic, therefore, says to a dogmatist, "You have no proof that your faculties see things as they are, no proof that God has not so constituted them as to deceive you," he says what is incontrovertible and undeniable. Such is the necessary condition of all faith. But let us for the moment put by this first general argument of skepticism, to which we will directly return, and let us see whether, as the skeptic pretends, it is still impossible to believe, even when we do not consider this chief ground of doubt. The skeptic asserts, as you will remember, that, even admitting that our faculties are so constituted as to see

things as they are, it is yet plain that there can be no confidence reposed in the information given by them, because each separate faculty is liable to be deceived, and there is no sure mode by which we can separate the truth from the error in its testimony.

We need not review the arguments by which the skeptic attempts to establish this point; for they were considered at sufficient length in the preceding lecture. Let us now proceed to try the validity of these arguments. Have they really any force? I think not.

The reasoning of the skeptic suggests at once this consideration, that, since all men acknowledge that their various faculties sometimes do deceive them, a means of distinguishing the cases in which they do and in which they do not is needed; that is to say, each faculty must have its own *criterion* of truth, and we must be acquainted with this *criterion*. For, I repeat it, if there are no certain signs by means of which we can determine that our faculties do not deceive us, then neither can we know that they ever do deceive us, or even that they can deceive us.

But is that which is apparently true, really so? Is there any *criterion* in fact? I answer, yes, undoubtedly there is, for every man in his sound senses. There may be, and probably are, among my hearers, many who have never studied the rules for the direction of our faculties prescribed by logic; but, I ask, does such a one, supposing that he is anxious and interested to gain certain information, doubt at all whether he is capable of seeing external objects as they really are? And yet, who now will be bold enough to deny, that, in very many cases,



these very senses, by which we feel so sure of arriving at an accurate knowledge of external objects, do, in fact, lead us into error? Every one present believes, at this moment, both that his senses have often deceived him, and yet that they never would deceive him, if he took the proper precautions. We all, in fact, then, already do know, or, in times of need, do instinctively discover, these proper precautions; and this is saying, in other words, that we all have a *criterion*, by means of which we do distinguish the testimonies of our senses which merit confidence, from those which do not.

What I have here said of the senses may be said with equal truth of all our intellectual faculties. No one present doubts his capacity to discover the true consequences of any principle, when he is interested in so doing, and bestows upon it the proper attention and care. And yet, we all know that we can and do deceive ourselves in our processes of reasoning, though, at the same time, we believe that there are means by which we might avoid errors in reasoning. We all admit, therefore, that there is a *criterion*, by which we can separate truth from error in our reasonings.

And thus it is with all the faculties which coöperate in the production of our knowledge. All are able to distinguish between cases in which a faculty has been properly exercised,—and when, therefore, we may feel confidence in the results to which it leads us,—and those in which it has been improperly exercised,—when we can feel none, and when it is unreasonable to trust it.

And a yet further proof that we do actually possess such a *criterion*, is the fact, that we are applying it every moment. When, for instance, we see any object at a great distance, do we feel entire confidence in the impression received through the eye? We do not, and for this reason — that we have learned from experience that the eye distinguishes imperfectly, at a distance, both the form and the color of objects; but, at the same time, we know the means of satisfying ourselves whether the notion we have received is correct or not; we remove the opportunity for error by lessening the distance between our eye and the object. Analogous examples might be cited with regard to every faculty.

The cause of our faculties deceiving us is not the want of a *criterion* to distinguish the proper from the improper exercise of them, but carelessness or haste in not using or in misusing this *criterion*. We have a confused view of it, and do not use all proper precautions for arriving at the exact truth, except when we have great interests at stake. Philosophers have therefore spared no pains to describe precisely every *criterion*, which common sense sees indistinctly; and it is in this chiefly that the great discoveries, which have been made in logic, consist. The labors of Aristotle in this branch of philosophy all tended to the one point of determining the true *criterion* of reasoning by deduction; that is, the distinguishing sign of legitimate consequences. And what is this? It is that the consequence is one actually included in the premises. This result may seem very simple, and even trivial; but it was

only by a most laborious analysis of all forms and possible processes of reasoning, that this great man arrived at it. And again, what did Bacon accomplish in logic? He determined the true *criterion* of reasoning by induction, and this was all; though it cannot be said of him, as of Aristotle, that he left nothing to be completed by his successors; for, without question, the application of the inductive method, in the researches of two centuries, has wonderfully perfected Bacon's incomplete idea of the conditions necessary for the proper mode of proceeding in inductive reasoning. These two famous logicians derive their distinction, then, from the fact, that the one discovered the *criterion* for reasoning by deduction, and the other the *criterion* for reasoning by induction; and yet they did no more than make clear two indistinct ideas, which had always before existed in the common sense of men. The criterion of sensible perception and that of memory have also occupied philosophers. You are acquainted with the noble efforts of Malebranche, of Locke, and of the Scottish philosophers, to determine the laws of memory and of the association of ideas; and you cannot be ignorant of the care and sagacity with which so many philosophers have analyzed and determined the sources of error to which all our senses are exposed. Now, to what end have all these efforts tended, if not to the establishment of the precise conditions needed, in order that memory and the senses may communicate notions worthy of credit? Unquestionably, this end has, in a great measure, been attained; and, in regard to these two faculties, it may be truly said, that

logical science is very nearly perfect. And yet the only discovery made by logic, in relation to them, is a knowledge of those various means for correcting memory and sensation, which men naturally employ in all cases where they are deeply interested. So that philosophy has done no more in this matter than simply to make clear the notions which had always existed, though obscure, in common human intelligence.

So far, then, from its being true, as skeptics assert, that human intelligence, subject as its faculties are to error, has no means of distinguishing truth from error in the multitude of its impressions,—so far is this from being true, that we have proved that there are such means for correcting every faculty. We have proved it by showing, first, that all men know that their faculties do sometimes deceive them; secondly, that all men, when greatly interested, really discover and use proper precautions for arriving at true and certain results in the use of each and every faculty; and, thirdly, that the most distinguished logicians have actually determined the precise conditions required for such certainty.

You will have remarked that, among the examples adduced to illustrate the point which we have been considering, I have not drawn any from reason. My motive was, simply, that reason is not liable to be deceived; alone, of all our faculties, reason possesses this prerogative, and it is owing to its peculiarity of acting from necessity. Necessity cannot admit of the distinctions of more or less; and, provided only that it is constantly the same in all men, it

must produce similar effects in each individual, under similar circumstances. And to this it is owing, that the ideas of reason appear exactly the same, in number and in kind, in the minds of all human beings, and remain, through all changes, immutable.

Hence it is, gentlemen, that the objection has never been brought against reason, that it is different in different men, or in the same individual at different times: there is no such ground as this for rejecting its conceptions. On the contrary, the great argument of the skeptic against reason is drawn from the necessity and immutability of its judgments. "See," they say, "reason admits this or that, because it cannot but admit it; its motive for believing any thing is, that it is impossible to disbelieve it. Is not this a sufficient proof that its belief is imposed upon it by its nature, and that, had that nature been different, the belief would have been different also?" This, you will observe, is Kant's great argument: according to him, the conceptions of reason have only a subjective value, because they are necessary, and thus might change, if the subject itself was changed. This argument, however, is plainly the same with that which questions the veracity of our faculties; and, therefore, we pass it by for the present.

Since the variableness of its conceptions cannot be brought against reason, skepticism finds objections in the variableness of philosophical views of these conceptions, and has arrayed against its authority a twofold argument, drawn, first, from the systems which have denied or disfigured these conceptions; and, secondly, from the disagreements among them-

selves of the philosophers who have attempted to classify them.

It is entirely true, gentlemen, that some philosophers have rejected one or more of the principles of human reason, — as, for instance, Hume, who has denied, as I have shown you, the principle of causality, and Condillac, who has denied that of substance, and many others who might be added. But, you will remember, I have proved that Hume and Condillac could not but come to these conclusions, if they were consistent with their own systems. The objection, then, is without force. It is easy to bring forward philosophers, who have denied, in their writings, some one or other principle of reason; but not one could be found, who has not, at the same time, constantly proved, by his conduct, that he believed in them quite as much as other men.

The objection drawn from the disagreement among philosophers, in their attempts to classify these principles, is equally weak. These principles are facts — the facts of human nature — and, of course, the observation of them is as liable to error as that of any other class of facts. Some of the philosophers who have studied them have seen more of these facts, others fewer — some more, others less correctly; hence the diversity of results. The diversity will lessen and disappear in proportion as observations are multiplied and made more exact; and, again, this diversity is more often apparent than real, and arises chiefly from the different forms under which the same identical principles have been described. But, however this may be, these diversities evidently



affect only the science of these principles, and not the principles themselves, which are and must remain identically the same for all minds. Where is the man, who, when he sees any thing happen, does not instantly suppose that there was a cause for it; or, where he perceives a quality, does not conceive of a substance; or who does not assign to every object a place, and to every event a time? These notions are so essential to human nature, that not even madness can destroy or change them. The insane man has this in common with all mankind, that he still believes in these notions; and, in this respect, still remains a man, even when he has ceased to be so in all others.

Thus much, gentlemen, I have thought it necessary to say of the general objection of skepticism, deduced from the variableness of the faculties of intelligence. As this charge cannot be brought against reason, which is immutable, it can extend only to observation, reasoning, and memory; and I have shown, even if it is true that these are fallible, that we are still capable of distinguishing truth from error, in their communications. This objection against the certainty of human knowledge is thus shown to be without force; and it is proved, therefore, that we can arrive at truth, if our faculties are only so organized as to see things as they really are, and not to transmit to us false images. Let us, then, return to the consideration of this last objection; and, having thus driven skepticism behind its last intrenchment, let us try its strength.

I hasten to say, then, that I know no positive

answer to this objection of the skeptic: there can be no proof possible of the veracity of our intelligence. And yet this objection is a remarkable one, and deserves consideration.

In the first place, then, you will please to observe, that they even who are most swayed by this objection, pay no regard to it in practice. A philosopher may very well conceive that there is no proof that God has not so constituted his intelligence, as to see, instead of the reality, something quite different from it; and yet, whenever an object is presented to his eyes, he will believe in the fidelity of the impression received through them; or, if his memory suggests that he has promised to dine with a friend, he will go; or, if a threatening sound strikes his ear, he will avoid the danger. There never was a skeptic who escaped such inconsistencies, or who did not fall into them a thousand times each day; and, however strong his reasons for doubt, he will yet believe as firmly as the most determined dogmatist.

In the next place, please to consider whether there is any way in which an intelligent being could be organized so as to avoid this objection. If this being is to be intelligent, he must, of course, be capable of knowledge; and, that he may be capable of it, he must have faculties fitted to acquire knowledge. An intelligent being could be organized in no other way. Now, being rational, he will remark that he has faculties, and that these faculties form part of one individual organization, and that they are themselves individual; and, at once, this very objection of the skeptic arises, that, if they had been differently

constituted they might have given him very different notions of things. Indeed, so inherent is the possibility of such an objection, in the very nature of an intelligent being, that we cannot admit the thought that even the Deity himself is secure from it, except when we reflect that we can form no adequate idea of his nature; for, if we take the highest idea we can form, and represent to ourselves the Deity as an intelligent being, who acquires knowledge by the use of a faculty for knowing, we cannot, by any possibility, escape from the conclusion that he might experience this very doubt, urged by the skeptic against our faculties. Such observations may suffice to show, that, even if this objection cannot be refuted, it yet does not merit the serious consideration of a philosopher. We can know nothing, and can learn nothing, except by using the intelligent faculties with which we are endowed; the first truth, which any man who would learn and know, must recognize, is, that his faculties see things as they really are; for, otherwise, he must renounce all learning and knowledge; science becomes impossible, and research vain.

This is the only answer that can be made to the one irrefutable argument of skepticism.

As to the causes of error which are derived from the imagination, the passions, education, and prejudice, and from the desires and propensities of the body, they are all well known, and such as every man is aware he must guard against. The precautions, which must be taken in order that our faculties may be preserved from their influence, are recognized universally as conditions for the legitimate exercise of

our faculties, and, consequently, for the legitimacy of the knowledge acquired by them.

Independently, however, of these causes, which tend to disturb the regular exercise of our intelligence, it is said that the intelligent subject itself is variable; that it is modified by age, and changes from year to year, and from day to day; and that it is not from one moment to another the same. I reply, that we must make a distinction here. It is true, that our body, like all bodies whatever, does undergo perpetual alterations, and does each moment receive or lose something, and is not identically the same for two successive moments. Still the properties of its different organs remain the same, amidst this continual flux of the particles of which its substance is composed. But it is not the body that has the capacity of knowing, but the mind, or that which we call ourselves, our *me*. Now the *me* declares itself identically the same at every moment of existence; and, if any one should be inclined to deny this identity, he would immediately be conducted to such absurd consequences as must convince him that all the facts of human nature imply this absolute identity, and are inexplicable without it.

It is true, these very variations of our body exert an important influence upon the mind; but, then, they are classed among the causes of error, and every sensible man takes heed of them when he would acquire accurate knowledge. The young man is aware that his age is liable to passions which may mislead his judgment, and which incline him to a precipitancy and a self-confidence unfavorable to the

pursuit for truth; and we, on our part, in consulting the judgment of youth, take into consideration these sources of error, and estimate their influence.

I have now done with the skeptical objections deduced from the nature of the subject of knowledge; and I hasten to those which originate in the nature of the object of knowledge, and of knowledge itself.

I have but a word to say of the former. It is unquestionably true, that every external object is constantly varying. But, observe, it is not what is variable that interests us, or that is the object of science. It is the substance of beings which changes; but science seeks to become acquainted rather with their specific nature, which is permanent, and remains unchanged in all essential characteristics.

This is not saying that the nature of beings is incapable of change; but the change is a regular one. This change, in other words, is subject to laws, and it is these laws which science seeks to learn. This is true, not only of single beings, but of the whole creation; it remains the same, notwithstanding the eternal movement that agitates, and alters, and modifies, incessantly, all its parts—a movement regular, and subject to fixed and immutable laws. And it is this immutable form of the universe, and the immutable laws of life animating it, which science seeks to determine and know: these never change. Science is not interested in the unceasing flux of phenomena, forever passing throughout creation; for this is transient, and the transient is indifferent to her. Thus, even if the skeptic's objection is founded in truth, it still does not affect science, because it does

not extend to that which is really the object of science. And this is enough to show you the weakness of all skeptical arguments drawn from this main one.

Of objections brought against knowledge itself, the first consists in saying that the idea which knowledge gives us of the reality must be unworthy of confidence, because, when compared with its object, our knowledge is so very incomplete.

To this I reply, if it is true that our faculties, when legitimately and rightly used, do see things as they really are, it is, then, also true, that the knowledge communicated by them, is a faithful representation of whatever portion of real being they observe; and, therefore, the only charge which can be brought against our knowledge, is its incompleteness. If, indeed, we then proceed to draw from this fragment, of which we have acquired knowledge, rash inductions as to the whole of real being, we may easily fall into error; but the knowledge of the portion observed by our faculties will remain as true as before; and this only can be said, that we have reasoned badly, and drawn from certain premises conclusions which they did not contain. But it does not follow that we are incapable of reasoning correctly, because we can and do sometimes reason incorrectly. If we draw from the minute portion of real being which we are acquainted with, rigorous inductions only as to the whole, the notions arrived at will be exact. True, these notions will still remain incomplete; but the dogmatist nowise pretends that human knowledge is complete; he asserts only that it is faithful and trustworthy.

The second reason for doubt, found by the skeptic

in the nature of knowledge itself, is drawn from the consideration that human opinions are so different in different eras, places, nations, individuals. To give a thorough refutation of this objection would be an endless task. I must limit myself to a few rapid observations.

I remark, in the first place, that this diversity of opinion is far from extending to all subjects. If any one would undertake to draw up a counterpart to the picture presented by the skeptic, I am perfectly sure that the catalogue of opinions, held in common by all mankind, would form a far more large and valuable volume than the lists so often begun by skeptics of opinions upon which men differ. What would have become of the human race, indeed, if, upon points where it is important to have certain knowledge, opinions had been forever undetermined as to what is true or false. The truth is, human opinion has never hesitated nor altered in relation to those facts of the external world, or of human nature, and of their respective laws, which it is most important we should know. Do you ask why? Because the human race could have continued in existence on no other condition. And do you know that this part of human knowledge, representing the notions held in common by all mankind, of all and every age, is so very large, that the part representing those about which they differ, becomes, in comparison, imperceptible? Do you inquire, now, why this principal and most important part of knowledge is so little noticed, and why it plays so small a part on the theatre of philosophical discussions? It is because it is so essential to man, and so constantly employed by him

that it becomes confounded with human nature itself; it is because we acquire it so early, and because we find it already formed and established in us when we first begin to reflect, and because, therefore, it appears to us as if we never had acquired it. It is that treasure, stored up for the future man, by the incredible activity of the young mind, in those first years, which, though to the careless observer they may seem a mere dream, are really the most fruitful in results of any in existence — a rare treasure, indeed, gentlemen; for it is with these ideas, common to every individual, that men understand themselves and each other; they constitute us men, and therefore is it that we do not notice them. The ideas which attract our attention are those upon which we differ. And how admirable is this provision! For to those alone which are uncertain need we direct our attention. Hence, however, comes the illusion, which leads us to consider these opinions as the whole of human knowledge, and which makes us believe, in consequence, that knowledge is uncertain; and this illusion must be kept distinctly in view, if we would estimate the true force of the skeptical argument.

But the diversity and mutability of human opinions, when thus limited, by no means lead to such consequences as skeptics pretend. They are to be explained by causes wholly different from that want of power in the intellect to see the truth, which the skeptic assigns as the reason.

The fallibility of intellect, gentlemen, is one cause. In every case there can be but one truth, while there may be numberless errors. It is, then, possible that



we may be deceived in a thousand ways about every thing; and, on the supposition that intellect is fallible, a thousand different errors—that is to say, different opinions—are possible; but does it follow, from this variety of opinions, that truth cannot be discovered? or, when once found, that it cannot be separated from the errors with which it is combined? Not at all; as a thousand instances testify. How many truths have been discovered and recognized, after countless false systems had been proposed and refuted! Who, indeed, would ever pursue a science at all, unless his studies tended to this result?

The laws which govern the acquisition of knowledge are another cause of the variety of opinions among men. God has not endowed us with the prerogative of attaining truth at once; we reach it only by a gradual progress, and successive steps—only by acquiring, in repeated efforts, its several elements. Human knowledge cannot be, and should not be, immutable. Each new discovery augments, and consequently modifies, science; and this is true at once of every department, and of the whole of knowledge. No opinion, no truth, then, is definitive, for it is not complete. And, since nations and individuals have advanced to different stages in this common progress towards truth, the diversity and mutability of human opinions are readily explained. Such an identity and perpetuity of human opinion, as is demanded by the skeptic, would be nothing less than the equality and immutability of all human intelligence.

In addition, it may be said that there is one other most fruitful source of illusion in this matter; and

it is, that the variety of forms in which ideas are expressed is often supposed to be a variety in the ideas themselves. Who does not know that the same religious or political dogmas are often found prevailing under forms the most apparently diverse? Who does not know, for example, how various are the modes by which the grand article of faith, a belief in a Deity, has been professed, in different ages and countries? Viewed in the light of this remark, this phantom of diversity in human opinion subsides into quite moderate dimensions.

Indeed, there is nothing at all wonderful in this variety of human opinions, if we consider the conditions to which intelligence is subject, and the laws of the formation, progress, and development of knowledge. In proportion as we more thoroughly understand the true laws of our faculties can we better explain the progress of the human mind, and the various errors through which it has passed. As soon as men discovered the true mode of proceeding in the investigation of physical science, it was at once seen most clearly why antiquity had erred, and necessarily erred. Hypothesis preceded observation in these pursuits, and various hypotheses were successively proposed and adopted, because it could not but be that such hypotheses should seduce the mind of man, and be tried; and the hypothetical method finally gave way to the method of observation, because the proper time for it had come. The change of human opinions in this respect was the necessary consequence of the laws of the human mind, and not a sign of its incapacity of arriving at truth.

I will close this lecture, already too much prolonged, with one more observation upon the system of skepticism. Is there, I ask, at the present day, any one, who refuses to believe in the truths which have been discovered in physical and mathematical science? If these truths are not doubtful, if they are worthy of credit, then it is plain that the faculties of human intelligence are capable of acquiring truth. They are not by nature deceptive, therefore, or incompetent to distinguish truth from error. If the authority of these faculties is acknowledged in one exercise of their power, then must it be acknowledged in all; and, if denied at all, in any case, then is all faith impossible. In other words, there can be no half-skepticism, nor half-dogmatism. He who would be a skeptic, in our day, must, if he would be consistent, consider mathematical and physical truths, as well as all others, chimerical. Skepticism, which once occupied so prominent a position in philosophy, has gradually withdrawn; and, from resting on those arguments so much used by antiquity, though now refuted, it finds itself driven, in modern times, to take refuge in the simple metaphysical doubt as to the veracity of our faculties — an impregnable position, it is true, but one where it does not and cannot exert any actual influence on the human mind.

## LECTURE X.

## THE SKEPTICISM OF THE PRESENT AGE

GENTLEMEN,

WE have now completed the discussion of systems which destroy the basis of morality by reasonings not drawn from the facts of human nature, and, according to my original plan, I propose to pass next to a second class of systems, which lead to the same result through an incomplete and false analysis of these facts. But, after what has been said in the two last lectures on the subject of skepticism, I have thought it might be useful for us to give some consideration to what may be called the *skepticism of the present age*. It is well thus to characterize it, because, as it is not in my view a form of genuine skepticism, this distinctive name may aid us in acquiring a correct and precise view of the actual moral condition of our era.

Skepticism, gentlemen, is a disposition in the mind to admit nothing as worthy of belief; a disposition produced by such a view of our means for acquiring truth as leads to the conclusion that we are incompetent to attain to any certain knowledge. Such is skepticism, strictly defined; and to such skepticism

I will give the name of *absolute skepticism*, to distinguish it from another state of mind also called *skepticism*, which differs from it entirely.

The state of mind to which I now refer may be seen in any person who is without a faith; and yet he may be wholly wanting in the characteristic of genuine skepticism, a determination to believe nothing, founded on the opinion that we have no means of arriving at certainty. A person may be without a faith, simply because he does not know what the truth is upon the great questions of human interest, and not at all because he admits in principle that the human mind is incapable of attaining to truth. Let us call this state of mind *actual skepticism*, to distinguish it from the disposition to believe nothing, which I have named *absolute skepticism*.

Keeping in mind this distinction, we shall see at once that the mass of mankind can never be *absolute skeptics*. They have not the information and leisure requisite for such an analysis of the phenomena of knowledge, as would lead to the conviction that the human mind is incapable of arriving at truth. The world has never yet seen, and for ages at least never will see, a whole people penetrated with such a conviction, and possessed by such a skepticism. But, on the other hand, *actual skepticism*, or a simple want of faith from mere ignorance of the truth upon important questions, may very easily prevail among the mass of a people; though even this, the only kind of skepticism to which they are liable, is always repugnant to them.

Among the various considerations from which absolute skepticism arises, there is but one that can to any

great degree be felt by a whole nation, and thus introduce into it the germ of genuine skepticism. This consideration is the contradictory and variable nature of human opinions. But it is only the better informed who are liable to be impressed even by this ; for to rise to a view of human opinion as contradictory and variable, must require such a degree of historical knowledge as can be possessed only by the more enlightened. The people, properly so called, are not competent to this. I add, now, that this truly skeptical view, the only one, as I have said, which can penetrate the heart of a people, is always a traditional and transmitted one, and never originates in the spontaneous action of the people themselves. In every instance it will be found to be an impulse communicated from the philosophy prevalent among the few, who consecrate their lives to thought and reflection.

True skepticism is then peculiar to men who reflect, whose social function, if I may use the expression, is thinking. Absolute skepticism is always foreign to the mass. The skepticism to which they are liable is actual skepticism ; and this is, as we have seen, not a determined disposition, but an accidental state of mind, consisting in a simple want of knowledge as to what the truth is upon the great questions of human interest.

No student of history, gentlemen, will deny that there have been eras, when this actual skepticism, this want of all faith and conviction, has been widely spread throughout the mass of mankind ; or that, on the contrary, there have been eras, when systems giving definite solutions of all great questions have prevailed. History shows us states of society, where whole nations, from

the child who has not begun to think, to the old man on the verge o' life, have believed firmly in certain absolute dogmas; and it shows us also other states, where whole nations have been plunged in doubt and ignorance as to truth. As a matter of fact, then, there have been eras, when actual skepticism has pervaded the mass, and others, when it has been unknown.

History assigns to these different states of society names which are most distinctive of their peculiar characteristics. She calls the former *religious* eras, the latter *irreligious*; because in the one religion has prevailed, while in the other its influence has been wanting. For, observe, a system of faith upon the great questions of human interest, established on the common convictions of all men, of the enlightened, and of the people alike, always assumes the form and receives the name of a religion. Thus far, in the world's history, it has always been under a religious form, that the great ideas, which have possessed nations, and governed and guided them, have been exhibited. On the other hand, the eras, where the mass have wanted all faith and established convictions, have been those in which religious faith was annihilated, and where no religious doctrine prevailed. It is with good reason, then, that history distinguishes as religious the eras of faith, and as irreligious those of actual skepticism.

What, now, it may be asked, are the causes of this skepticism? I have elsewhere exhibited them, and they are at the present day well known. When a system of faith has prevailed among the mass for a length of time, there will and must come a period, sooner or later, when the errors, which are intermingled with

even the highest and most important truth in all human opinions, will strike the minds of the enlightened. Then springs up a spirit of critical examination, which, scrutinizing the whole system of faith, and discovering its various imperfections, ends by concluding, that where the parts are so defective, the whole system must be unworthy of credit in an advanced stage of society. It is among philosophers, or at least among the most intelligent members of society, that such a revolution commences; and it is among them that it is carried out and completed; but the results of their researches penetrate all classes, and finding their way down from the summit to the base of society, reach finally the mass, where, sapping and ruining all convictions and the whole system of truth, they produce a total want of faith. Such is the progress of actual skepticism among the people. It is a result of a foreign and superior influence, that is, of the action of philosophers, who, summing up the knowledge which the human race has attained, and comparing with it the prevailing faith, discover and announce that this received system is not on a level with the advanced intelligence of their age, and should therefore be rejected.

That we, gentlemen, at the present day, are living in such an era is so evident, that few would be inclined to question it. How, indeed, can it be denied that in most minds now there is an utter want of faith upon the great questions which interest man? And yet, in the midst of this actual skepticism, you cannot find a shadow of absolute philosophic skepticism. Indeed, if you could penetrate the minds of the mass, you could not find in their modes of thinking any one of the



grounds of absolute skepticism even so much as suspected. The people do not trouble themselves with asking, "What is the authority of the human faculties?" or, "What is the nature of the object of knowledge, or the nature of knowledge itself?" They are utterly ignorant whether the nature of our faculties, of the object of knowledge, and of knowledge itself, are, or are not, such as would lead to the conclusion, that the mind is incapable of arriving at truth. The mass never think of this. But further I will say, that even in the more intelligent portion of society, in that portion which thinks and reflects, and may properly be called the *philosophic* class, the elements of absolute skepticism are hardly to be found at all, or only in a very small degree. Without doubt, in our age, as in all ages, there are minds to which such considerations present themselves; but the incredulity of our age is not caused by them. The cause of prevalent incredulity is, simply, that all former solutions of interesting problems have been refuted, and that no others as yet are found. Our age is not so much skeptical, as it is wanting in faith; it does not believe that the truth cannot be discovered; it is merely ignorant of the truth.

The revolution, of which this state of mind is the result, had its origin long ago; it dates back not to the political revolution of 1830, nor the events of 1814, nor to the social revolution of 1789; it has come down from a much earlier age, and began as far back as the fifteenth century. I say as far, because we should find, on close examination, that it had an origin yet more remote.

In this revolution there have been two distinct periods, each having its peculiar causes, character, and

results; and we must distinguish these periods accurately, if we would form a precise notion of our present situation.

Before this want of all conviction, which I have described, can pervade any people, there must have been previously a conflict of longer or shorter duration, but still a violent one, against the dominant faith. Every such revolution, as we have been considering, has necessarily its origin in a period of warfare with prevalent opinions, terminating in their defeat and overthrow. Now, in the present instance, a controversy of this nature has been continued from earlier times to our own day; and it was indeed the striking and distinguishing characteristic of the eighteenth century, that it was incompetent to finish the controversy which had been transmitted to it. The eighteenth century was the closing scene of the first period of the revolution, in the midst of which we of the nineteenth century are living; it did not begin this revolution; it neither discovered nor announced its leading principles; but it did make them popularly known, and did disseminate their results through society. The eighteenth century acted an important part, therefore, in the progress of this revolution, for it exhibited plainly to all eyes the true nature of the controversy.

In this first period of the revolution, the loss of earlier convictions was not accompanied with a desire of another faith to supply their place. We do not find, in the skeptical writers of the eighteenth century, any longing expressed for faith. They were filled with a sense of the work of destruction which they were commissioned to perform; but, so far were they from being

conscious of a desire and need of faith, that they even rejoiced and triumphed in their skepticism as in their chief title to honor. We have reached an era now, however, when the results of this destructive war remain, without the joy in casting off belief which characterized the last century. This change is a momentous one, and it could not but come. It is not in our nature to remain satisfied without light upon the great questions of human interest: when the mind has once lost the truth, it must seek it anew, for it cannot live without it. It is only by a transient illusion, that, in the earlier period of the revolutionary era, rest and peace are sought in skepticism; no sooner is victory attained than the illusion is dissipated, and the need of faith again is felt. Then begins the second period of the revolutionary movement, a period in which, all conviction being destroyed, the desire for faith is once more felt with all its consequences. And this is precisely our situation at the present day; we have a want of faith and a longing for it. These are the two characteristics of our age. And our actual condition in all its detail will seem perfectly intelligible, and even such as he might have predicted, to any one, who fully comprehends the logical consequences, of these states of mind. Let us, then, attempt to follow out the chief of these consequences.

The striking and predominant trait of the eighteenth century, gentlemen, was a disposition to admit nothing as worthy of belief. As the work then to be completed was the destruction of all that was false, the tendency of every mind was to skepticism. But now, when a desire for faith coexists with a want of all conviction

and established principle, a wholly opposite disposition has been developed, even a disposition to believe every thing; and this disposition to believe every thing is really a distinctive characteristic of our age, often as men deceive themselves by calling it a skeptical one.

The consequences of this disposition to believe every thing have been different in different minds. Impelled by the common want, some have endeavored to reproduce the faith of past ages; and this was natural enough, because, as that faith had already once received a definite and complete shape, it was necessary only to readopt it. This class of persons have pronounced their anathema against the three last centuries, and all that they have accomplished, especially against the eighteenth, the most fatal of all to previously established convictions. Devotees to the past, they admire and honor it, and seek to reëstablish in their minds, and rekindle in their hearts, that faith which these three centuries have extinguished. Another class have become utterly discouraged; and seeing behind them only ruined and overthrown convictions, and before them an empty void, they have given up all hope of finding truth. This is the party of despair. There is a third class, incomparably the largest, who are waiting for a good which the future is to bring; they, too, feel the want of faith, but they neither despair of finding it, nor do they seek it in the past, — they look for it to the coming time.

It is natural and necessary that the party of the past and the party of despair should be small in number and in influence; the third party only, which, impelled by

common want, seek to satisfy it by the discovery of a new moral order of the social world, can hope for success.

This movement of loving and seeking for a new faith has introduced a new period in the revolution. It began with the persuasion that the faith of the future must be directly opposite to that of the past—an illusion quite natural and conformable to the laws of the human mind. We all reason thus in great and small affairs alike; it is the first and instinctive movement of the human mind. This reaction produced a general tendency to the opposite of what had already been. We had been living under an absolute government; we were driven, therefore, to the opposite of such a government, that is, to a democracy. The philosophy of the Christian faith which had prevailed was eminently spiritual; a material faith was therefore introduced to reign for its moment. Art, too, under the influence of Christianity, had been spiritual and ideal, like the convictions which it embodied; and art, therefore, must become, as it did under David, first material, and then, somewhat later, fond of the actual, and even of the deformed. The morality of a Christian era had been a morality of devotedness, of self-sacrifice, productive of greatness of soul and character; the morality which followed the triumph of skepticism was that of pleasure and self-interest. Such were the first fruits of the reconstructive impulse, which, setting out from the void that doubt had brought, rushed into the opposite of what had been, with frenzied ardor. The necessary result of such a movement was to produce such an exaggerated and unnatural mode of thinking as could

not long fail to awaken disgust and dread. And for this plain reason ; when skepticism succeeds in overturning a system of faith that has long prevailed over any large portion of the human race, it is on account of the errors and imperfections of that system. But skepticism is not confined to these errors, and does not limit itself to a demand of their rejection ; reasoning from the parts to the whole, it pronounces the entire system false, and the generations absurd which have held it. Hence the illusion that truth will be found in what is exactly opposite to past conviction. Now, it is impossible that the human race should be governed for ages by ideas which are wholly false : there must, then, have been a large portion of truth in any doctrine which has for a length of time been generally admitted ; for thus, and thus only, could it have acquired and preserved its ascendancy. To throw ourselves, then, in our desire to reconstruct a faith, headlong into the very opposite of what has heretofore been believed, is necessarily to turn away from much which certainly is true, in the search of what may be either true or not. Systems which originate in such a mad movement of reaction, are destined always to disappear, after a short existence, before the good sense of mankind. And thus already have we seen the reign of materialism and deformity disappear from art. And in literature, also, the impassioned style, which has overstepped and trampled down the rules of Aristotle and Boileau, may be considered as nearly exhausted and soon to pass away. The same movement carried us from the old political *regime* to extreme and unlimited democracy ; but already has this tendency begun to be most seriously and severely

judged by that good sense, which sees at once its inconveniences and excesses. The reign of materialism has been of short duration ; and already, in the hearts of the young, at least, is spiritualism enthroned : indeed, it would be difficult to find, in society at large, any individuals advocating that moral code of mere pleasure, which was openly professed by the most respectable of the last century. It appears plain, therefore, that many of the extreme tendencies of the reaction are already dead, while others show symptoms of decay.

The systems which resulted from these tendencies, were thus destined to be short lived ; the fruits of a blind reaction, they were blind and fanatical themselves. And now that their ephemeral reign is ended, we are fast falling, and have, in part, already fallen into a state yet worse than that which immediately succeeded the triumph of skepticism. Then, indeed, there was an absence of all faith, but there was not a want of confidence in our power of attaining to truth ; for we had not yet tested the power by trial, and it seemed as if it would be easy to find new solutions of the problems of greatest interest to man, in place of former ones, which were destroyed. But now, when the first efforts of reason, in the examination of these questions, has failed, — now, when we have seen only systems invented, so foolish as to deserve no respect, — doubt arises as to the capacity of human intelligence to re-discover the truth which we have lost ; and hence a more profound uncertainty and a deeper consciousness of want of faith than was felt at first. From this feeling of want and of uncertainty

have originated the most striking peculiarities of the present age.

You may have remarked that, when, in meditating by yourselves, or in conversation with others, you seek to determine what is beautiful or deformed, true or false, good or bad, you meet with difficulties; and that, in all debates upon such questions, each side seems to have reasons in its favor, and defenders; so that it actually appears as if arguments for and against were equally strong and worthy of consideration.

But, gentlemen, do you, therefore, conclude that this is the natural state of human intelligence, or that these are phenomena common to all eras? By no means. It is the absence, in our day, of any *criterion* of true and false, of good and bad, of beauty and deformity, which produces this condition of things. As all first principles have been destroyed, all rules to guide the judgment have been abolished also; and, without a common rule recognized by judgment, we cannot have a common understanding with others, or arrive at a certain solution of any question. And what is the consequence? Each individual will feel that he is free to believe as he chooses, and will declare, with authority, his chosen faith. By what test shall it be condemned? By that of some grand truth which is recognized and admitted? There is none. By the authority, then, only of any one who disputes his opinion, and who, as he is his equal, cannot be his judge. In our day, individuals reign supreme; their authority is complete and unlimited. And, as the right of each individual to think as he pleases, has naturally produced an infinite variety of



opinions, all equal in worth and authority, the result is that state of complete intellectual anarchy amid which we are living. On the one side is the unlimited authority of the individual; for this authority is subject to no common faith, no admitted criterion of truth, by which all minds are governed and directed, and around which they rally. On the other side is an infinite diversity of opinion; for, as the authority of one individual is equal to that of another, each is entitled to call his opinion true. Individuality and anarchy, then, are the two great characteristics of our era; they are inevitable in the present age, and, as we see, they every where prevail.

One further circumstance coöperates to establish this state of intellectual democracy. It is experience which chiefly produces inequality between men, storing, as it does, the minds of those who have lived longest with the greatest variety of facts and ideas. But it is the tendency of eras like our own to call in question this incontrovertible fact. Succeeding to long ages which have believed in what is now proved to be false, it has, and cannot but have, a contempt for the past; the past is to it the symbol of error; thus far it thinks men have known nothing and doubted nothing; truth is to be sought and found in the future; the more attached we are to the past, the further are we from truth; and truth is nearer, the more we live in the future and the younger we are. Hence the thorough disdain for experience and antiquity which marks our times. The young man of to-day measures himself with those of many years;

and, before his school days are over, the boy thinks and declares himself equal to his sire; and this state of things is a strict and necessary consequence of what has gone before. This notion of the equality of minds is carried so far, that the judgment of eighteen has as much authority as that of fifty; and the reasoning of a day laborer, on a question of policy, is considered as decisive as that of a statesman whose whole life has been passed in the midst of public affairs, or of a student grown gray in thought. Undoubtedly, the good sense which survives the greatest aberrations of human intelligence, will moderate this intellectual democracy, and check the consequences which may be seen logically to flow from it; but, though checked, they yet more or less appear, as if to make mankind aware of their tendencies.

This is not all, gentlemen: the conviction that the past has been deceived, leads to a disregard of the serious study of historical facts; and the conviction that there is no criterion for truth, produces a contempt for reflection; and hence results a profound ignorance, which, combined with presumption, are two characteristic traits of the present intellectual era. The consequence of this upon the literary productions of our time, is the amazing folly with which notions, at once the most absurd and trite, are confidently thrown out, and the utter want of all such positive knowledge as would authorize the confidence. These two defects are, however, but the necessary consequences of the individuality and intellectual anarchy which disturb us: they are the natural result

of our present situation, which is itself a necessary period in the revolutionary movement now passing around us.

The effect of the various facts which I have now been describing, is a general weakness of character. Character, indeed, scarcely exists in our day, and for this reason; of the two elements of which character is composed,—firm will and fixed principles,—the second is wanting, and the first, therefore, powerless. For to what end would be a firm will without fixed principles? A mighty instrument, doubtless, but a useless one. Governed and directed by strong conviction, it will work wonders of decision, of devotedness, of constancy and heroism. But in such an age as ours, without established faith and fixed ideas, and without, moreover, the power of forming them, where the only authority is the caprice of individuals, who, proud of independence, glory in deciding in every case for themselves, how can such a will exist? He who has faith is proof against the absurd ideas and foolish imaginations which visit even the soundest mind: strong in his convictions, he applies them as a test and a criterion; and chimeras, fancies, and inconsistencies disappear, while that alone, which is in harmony with his convictions, remains. But we, who are without faith, want this criterion; and, therefore, we can neither judge, approve, nor blame. And, consequently, as a fact, we neither do approve nor condemn; we accept and tolerate every thing; and, by turns, the sport of wholly opposite opinions, we are wanting in well-ordered purposes, in definite plans for conduct, and in dignity of character. What I

now state is not brought forward in the way of reproach, but as a matter of fact; our age is what it actually is by necessity. I only describe and explain it.

The love of change, gentlemen, is another characteristic of our present intellectual condition. Love of any kind is only a desire for something which we need; and our great need now is, of those truths which may restore and regenerate individuals and society; it is in the future only that we can expect to find them. Hence our age is looking with hope and love to that future, and gives itself up cheerfully to change. We seem to be living not so much in the present as in the future, and receive each novelty with rapturous enthusiasm; as if, because new, it was that of which we feel the want. The secret and unconscious longing of our hearts is for something yet untried, as if it alone could satisfy our desires.

Hence that indiscriminate passion for revolution, which makes us the dupes and tools of each adventurer's ambitious dreams, and renders vain the sacrifices and the cost of social convulsion.

For, observe, what we need is no mere outward change. Let society pass through any number of outward revolutions, and, unless the ideas which it is in want of are thereby supplied, they will leave it exactly where it was, and will be wholly useless. What we want is, an answer to these questions, which Christianity has heretofore answered, but which, to many, remain unanswered now; and nothing is so ill calculated to supply this want, as tumults in the

streets, and overturns of governments. Reflection alone makes discoveries in truth, and peace is needed for reflection. Outward revolutions are, indeed, of service, when they tend to realize the truths which have already been discovered; but to desire revolution, when the truths for which an age is sighing are yet unknown, and as a means for discovering them, is to commit the absurdity of wishing that the consequence should produce its principle, or an end its means.

This, however, is the very thing which the multitude does not see; it is so deluded as to expect, from every future change, that new and unknown something which may make them happy. They hurry on to revolution with blind madness, impatient of the present, eager for the future. Before this torrent of popular passion no institution can stand, no government endure. Hence such short-lived popularity as we continually see. When a new man appears in the political world, we greet him with admiration and honor. Why? Because we hope that in him we have at last found one who can satisfy our wants. And what follows? As he, no more than we ourselves, has any answer for the problems which we wish to solve, in a few weeks after his elevation to power, we find him barren and empty as his predecessors, and at once his popularity declines. In our day, in fact, the mere possession of power is reason sufficient for unpopularity. They only are, or can be, popular, who have not yet acquired the power they seek. They, as yet, have not uttered their secret; and the moment when they are in a position to declare it, and when it appears that they, like the rest, have

no more to tell, the warm favor which welcomed them grows cool, for the illusion which made them great is gone.

From what has now been said, gentlemen, you can readily perceive the cause of the unhappiness of that collective being, called a government, in our day. The people are like children, who feel a want, and cry to the nurse for something,—she can neither discover nor imagine what,—and which, very possibly, may be wholly out of reach. The people feel a painful uneasiness, but they know not its cause; and they complain, therefore, now of the form of government under which they live, and then of those who conduct it, because the evil which they suffer from is not rooted out. They forever desire to substitute other men for those now in power; in place of established forms, they would have new ones; and, for existing laws, and the social order already prevailing, they seek new laws and a new order; persuaded that the source of the evil is in the government, in the laws, in the organization of society, and that, with the change of these, they shall find what they seek. But, were all changed, they would still remain as unhappy and discontented as at first; for the changes they desire are only outward and material, not moral, while it is a moral change of which there really is a need. And, as long as the desired solutions of these questions remain unfound, in the light of which society is to be remodelled in a form adequate to the wants of the human mind, so long will society continue to pass through a constant succession of ineffectual changes.

Whence arose that social structure, whose foundations the three last centuries have sapped, and which the revolution finally overthrew? It arose from the solutions which Christianity had given of the great problems of human interest. These solutions, unlike those proposed by the wise of our time, were not negative in character; and hence the results to which they led in art, religion, and politics, were positive. Institutions and laws proceeded from them; organizations and forms of government, social and political order, were wrapped as a germ in these solutions; and this order has been, and could not but have been, unfolded in past ages. At the present day, this order is destroyed; and, to produce another in its room, we need a new germ; that is to say, new solutions of those grand questions which Christianity has heretofore answered. These questions must be answered before either individuals or communities can be reorganized, and reproduce a new system of life and conduct. How, indeed, can they, who know not the end for which they are living upon earth, determine the manner in which they ought to live? And, ignorant of this, how can they constitute, organize, and regulate society? If we know not the destiny of individuals, we cannot know that of society; and, if we know not the destiny of society, we cannot organize it. A religious and moral faith is, then, the only possible solution of political problems. We have not such a faith; and no outward revolution, therefore, whatsoever, can accomplish any thing for society.

We cannot meditate too much upon these con-

siderations, if we would acquire a distinct and accurate view of the present state of things; for here, and not elsewhere, is its explanation. But the people are ignorant of their true condition, and their blind and generous impulses, therefore, are used as instruments by ambitious men. Each day appear a crowd of empirics, who promise, on the single condition of being raised to power, that they can supply the want of which all are conscious, and seek in vain to satisfy. The intelligent and enlightened see that these quacks abuse their power; but, as if they had really found that unknown something for which all are craving, they talk of *republic*, of *unlimited suffrage*, of *legitimacy*; and, seduced by the word, which we mistake for a thing, we passionately pursue the untried good, and discover our mistake only when experience has proved that it is an empty name. Thus, again and again, we give new names to the unknown good, and chase a thousand phantoms, which can never satisfy us, but will forever leave us discontented as before. Here is the explanation of the constant disappointments, which, for forty years, the friends of social liberty have experienced in France.

By turns, each new form of freedom has seemed to be the good for which we were sighing, and a want of it the source of all our woes. But, when successively we have acquired them, and yet found ourselves unimproved in condition, we are restless as before; and a revolution is scarcely over, when the plan is sketched for a new one. The cause of this is our ignorance of our own condition. These various forms of civil liberty, which we have been



struggling for, — civil liberty itself, even, — is not, and cannot be, the end which society, in our day, is really pursuing. It is, indeed, an advantage of free communities, that no master can turn them from the pursuit of their true end, and impose upon them one of his own choosing; and they have this additional advantage, that they are better fitted than other communities to discover and accomplish their true destiny. In this twofold aspect, the various successive forms of civil liberty have been beneficial; but beyond this they have brought no good. Liberty is nothing more than an opportunity offered to a people of accomplishing its destiny, and a guaranty that it shall not be hindered from so doing: liberty is not, in itself, the accomplishment of that destiny. The same may be said of order; and it is plain, therefore, that the true destiny of a community is something different from, and superior to, both liberty and order.

Do you doubt this, gentlemen? Examine, then, the various rights which we now enjoy, and see if they are any thing more than opportunities and means. We were filled with a passion for popular election, and, after long struggles, secured the privilege; and, in consequence, a large number of our fellow-citizens now take a part in the appointment of the highest public functionaries. And, when, at great expense, we assemble our citizens to elect those who shall command the national militia, or become municipal counsellors, or counsellors of departments, or members of the chamber of deputies, what do we really accomplish? Two things. In the first place,

we give a pledge that no individual shall be allowed to substitute his private interests for those of his country, or to prevent the nation from accomplishing its destiny; and, secondly, we intrust to the assembled citizens the responsibility of determining and declaring what measures are most for the public good, or, at least, of sending to the various national councils men who can decide upon them, or elect, among themselves, competent persons to be in power. Such are the reasons for which popular elections are valuable; but of these two results, one positive and the other negative, mere election attains only the first; it really does prevent any individual from using the country for his own purposes; and this is all that it can do; for, if the electors and those elected are ignorant of what constitutes the public good, it is plain that our wants will not be satisfied, and, therefore, that mere liberty of elections will not secure the end we seek. The same may be said with regard to liberty of the press, and all other civil rights; so that, however desirous we may be of obtaining various forms of freedom and civil institutions, we shall deceive ourselves greatly, if we suppose that they can, by themselves, afford a remedy to social ills. Forms and institutions are but pledges and protections against whatever threatens to impede the progress of a moral revolution; and, possibly, they may be a means also to advance it; but this is all; a moral revolution only can cure our social diseases. I say that the exercise of civil right may, *possibly*, be a means of advancing this revolution, because, high as is my respect for the popular mind, I yet think this popular mind, this com

mon sense, rather fitted to recognize truth than to discover it; of all the great truths which have influenced the destinies of the human race, I know not one which originated in the instinct of the mass; they have all been the discoveries of gifted individuals, and the fruit of the solitary meditations of thinking men. But once brought to light, once exhibited, and it is the adoption of them by the mass of the people, which consecrates them.

What has now been said of our present moral condition, will sufficiently indicate the course of conduct which every wise and earnest man, is, in our era, bound to pursue, in view of his own dignity and the interests of his country.

And first, it is his duty to be calm, to raise himself above, and to escape from the chimerical dreams to which the mass of men are the prey; and thus be preserved from the delusive and absurd schemes which are their natural result. To attain this state of mind, it is only necessary to comprehend the universal law of revolution, and the precise period of the revolution now passing, at which we, in this age, have arrived. If, in what is going on around us, we accustom ourselves to see the successive phases of a grand law of humanity in the process of development, we shall be less disposed to abandon ourselves to the passionate fears and hopes, to the ardent attachments and aversions, which every new party and event, however trifling, will otherwise awaken. It is only when we regard them from this elevation that we can judge of their real importance. When we take a comprehensive view of the mighty revolution, which, for

the three last centuries, has been agitating Europe, and consider its sources and tendencies; when we measure what has been accomplished with what remains yet undone; when we call to mind the slowness with which it has thus far advanced, and with which it is destined to advance in the time to come, and then conceive distinctly of the true nature of this revolution, and the end at which it aims;—how trifling appear many events called important! How momentous others, at first sight small! Each object then assumes its just dimensions, and the illusions and passions which had confused the view are scattered, even if they do not wholly disappear.

For those who live in the future, and who are seeking, from government and the laws, a good which no individuals can bestow,—that unknown and mysterious something which the future veils,—that ineffable ideal, the desire of which prompts each social movement, and which, for myself, I call a new system of faith on the grand questions which must forever interest man,—for all such persons, a clear understanding of the nature of the passing revolution, and of the precise point at which it has now arrived, is well calculated to moderate impatience. For, when we once comprehend what is really to be accomplished, we see that it cannot be done in a moment, but that it must necessarily be the fruit of long labor, and slowly perfected; and that it is not in the power of institutions or laws to hasten the fulness of time. Past history bears witness that such a revolution must be gradual. A state of society

similar to our own prevailed in Greece before the introduction of Christianity, and was brought to an end by that event. Skepticism made its appearance in Greece six centuries at least before the Christian era—in the time of Thales; individuals of enlightened minds had already begun to entertain doubts of the prevalent faith; and, two centuries later, in the time of Socrates, there were probably but very few among the citizens exercising political rights, who were not wholly given up to incredulity. Socrates was condemned, to be sure, on the ground that he attacked religion; but his sentence was dictated really by political reasons; and we, in this day, have seen a parallel instance, in a neighboring country, of this union between private incredulity and public profession of faith. If, then, the ancient faith in Greece was destroyed four centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ, and if philosophy, even at that early period, had begun to seek for new and higher forms of truth, it is plain that mankind were kept for centuries in waiting for that positive faith which could alone reorganize it. Yet more; it is well known, that the establishment of the Christian religion, in the minds of the common people, did not immediately follow its first introduction; it penetrated to them only by slow degrees, and centuries were needed to complete its progress. When, then, we attempt to measure the time needed to perfect and finish this former revolution, we find that the human race was occupied for nearly a thousand years in their passage from paganism to Christianity. God forbid that I should assert that the human mind,

with the immense power which it has acquired in the course of eighteen centuries, will require so long a period as this to finish the work which it has begun in our day; and far be it from me to think that the revolution now in progress is to lead to any such complete change of opinion. Christianity has too strong a foundation in truth ever to disappear, as paganism did; its destruction was but a dream of the eighteenth century, which never will be realized. But, undoubtedly, it is to be purified; undoubtedly, it is to receive new forms and important additions; for, otherwise, the strife it has excited, the incredulity which yet prevails, and the long struggles and labors of the whole of Christendom, have been without a meaning and a cause; and this it is impossible to believe. As yet, when we view it rightly, this revolution has been but three centuries in progress; and we must not allow ourselves to imagine that by to-morrow we shall reach its end; neither should it astonish us, since the first period of this revolution has so lately terminated, that we have now arrived at only its second period. Many generations may very possibly pass away before the faith of futurity will assume a definite shape, and be planted deep in the hearts of the multitude, to bless them with the *Credo* for which they now sigh in vain. And, during the intervening period, the world may remain, as in ancient times, a prey to that state of intellectual and moral anarchy which we have described, and which nothing but the manifestation of some new form of faith can remove. It was Christianity that cured this evil in ancient times; and it worked a



moral cure before it did a material one. The moral remedy was the principle, of which the material was the consequence. Our cure must proceed in a like manner; first, truth, and then social reformation, as the effect of truth. Such is the law of revolution. At present, there is hardly the faint appearance and first dawning of new solutions of the great questions of human interest. And it is plain, therefore, that we are, as yet, far distant from the last period and final completion of this revolution. The journals, which day by day announce a new order of things, give no description of this better state. They say, and say truly, that the present order does not meet our wants; but they do not tell us what should supply its place. This, indeed, is precisely what they are incapable of doing; for they, like the people, feel only the want of truths which are yet undiscovered, and they, like the people, too, are ignorant of them. They would be nearer the truth, if they did but know that they were ignorant of it; and they would be nearer still, if they comprehended that as yet it cannot be known.

Such, gentlemen, are the means by which we may preserve a calm mind, in this feverish and agitated era. But we must do more than this; we must not only preserve the mind calm, we must direct it. And, in this regard, how can we do better than imitate the example of those men, who, in an age similar to our own, — the age which followed the overthrow of the ancient faith, — so lived, that their names have been revered through succeeding times? These

men, who were the Stoics, announced, in the midst of universal anarchy and corruption, the imperishable principles of morality; established rules for private duty, when all public law was broken down; and, sheltering themselves in virtue, passed, untainted, through the most polluted era that history records. We need but mention the names of Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and their illustrious friends, to show that it is in the power of individuals to preserve their characters and conduct pure, amidst the ruins of even the corruptest ages. We, then, certainly can do it, — we, who live in an age so much more elevated in character, under the light of Christianity, and of a philosophy purified by its power. It is entirely possible for any individual, who will seek seriously to distinguish good from evil, to keep his mind and conscience clear from the swarm of absurd and immoral notions which an incredible license of thought, yet more than of feeling, lets loose each day upon society, from the journals, the theatre, and books. There is no one, who cannot, by consulting good sense and his own heart, plan out, for himself, a course of conduct conformable to the purest maxims of morality, and, by firm purpose, remain faithful to it, and realize his ideal. This is possible for us, one and all; and what we can do, we ought to do. No one is excusable for not preserving, inviolate, his character and reason, in a period like the present; for, although there are, in our social condition, circumstances which may be temptations to those who will allow themselves to be led astray



and corrupted, yet it is to prepare us for precisely such situations, that God has endowed us with judgment and with will.

And our country, gentlemen, — our country, which, next to integrity and honor, should be the first object of regard, — is there not, in our time, as in all times, a way of being useful to her? There is; it is to make her true situation, and the causes of it, known to all her children; to explain to them the secret of their wants, the nature of the good which all are craving, and the means best adapted to its acquisition. This, in my judgment, is the only possible way of keeping society calm and well ordered, when society is without a faith. We must, then, enlighten as much as we can the great body of the people: never was light so necessary, never did they need discernment more. When society is under the influence of an established faith, the catechism neutralizes the effects of ignorance. But when minds without convictions are left an undefended prey to all ideas, good and bad, useful and injurious, as they may arise, there is but one source of safety, and that is, the diffusion of such a degree of information as may enable each citizen to discern his own true interest, and the actual condition of his country. All, of our day, who understand the times, have a mission of patriotism to discharge; it is to communicate to others their own information, and thus aid in calming down the moral conflicts of the public mind, as they have calmed their own. To one who really comprehends the present state of things, there is no cause for fear. And once free from fear, we can meditate,

we can plan our course, we can work, we can live. But when we rise each morning, in the dread of ruin, with the feeling that we are on the verge of some terrible catastrophe, thought becomes impossible; we can but abandon ourselves to the current of events, and there is an end at once to labor and reflection, to all plans for life, and all developments of character; like leaves, we become the sport of each passing breeze.

And now, after what I have said in this lecture of the fruitlessness of mere outward and material revolutions, — after the proof I have offered that they never can advance society towards the good which it is seeking, but that they produce always disorder and suffering, — need I add, that it is the duty of every enlightened man and good citizen to prevent, if possible, such useless evil. Once more I repeat, therefore, that when it is the object of outward revolution to realize and complete a moral revolution, then, and then only, revolution is both reasonable and right. But when a conviction of the need of a moral organization for society, so far from being generally established in the mind and heart of the community, is not even apprehended by those who profess to be the heralds of civilization, — in such a case, revolution can only bring uncompensated suffering; and every friend of his country should withhold his aid. In speaking to you thus, gentlemen, I am not preaching a sermon. I do but simply unfold to your view the necessary consequence of the great law of revolution, to which humanity is subject. My frankness and freedom will not, I am confident, be misunderstood.

## LECTURE XI.

SYSTEMS WHICH MISCONCEIVE AND MUTILATE THE LAW  
OF OBLIGATION.

## THE SELFISH SYSTEM. — HOBBS.

GENTLEMEN,

THE systems which we have thus far examined make no attempt to determine whether there is, or is not, any law of obligation. This question, indeed, never presented itself to the minds of their authors. They were occupied in considering quite different ones; and it was only in an incidental way, while discussing questions wholly foreign in appearance from the fundamental one of ethics, that they were led, actually, to deny the existence of the law of obligation in human nature.

But we come, now, to another class of systems, which are essentially ethical systems, and which come to this same result, of denying the existence of the law of obligation, by an actual examination of the questions whether there does exist in our nature any, and, if any, what rule for conduct? They do not all, however, reach this common conclusion in the same way. Seeking in the human mind for the original principle of morality and right, on which

all ethics and legislation must be based, some of these systems go wholly astray, and believe that they find it either in self-love, or in some of our primitive tendencies; while others, feeling that it must, in its nature, be impersonal and disinterested, place it in a conception of the reason, indeed, where truly it is to be found; but, mistaking the character of this conception, they fall into various errors. We might, with good reason, divide these systems, then, into two categories; the first embracing those which destroy the law of obligation, by wholly misconceiving its essential nature; and the second those which produce the same result, by the false view which they give of this nature. But I shall not, at present, insist upon this distinction, for it is not in itself a very important one; and it is difficult, in express terms, to describe it, so equivocal is all philosophical language. It will be easier to make this distinction manifest, after a discussion of these systems.

The first of these systems which I shall present to you—and it deserves this preference on account of its celebrity—is the system of self-interest, of which, in modern times, Hobbes has been the most famous teacher. This and the following lecture will be devoted to a criticism of the principles and theory of this philosopher.

It continually happens, gentlemen, that we perform acts, because we see that they will be followed by a pleasure; and, again, we continually pursue objects, because we know that the possession of them will give gratification. On the other hand, we often refuse to perform acts, or avoid objects, because we

think that such performance or possession will be a source of pain. This motive to choice is one, then, which is familiar to us all; and every day's experience must exhibit its operation to even the most careless observer. Now, Hobbes declares that this is the *sole* motive of human choice. He asserts that the end of *every* action is the pursuit of pleasure, or the escape from pain; and, generalizing his observation, he thus expresses the formula which is the principle of his system — *well-being is the end of man*.

Observe, gentlemen, Hobbes uses the expression *well-being*, not *good*. In fact, the general term which represents an agreeable state is not *good*, but *well-being*, or, if you please, *happiness*. If Hobbes had said *happiness is the end of man*, he would perfectly have expressed his idea; and he equally expresses it in the language which he has adopted — *well-being is the end of man*. But he would have done injustice to his thoughts, had he said *good is the end of man*; for the word *good* suggests to all minds — even to those most preoccupied with the conviction that the end of all our actions is happiness — some ideas quite different from those of enjoyment and pleasure. The expression of Hobbes is, then, the most strictly exact which he could employ to convey his idea.

If the end of every act is pleasure, it follows necessarily that the universal motive of every act is the desire of pleasure. For the same reason, then, that Hobbes has said that the final end of every act is well-being, he should have said that the universal motive of human conduct is the desire of well-being.

Thus, then, to express the whole system of Hobbes in brief, we may say, well-being is the end of every action, and the love of well-being the universal motive of human conduct. This is the actual theory, which he adopts and professes, as to the law of human volition.

His principle once established, Hobbes proceeds, with the strict logic for which he is justly celebrated, to deduce from it a series of consequences. These I will now exhibit. There are two classes of these consequences—the first, metaphysical and direct; the second, remote, and extending to ethics and politics.

If it is true, gentlemen, that the sole reason which can determine a man to perform any act, or seek any object, is the pleasure attending the accomplishment of the one, and the possession of the other, it follows necessarily, that the condition requisite for any act of will is the anticipation of that pleasure. This universal motive, as Hobbes considers it, of human action, then, cannot impel us, without a conception, recognized by reason, of the consequences which will accompany the act, and the attainment of the object. This condition being fulfilled, we can act; otherwise, we cannot.

A second direct consequence of the principle is, that all objects and acts are matters of indifference to us, except in so far as we conceive of them as producing certain effects upon ourselves; for, in what, according to the system of Hobbes, does all the good or evil of acts or objects consist? Solely in their fitness to produce pleasure or pain. We must be acquainted, then, with their fitness or unfitness to

produce pleasure, before we can determine their moral quality; and the only moral quality which we can ever discover in them is this property of producing pain or pleasure.

If this is true, that the only ground on which we can desire or dislike, seek or avoid certain acts or objects, is, that they appear to us fitted to produce pleasurable or painful consequences, then it follows, in the third place, that we have not a variety of passions, as is usually supposed, but a single passion only, which is the love of personal well-being, of our own pleasure, our individual happiness. The passions, therefore, numerous and various as they appear, are so only externally — only in relation to the material objects affecting them: within us these different passions are found to be, and can only be, transformations of one single passion; and that is the love and desire of personal well-being. Hobbes did not hesitate to resolve all human passions into this single one; and he was led, therefore, to give such definitions and explanations of these passions as seem strange enough; but they are, nevertheless, the only ones which he consistently could give.

For example, the human heart has an instinctive impulse to reverence God; and an emotion of the same nature is felt towards certain men. Now, what, according to Hobbes, is *reverence*? It is a conception of the superior power of the person whom we honor. Again, a wholly opposite sentiment is awakened in us by another class of persons — the sentiment of the ridiculous. How does Hobbes explain this? It is a conception, he says, of our own superiority to the person we laugh at. Once more; we see, at each moment, and under a thou-

sand forms, the sentiment of love manifested in all social relations, in the mother towards her child, in the child towards its mother, in the lover towards his mistress, and in friend towards friend. What is love, according to Hobbes? It is a conception of the utility of the loved person. Thus, the mute adoration of a mother, hanging over the cradle of her child, is only a foresight of the service which that child may, at some future day, render. What is pity? It is the imagination of a misfortune which may one day happen to ourselves, as we contemplate the misery of another. Benevolence, kindness, charity, what are they? They are all but manifestations of the consciousness of power, sufficient to produce happiness, not only for ourselves, but also for others. You can judge from these examples of the rigorous logic with which Hobbes traces back all our passions, even those apparently the most disinterested and remote from any pursuit of individual good, to self-love. And thus he was obliged to do; for had he but once admitted the existence of any other sentiment in our nature than the love of our own well-being, his whole system would have been overthrown.

What, according to this system, is the first and greatest good? Assuredly the preservation of the individual. For the indispensable condition for happiness is existence; if life is lost, all enjoyment becomes, of course, impossible. The greatest of all evils, then, is death. What we are to seek above all things, in pursuit of our highest well-being, is self-preservation; what we are most earnestly to shun is destruction.

All such consequences as these are the necessary



results of the system adopted by Hobbes. But thus far they are only theoretical. Let us pass on to others, which bear directly upon the conduct and practice of life.

Admit that man is constituted as Hobbes supposes; place with him the principle of all choice in the love of happiness, and grant that human conduct, profoundly analyzed, confirms this view, — what follows? Necessarily, inevitably it follows, that all means, which can conduce to this simple and only true end of man, must be good and lawful; or, in other words, that man has a right to appropriate, by every means in his power, whatever will contribute to his own well-being. The course of conduct truly proper and rational is determined, then, by this consideration, that it leads to individual happiness. All acts, all conduct, which conduce to this, are, for that very reason, good, proper, lawful. The right to do any thing and every thing, which can increase our well-being, is, then, according to Hobbes, imprescriptible. And this right is the foundation of ethics. He says this with reason; for by ethics is meant, in every language, precisely the ideal of that course of conduct which is good, proper, and conformable to reason.

Now, well-being is an individual thing; if, therefore, the desire of well-being is the sole source of all volitions, as it cannot be the well-being of another that I desire, I must be impelled by a desire for my own. Every one has his own view of well-being, and of pleasure; every one determines for himself what are the means fitted to attain it; constitutions are unlike; tastes differ, each has his own estimate of happiness, and of the proper

way to gain it: the only judge, therefore, of what is good as an end, or good as a means, must be the individual himself. There can be no other. Whence it follows, that ends and means become good by the mere fact that they are considered to be so by the individual. There may be, therefore, as many modes of right conduct as there are persons, because every one may have his own way of conceiving of happiness and of the modes of attaining it, and all modes are in themselves equally good. There cannot be one system of ethics, then; but there must be as many systems as there are individuals. And thus two courses of conduct, the most different and opposite, may be equally proper; for, to make them so, it is only necessary that they should be considered by the individual as conducive to his well-being. The individual is supreme; his judgment is sovereign; he creates right and wrong; by his own choice he produces good, and at his will destroys it.

Such are the consequences of Hobbes's system in relation to individual conduct. Let us turn now to its political consequences. He has deduced them from his main principle with equal strictness of reasoning. If every one has a right of deciding for himself upon whatever is necessary to the attainment of his best good, and if no other person has a right to pass judgment, either upon the end or means which he selects, it follows, necessarily, that each individual has a right to the possession of all things. For can we conceive of any thing which may not be included in the idea of individual good, either as an end or a means? The individual, then, has a right to every thing. And, therefore, in a state of nature, the right of each indi-

vidual extends, without exception, to all things which exist.

But if each has this rightful claim to all things, there must be a collision and conflict of rights. If I desire the possession of a certain object as necessary to my well-being, my neighbor may consider it necessary to his, and may look upon my act of taking possession as injurious to him. Hence inevitable contests. The right of each individual to the possession of any and every object produces, necessarily, therefore, a strife between one and all; it sets every individual at war with all others. It follows as a necessary consequence, then, from Hobbes's system, that the natural condition of individuals is one of conflict. Hence his celebrated axiom, "War is the state of nature;" and this not an accidental nor partial war, but a war unceasing and universal of every man with every other man.

Now, to one who regards happiness as the greatest good, nothing can be worse, as Hobbes has clearly seen, than such a state of war. For what, according to his theory, is good? It is every thing that tends to produce happiness. What, then, can be worse than a state, the characteristic of which is, that each individual is continually exposed to attack from the united forces of all other individuals? Evidently, in such a state of things, the individual must, sooner or later, be destroyed, and thus, in consequence, entirely hindered from obtaining happiness. No other state can so completely prevent all possibility of well-being; no other state can threaten so continually the existence of the individual; and this, be it remembered, is the greatest good of all, because it is the necessary condi-

tion of every other. The state of war is, then, the worst possible, if Hobbes's system is true; and yet it is the state of nature. Hence his bold conclusion that peace at any cost, peace on any conditions, is preferable to this state of nature, this state of war. But peace is the effect of society; it is society alone that can establish it, and destroy that state of war, which is man's natural and primitive condition.

What, then, according to Hobbes, is society? The nature of society is determined wholly by its constituent element, and this element is the existence of a power sufficient to prevent, among a number of collected individuals, the natural state of war.

Such is the exact definition of society, according to Hobbes. He finds in it nothing more. What, then, is the end of society? The repression of the state of war. What is the original cause of the formation of society? The misery of the natural state. Hobbes is ready to admit, however, that there are two possible ways in which society may originate. The first is by contract; and such a contract is made whenever different individuals, feeling the inconveniences of the state of nature, and condemning it as the worst of all conditions, agree to establish a force, which shall be superior to that of any individual, and capable of destroying him, if necessary, in suppressing war and substituting for it peace. Society, thus formed, originates in contract. But there is another mode of forming society. A single man may, by cunning or power, succeed in extending his authority over a multitude of others, and thus establish a social state. Here society is based on the right of the strongest; but it is none

the worse on that account, because, according to Hobbes, the only characteristic of society is the existence of a power sufficiently strong to repress war between individuals; this being done, society exists; and, since the right of the strongest can produce this result as well as contract, society can originate in one way as well as the other; and one is as legitimate an origin as the other, according to Hobbes. For what constitutes legitimacy, in his view? Whatever conduces to the highest good, that is the greatest happiness of each individual. Now, it has been proved that the state of nature, or of war, is the worst possible for the individual, and the state of society the best. Provided, then, that society exists, — no matter how it originated, — it is legitimate. Society, founded upon conquest, or the right of the strongest, is as legitimate and conformable to reason, as society based upon contract; for one attains, as well as the other, the end proposed for society; and it is the end, and the end alone, that determines its legitimacy.

What, now, is the best form of society, or, as it amounts to the same thing, the best among the various kinds of power by which society can be constituted? Hobbes does not hesitate to answer, the strongest. And which is the strongest? It is that in which power is concentrated in a single hand, or the monarchical form: the monarchical, therefore, is the most perfect form of government. But, of different modes of monarchy, which is the best? Again he answers, the strongest. And which is the strongest? Absolute monarchy. This, then, is the best of all forms for

society ; and this is a strict and necessary conclusion from the whole system.

Under whatever form, and upon whatever foundation government may rest, its rights and duties, or, in other words, the acts which it may, and which it may not, do to the members of society, remain always the same. As its mission is to overcome the resistance of individuals ; as it can maintain the state of peace only by subduing war ; and as war originates in the exercise of individual power, — it follows that the right and duty of every government is to repress and destroy the power of each individual, by all possible means. Consequently, government, whatever may have been its form and origin, has an unlimited right of action. Whatever it chooses to do is, for that very reason, right ; for its authority can be limited only by the increase of individual power ; that is to say, by introducing the state of war, thus sacrificing peace. Limitations to its authority are, therefore, contrary to the very end of its existence, and to the end of society ; and by permitting such limitations, it falls short of the ideal type, which every government should approach as nearly as is possible.

What, now, are the duties and rights of subjects in relation to a government, supposing this to be the true conception of government ? Rights they have none ; and their duties are all comprehended in the single one of obedience, under all circumstances, to whatever government may command ; for any disobedience to established power tends to reawaken the struggle for individual power ; and this is a return to that state of

war, which is the worst possible, and, consequently, the least legitimate of all states. Hence, as you may see, it follows necessarily, that it is the duty of the subject to obey, and that he has no right of resistance, whatever, against any thing that government ordains.

The only possible error, which government can commit, is the performance of acts tending to weaken or overthrow its power. But even when it does pursue false measures, subjects are still bound to respect it, and submit to it. For what makes any measure a false one? The fact that it tends to lessen the authority of the government. Disobedience would but increase the evil. The error of government can never justify, therefore, the disobedience of the subject. Subjects can in no case whatsoever, then, have rights against the government; for any right of resistance, even against injudicious measures, would be a return to that natural state of war, which is the worst state of all.

Such is the political system of Hobbes. It is, as you see, a necessary result of his ethical system, which is itself deduced, by strict reasoning, from his leading doctrine as to the end of man, and the single motive for all human action. With the exception of a few inconsistencies, to be noticed hereafter, the deduction is perfectly strict.

Thus briefly have I set before you the celebrated system of Hobbes; and the exposition has been, I trust, clear, exact, and complete. It now remains for us to see how far this doctrine is a true one, and,

if it errs, to determine the nature of the error on which it is based.

In the present lecture, I shall not communicate all the remarks which the system might suggest, but shall limit myself to an examination of the representation which it gives of the phenomenon of human volitions. And, in comparing this system with our own consciousness, I shall endeavor to show in what particulars it is inexact, incomplete, and, consequently, false. It is in its fundamental principle, then, that I shall examine the system of Hobbes; for, if this principle is true, we cannot refuse to admit all the consequences resulting from it.

By our analysis of the various modes of human volition, we have been led to the conclusion, that man is impelled to action in three different ways; that is to say, by three classes of motives. I have described these classes, and have shown you how each of these motives influences volition in a distinct and peculiar manner.

Of these three sources of volition, which observation has proved really to be active in the human soul, you see, at a glance, that Hobbes has overlooked or misunderstood two. This deficiency of exact analysis is important in itself, and yet more so in its consequences. As, instead of recognizing three distinct classes of motives, which determine human conduct, Hobbes admits only one, he inevitably arrives, by setting out from these false premises, at such consequences as contradict and overthrow all the ideas and beliefs which common experience has introduced into the minds of men.



And first, gentlemen, Hobbes has confounded the selfish motive, which he admits, with the motive of impulse and passion, which is always its predecessor, and perfectly distinct from it. In truth, the primitive tendencies of nature have not the same end with self-interest well understood, as conceived by reason. The peculiar and final end of each instinctive tendency is the particular object which it seeks. Thus, from the fact that I am an intelligent being, the desire of knowledge springs up within me; and this desire, in itself, impels me to learn, without the need of any calculation, by reason, of the consequences of this knowledge, or any foresight that its acquisition will give pleasure. This may be plainly seen among children, who have great curiosity, but certainly not from any calculation of its consequence; and mature men, although, in many instances, they do, undoubtedly, calculate, reason, and examine, before they act, yet far more frequently they follow the immediate impulse, and pursue the object exciting the desire, without a thought of the pleasure which its acquisition may bring. Do you think that he who loves and seeks the truth, does so on account of the pleasure which will follow the discovery of it, and because he has conceived beforehand and calculated that he shall, by this discovery, experience a certain amount of happiness? Nothing can be more unlike the actual fact, than such a supposition. In far the majority of cases, we seek the ends toward which the instincts of our nature impel us, for the ends themselves; in thought and purpose, the end itself is the only thing pursued or thought about

and the pleasure is unforeseen and unanticipated. If this is true of mature men, it must be true of the child. The fact is, the child never calculates, never foresees the consequences of action. Children are incapable of forming such conceptions of the results of conduct as are absolutely requisite, before calculations of pleasure can be their final end, and their determining motive. Yet more may it be said, that, if we never obeyed the tendencies of our nature, except from considerations of the pleasure that will accompany their gratification, then would it be impossible that we should ever act at all. For, plainly, we never should know that the gratification of desires would procure us pleasure, except by having once experienced this pleasure. Therefore, it follows that, if it is true that the condition of our obeying impulse, is the conception of the pleasure attendant on its gratification, we never should have yielded, for the first time, to any instinctive tendency, and, consequently, should never have acted at all.

And, finally, the pleasure which is the end sought by self-love, implies the activity of those very impulses, whose end is different from this pleasure. For what causes the pleasure? The gratification of natural impulse. The impulse must exist, therefore, antecedently, or no pleasure would be possible. We never should experience the pleasure of quenching thirst, for example, unless we had this thirst; and thirst is a craving for a particular object — water. Self-love is the love of all those various pleasures which accompany the gratification of our different passions; it is entirely distinct from these, for it necessarily pre-

supposes the existence of passions having for their end, in action, objects quite different from this pleasure.

It is contradicting the actual fact, then, to maintain, that, whenever we obey an impulse, it is in view of the pleasure consequent on its gratification. But is this saying, on the other hand, that we never act and never pursue an object for the sake of pleasure? Far from it. For there can be no doubt that our choice is often thus determined. But, because we are thus sometimes governed in our actions, it nowise follows that we always are, or that we can be governed by no other motive. Among these modes, by which the human will is determined, is one entirely distinct from this of self-love, the characteristic of which is, that the motive originates directly from the instinctive impulses of our nature, and has for its final end the particular object which the passion craves.

Evidently, then, there is, in the idea of Hobbes, a fundamental error; and it consists in confounding two quite distinct modes of human volition; the instinctive mode, which is the only one seen in children at all, and which is seen, more or less, in mature men; and the mode of self-interest and calculation, which originates in a foresight of the pleasure that will follow the accomplishment of an act, and the possession of an object. It is plain, then, that even if the moral motive did not exist in us, it would still be false, wholly false, that the only end of all our actions is the pursuit of pleasure, and the avoiding of pain.

Great, however, as is the error of thus confounding impulse with self-love, the system of Hobbes is chargeable with one still greater, and quite as easily detected. It confounds the moral mode of volition with that of self-interest. For, as it is perfectly true and perfectly evident that, in a multitude of instances, we yield directly, and without calculation, to the primitive instincts of our nature, so it is equally true and yet more evident, that, in very many others, we yield to a motive which is neither a pure natural instinct, nor a calculation of pleasure, but a conception of duty.

This motive of duty, gentlemen, acts more or less upon all men : there is no one upon whom it does not act sometimes ; and the reason why we are so apt to suppose that it seldom influences human conduct, is, that it is, as I have been anxious to show you, so much in harmony, both with our natural instincts and our true self-interest, that we rarely find it acting by itself, and independently of these other motives. In most cases, the moral motive coöperates with impulse and self-love ; and in such cases, it is not duty, which is a pure conception of the reason, that is most apparent in the act of choice, but the instinct or the selfish calculation, which are far more easily recognized by consciousness. If, however, you will analyze your commonest purposes, you will find, that the idea of order, the consideration of what is good in itself, has an influence, which, though little noticed, is still really active. In the majority of cases, a man would be ashamed to act, except in a certain way ; he feels that it would be wrong to act in any other ; and this

consideration has great weight in affecting his decision. True, before yielding to the influence of such considerations, we are accustomed to conjecture the consequences; but, as the honorable path is usually the safe one, it happens most frequently among men of good sense, that such foresight of consequences strengthens, rather than impairs, the power of the sense of duty; and, in opposite cases, the sentiment of honor still weighs against that of interest, and not seldom counterbalances it. Do I, by such statements, make man appear better than he is, and attribute an exaggerated moral purity to his common modes of volition? In most cases, there is undoubtedly a mixture of other motives with that of duty; but then, on the other hand, we must not deny the fact, that the instinctive and selfish motives do not exercise exclusive control over us, but that the moral does modify their influence. The simple truth is, that, in a multitude of cases, the moral motive coöperates in the determinations of our will, while, in many others, it is the sole spring of conduct. A philosopher, then, who, first suppressing and denying the influence of the instinctive and impassioned mode of choice, goes on to deny also the moral mode, is doubly false to human nature. Thus mutilating our nature, and setting out from such false premises, how can he but arrive at conclusions, which will give him a wholly incomplete and erroneous principle of ethics. Apply to such a principle Hobbes's vigorous logic, and the necessary result must be deductions which will utterly overturn the common convictions of mankind.

But the psychological errors of Hobbes do not stop here. Admit his hypothesis, and grant that the selfish motive is the sole spring of all our conduct, still I maintain that, even within this limit, Hobbes is incomplete and faulty; I maintain that he has disfigured and mutilated even this part of our nature; or, in other words, I say that self-love, such as Hobbes has described it, is not the true self-love which exists in the nature given us by God.

Let me recall to your minds an observation, made while I was exhibiting to you an analysis of the moral facts of human nature; which is, that into the idea of self-interest well understood there enter two elements; first, a view of our own personal good, and, secondly, a view of the pleasure accompanying the attainment of this good. These two elements, distinct as they are, and as I have shown them to be, do still both enter into the idea which we form of our highest interests.

Hobbes, however, recognizes but one of these elements, and entirely neglects the other; so that, after having elevated self-love into being the only motive of volition, he actually proceeds to divide this motive, and then, casting aside the larger and better, preserves only the least part, which is but a consequence, result, and accompaniment of the other. When reason, awakening after long years of infancy, begins to ask what constitutes our highest good, and what ought to be the end of our conduct, the first thing it remarks is, that our nature instinctively pursues certain ends, which it cannot attain without pleasure, or fail of without pain. Naturally enough,

then, reason stops first at this idea, that the final end of our instincts is the happiness which their satisfaction gives.

But reason, gentlemen, cannot long rest here. Each instant, it meets with a crowd of facts, which prove the incompleteness of this idea. When a young and beautiful woman, passionately fond of the world and of display, devotes herself at once and entirely to the care of her child, and, renouncing pleasures lately sought, giving up her favorite pursuits, sacrificing her tastes and desires, forgets all that once occupied her, in the delight experienced while she sits night and day by the cradle of that young being, who is wholly incapable of repaying her affection,—who could see, in this sublime transformation, merely a selfish calculation of pleasure? Every one must see the presence of another motive, which at once, and independently of all reflection and calculation, impels the mother to love her child as a final end; I mean the powerful and wonderful instinct of sympathy. When the student, enamored of science, sacrifices health, repose, all pleasures which tempt mankind, to the enjoyment of hunting up from musty volumes select passages, comparing them together, and, after long and laborious investigation, drawing from them some inference as to a trifling event that occurred thousands of years ago,—who can fail to be struck with the evident and undeniable fact, that the cause of this devoted toil is simply the ardent curiosity for knowledge, which is one of the instincts of all intelligent beings? A love for truth in itself, and a longing to discover and know it, is his final

end, and he has never thought for a moment of the pleasure that will attend its discovery. Do we seek truth, then, from having calculated what sensations its acquisition will bring, or to obtain public applause, or for the gratification of vanity which this applause will give? Seeking truth from such motives, we should never find it; for then only do we gain it, when we pursue it for itself. Reason is struck at once with these and similar facts, forever presented in the world; it sees, then, that its first idea of our nature was incomplete, and recognizes the fact that there are things, which are good in themselves, quite independently of the pleasure which they occasion; and that they would continue to be good, even if the pleasure did not attend them. When reason takes this step, it rises to an idea of our true good wholly different from the first it had conceived; good now becomes to its view that which nature impels us to seek, and which is agreeable and in harmony with our nature; in other words, the second element of self-love appears.

This is not, indeed, the moral motive, but it approaches it nearly. This step being taken, a second at once succeeds. Reason demands why it is that certain things are in harmony with our nature, while others are not so;—why it is that we are attracted to certain objects, and repelled from others. The idea that our nature has been made for these very ends, takes the place of our former one, that these ends are agreeable to our nature; and, from this new idea, which, though still within the sphere of selfishness, approaches nearly the limits of morality,



we rise to a yet higher one, that all natures have their peculiar ends, — that there is one ultimate and absolute end, of which particular ends are but component parts, — that this absolute end is universal order, — and that this universal order is the will of God. Thus, at last, we are lifted above motives of a personal and selfish nature, and rise to one which is wholly impersonal and moral. These various transitions are necessary to conduct reason upward from the view of pleasure, as the only end of action, to that of absolute good — of good, properly so called. Self-love, then, is far more complex than Hobbes has considered it. It includes other elements besides the single one of pleasure — other ideas than that of happiness; and thus you see how, even in regard to self-love, Hobbes has given a mutilated and imperfect picture of human nature. He has given a false view of our nature in one other way also; and I shall close my lecture with its description.

We have seen that Hobbes has discovered, in self-love, only the one element of pleasure; whereas it appears there are several elements. But I confine myself now to a consideration of this single element; and I maintain that, even here, Hobbes has no more given a correct and complete view of pleasure, than he has of self-love. Of the three modes by which the human will is determined, he suppresses two, and admits only that of self-love; the selfish motive is complex, but he suppresses one of its elements, and preserves only that of pleasure. And now, does he do full justice to this? No: pleasure is also complex, but he mutilates it. For, among the pleas-

ures which man is capable of enjoying, a very large number are associated with the happiness of others; and these are our very highest pleasures. Who does not know that the contemplation of the happiness of others, as increased by our actions, or of assistance rendered by us for their support and relief, — who does not know that a consciousness of the sympathy that they feel for us, and a sentiment of the kindness that we experience towards them, — who does not know that these form the largest and the finest part of our happiness? In forming calculations as to the attainment of the highest amount of pleasure possible, a wise man would be careful, then, not to omit that class of pleasures which originate in sympathy, and which, more than all others, contribute to the happiness that, according to Hobbes, is the sole end to be pursued in life. Now, suppose that a man should not overlook, but recognize, this abundant source of agreeable sensations, — suppose that he should take them into his calculations, — could he ever arrive at the conclusion that the state of war is the state of nature? Never, gentlemen: he would come necessarily to the exactly opposite conclusion, that the social state is the truly natural state. For, if the sight of the happiness of others constitutes the largest and best portion of our own, the calculation of his individual happiness would lead a man of sense to occupy himself in securing the well-being of his brethren — to desire it, and labor for it: all men, therefore, merely for the sake of their own happiness, would desire the happiness of their fellow-men; all would seek to enjoy the delightful sentiments of

kindness towards, and sympathy from, their kind ; all would pursue the pleasures which friendship, love, family ties, national interests, and charity, alone can give. Yet more ; there is a powerful instinct in our nature, — an instinct which, ungratified, produces suffering, and, gratified, brings joy, — the social instinct ; and this impels us to seek society, and makes intercourse with fellow-men an absolute necessity. The satisfaction of this instinct, also, must be taken into our calculations and plans for happiness. I ask, now, how, in what marvellous and incomprehensible way, could the state of war gratify such wants as grow out of these natural dispositions ? Granting, then, that pleasure is the end of all our actions, and the sole motive of all volitions, yet still, when we regard this capacity for pleasure in its full extent, not only are we not led to the conclusion of Hobbes, that the state of nature is a state of war, but we arrive at a result diametrically opposite. Hobbes, then, reducing all motives to this single one of the pursuit of pleasure, has not comprehended the nature of pleasure even ; he has recognized only its grosser elements, which are the smallest in number, and least important ; and, even within the narrow limits to which he has confined himself, has disfigured, so far as an observer possibly could do, the true image of human nature.

What now, gentlemen, shall we say of a system built upon such a foundation of error ? Is it not already condemned ? Is it worth our while to examine and refute it ? It is not, scientifically speaking. But it does demand our further consideration, when we call

to mind the influence which it has exerted, and when we reflect that it owes this influence to the very fact of its mutilating, as it does, the moral element, while admitting only the grossest and most tangible elements of human volitions. It is this which gives it that appearance of simplicity, and that plausibility, which deceive the crowd; and it is this which has made it seem valuable in the judgment of one of the most distinguished jurists of our age,—I mean Bentham,—who, in our day, has revived this system under a new form, hereafter to be described. We must go on, then, and finish the work we have begun; we must examine and discuss the consequences and details of the system, whose fundamental principle we have now overthrown. To this duty my next lecture will be devoted.

## LECTURE XII.

## THE SELFISH SYSTEM. — HOBBS.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture I confined myself to the consideration of two points. First, I exhibited the system of Hobbes in its principles and consequences; and secondly, I compared these principles with the facts of human nature, of which they pretend to be a representation, and showed that a more deformed and mutilated image of the original could not possibly be formed.

Let me remind you, in brief, that Hobbes's system takes it for granted, that the universal motive of action is the desire of well-being; that is to say, the pursuit of agreeable sensations. To determine whether this system rests on a firm foundation, we must inquire, then, whether it is true, that human actions have no other origin than this desire of pleasure and abhorrence of pain. This is a simple question of fact: to decide it, we have merely to ask ourselves how our volitions are determined, and then compare with our consciousness this pretended picture of ourselves, which Hobbes sets before us. This we have done, and the result of

our discussion was all but a complete demonstration of the utter falsity of the whole system.

I showed, in the first place, you will recollect, that of the three different modes of human volition, Hobbes has entirely overlooked two, — the impulsive and the moral, — and has admitted only one, — the selfish, — which he has consequently set up as the sole and universal motive of all choice and action. In the second place, I showed that the idea which Hobbes conceived of even this motive of self-love, was incomplete; inasmuch as in this selfish mode of volition, there is another element beside the desire of pleasure. Action is in harmony with our nature, quite independently of the pleasure that may result from it. So that, after having entirely set aside two of the modes of human volition, Hobbes mutilates the only one which he preserves, in suppressing by far the most important of the two elements of which it is made up, and admitting only its least important element of pleasure.

In the third place, I showed that Hobbes has mutilated even this element of pleasure, as he before had the principle of self-love, and the whole phenomenon of volition; for his system does not take into account, in its estimate, the largest and most numerous sources of happiness — the pleasures of sympathy; so that even pleasure itself, the only element of self-love recognized by Hobbes, is falsely represented; for he has, if I may say so, cut it in two, and thrown away its better portion; and thus finally has settled the whole matter, by considering this fragment of the element of pleasure as the universal and only motive of all choice and conduct.

I repeat it ; never has unfaithfulness to psychological truth been pushed so far ; never was there a system so completely and strangely disfiguring the true image of human nature. It is nowise extraordinary, therefore, that it leads to consequences so wholly untenable, monstrous, and contradictory to the universal faith and common sense of men. The consequences to which this system leads, are as absurd as its principles are false ; and common sense as instantly repels the one as observation does the other.

This might be called a direct refutation of the system of Hobbes. But, as you well know, there are two modes of refuting an opinion ; the first is to confront it with the truth, and compare them together ; the second is to consider it by itself, and see whether it is throughout consistent. Now, I should fail of exhibiting the utter weakness of Hobbes's system, if I omitted to apply to it this second mode of refutation ; for, although his mind was logical, he could not avoid falling into many contradictions, when his fundamental principle was so false. The present lecture will be occupied with an exhibition of the most glaring of these contradictions.

You will remember, doubtless, that Hobbes has demonstrated, as he thinks, that a state of war is the only natural state among individuals brought in contact with each other. You will remember also, that, appreciating the inconveniences of this state of things, he has declared this state of war to be the worst that can possibly exist, and hence has been led to the assertion, that it is for each man's highest interest to accept of the state of peace, at whatever cost, or upon whatever

conditions, it may be obtained, and thus has explained the creation of that social state, of which peace is at once the end and characteristic.

Now, this very mode of explaining the foundation of society necessarily implies a contradiction; and this is the first that I shall exhibit to you. If calculations of self-interest could lead men thus to substitute a state of peace for a state of war, a state of society for a state of nature, the very same calculations would have prevented and rendered impossible that natural state of war. For how can it be true, that man's natural state is a state of war, if it is in his nature to see and feel that this is the worst possible state for his own interests? If the principle of self-love leads to the apprehension of this truth, then it is difficult to see how it can produce the state of war which contradicts this truth, and not the state of peace which is in harmony with it. Admitting, then, that man is constituted as Hobbes asserts, his state of nature, as he calls it, is impossible. The same reasons assigned by him, as sufficient to bring it to an end, are strong enough to have prevented its ever originating: this is the first contradiction to which I would call your attention.

A second contradiction Hobbes is guilty of, when he asserts that in the state of nature there are natural rights, which give way, after the formation of a society, to positive rights. Hobbes says, that in the state of nature each man has a right to all things, and that this right is a natural right. Now, I confess, I am astonished, and cannot but find fault with Hobbes, that he should have introduced this word *right* into a system which utterly abolishes and excludes every such



idea as men have usually attached to that word. To satisfy yourselves of this, gentlemen, you have but to consider how different this pretended right is from the actual right, which the universal sense of mankind recognizes.

What are the characteristics of this right possessed by every one over all things — this natural and primitive right, according to Hobbes ?

In the first place, it is a right imposing no corresponding duty. If I have a right to the possession of all things, and my neighbor has equally this right, it follows that my right imposes no restraint upon him, neither does his right upon me ; my right destroys his, and his destroys mine ; there are no reciprocal duties. The first characteristic, then, of these rights, so called by Hobbes, is, that they have no corresponding duties.

But further ; so far from imposing any obligation upon others, this right of mine is one that every body has a perfect right to violate. So far as I have any right, just so far have others ; they have a right, then, to disregard my right. This natural right, therefore, not only does not impose duties upon any body, but, on the contrary, every body has a right to violate it. Of all rights, surely such a one is the strangest that can be conceived.

Once more ; this right is one which, though possessed by all, is recognized by none. For, since my right extends to every thing, and my neighbor's does the same, I cannot but recognize this right of his ; consequently, I cannot feel that I have the right myself. What is true of one is true of all ; and hence it seems

that no one can recognize that he himself has this right, which, nevertheless, each and all possess.

Thus it appears, then, that the three characteristics of this natural right, admitted by Hobbes, are, 1. that it imposes no corresponding duties; 2. that it is of such a nature that every body has a *right* to violate it; and, 3. that no one can recognize it as belonging to himself. What a prodigious difference is there between any such meaning of the word *right*, and its meaning in common acceptation! The word *right*, as used and understood by the best writers, and by the common sense of all men, from the shepherd, who guards his flock, to the legislator, who enacts laws, implies something which all must recognize as sacred, and which demands from all respect. If I possess a right, I perfectly comprehend — I and the whole world with me — that you, and every body else, are bound to respect it; that, by disregarding this right, you are false to a duty, and violate a consecrated thing. My right, then, imposes a duty upon all others; no other being has a right to violate it; and thus all recognize that it belongs peculiarly to me, and not to others; so that right, according to the universal understanding of mankind, has characteristics precisely opposite to those which mark the pretended right of Hobbes. Be not astonished, then, at meeting with the word *right* in a system which makes all right impossible. We may reconcile it with all systems, and interweave it with them, if we will but alter and destroy the very idea that the name of right expresses.

What I have now said of rights, as the word is defined



and employed by Hobbes, might be said with equal truth of duties. What, according to him, are duties? He recognizes but one class of these — the duties of the subject to the government; there are no duties for government; duties are confined to subjects. And now, I ask, what is the nature of these duties? And, supposing myself in the position of the subject, I find that, in my relation to government, two kinds of cases may arise; — first, those in which it appears to be for my interest to obey; and, second, those where obedience seems to be against my interest. Now, in the former case, to what motive does a man yield, when he obeys and respects state authority? Evidently to the single motive admitted by Hobbes, that is, *self-interest well understood*. But what, then, shall the subject do in the second case, where he finds obedience prejudicial to his interests? Has not Hobbes declared, that interest is the only possible motive of volition; and yet more, that each is sole and sovereign judge of his own interest, and that he may not be condemned for his judgment? What becomes, then, of the duty? By what motive shall the subject still be led to obey and respect government? There is no such motive, if man is constituted as Hobbes supposes. If, then, he pretends that, in such cases, the subject must obey, Hobbes falls into a manifest contradiction of his own system; for, if a man can feel that to be a duty which is not for his interest, then must there be some other motive beside self-interest, and Hobbes's system is false. But Hobbes will say, it is always for our interest to obey government, because the state of war is the worst of all states. To this I reply, that if I see this to be for my interest,

then it is to the motive of interest I yield ; and duty means, therefore, only interest well understood ; but if I do not see it to be for my interest, how shall I be influenced by interest well understood, when I do not understand my interest ? And if I do not understand it, what motive to obedience remains ? What becomes of Hobbes's duty ? What signification has the word ? Is it not plain that Hobbes must either give up the word, as an unmeaning one, or contradict his system by assigning it a meaning ?

So far, gentlemen, from there being any ground upon which, according to Hobbes, an individual may be constrained to do what is for his interest, when he does not comprehend that it is so, the consequence from his principle would lead to the exactly opposite result—that the individual has a right to violate such duties, as it is pretended interest imposes, when he does not see that they would advance his interest. What is *natural right*, according to Hobbes ? It is precisely the right, possessed by each individual, of seeking what he conceives to be his highest good, in just the manner which he thinks best. Such is natural right, in Hobbes's system. If he pretends, then, to impose upon the subject the duty of obeying government, when he sees it to be for his interest not to obey it, he is imposing a duty which the subject has, according to his own doctrine, a perfect right to neglect and violate.

Now, what is *duty*, according to the common understanding of mankind, as manifested in every language ? It is something sacred in itself, something which we are obliged to perform, and which is acknowledged and

recognized as sacred, not only by the person bound to observe it, but by all others, who, recognizing it as sacred, have, for that reason, a perfect right to demand that it shall be respected.

Thus, when I see that I have a duty, I feel compelled to discharge it; and others feel, although my performance of the act may not affect them, yet because they comprehend the obligations resting on a man in the different situations of life, that it is my duty, and that they have a right to say, "Do this, or be judged unworthy." Between this idea of duty, as it exists in universal human consciousness, and the idea of interest well understood, which Hobbes is obliged to substitute for the true meaning of the word, there is a distinction too wide to be overlooked — a distinction quite as important, as that which separates the signification of *right* in his system from its common signification among mankind.

Hobbes may use the words *right* and *duty*, therefore; but if he employs them in their general acceptation, he falls into a monstrous and glaring contradiction. If, on the other hand, and as apparently is the case, he attaches to them a new and unwonted sense, we may well inquire by what title and authority does he alter thus the common meaning of words, and so deceive his reader into the idea that rights and duties are, or can be, recognized in such a system as his? For one or the other of these abuses of language, Hobbes must seem liable to condemnation, in the judgment of every reasonable man.

It is in vain, in a system which does not admit, among the possible motives of human volition, the

rational motive, to pretend to discover any thing even remotely resembling a right or a duty. The attempt must always utterly fail.

When I yield to the impulse of passion, my act has no moral character whatever, and I feel no right to demand that others should regard me with respect; for I am not seeking to accomplish absolute good, but merely to gratify my desire. Again, when I follow interest well understood, my motive is still personal; it is not for absolute good, but for private good, that I act, and I feel that there is nothing which gives my conduct a claim to respect in my own or others' eyes; my happiness is agreeable and pleasing in prospect, but I am aware that it imposes no duties, and secures me no rights. If men recognized no other motives than these two of impulse and interest, then the ideas of rights and duties would not exist. Whence come these ideas? On what condition can they originate? On one condition only, and that is, that there is such a thing as absolute good — something good, not from the benefit it brings to one or to every individual of our race, but from the eternal nature of things. On this condition, rights and duties become possible; because, whenever an act to be performed appears to have this character of absolute good, at once I feel myself obliged to do it; and, feeling this obligation, I am conscious of my right to act without hinderance; because, since every other person may see, as I do, that it is absolutely good, and feel, as I do, that I am bound to perform it, he must be conscious of an obligation on his part not to prevent me in its execution, but to remind me of my responsibility, and even to demand that I should discharge my

duty, if he suffers from my neglect. Thus all rights and duties are naturally derived from the rational motive. Suppress this motive, and duties and rights become impossible; the words themselves have no meaning, and are of no further use in human speech. Under whatever disguise or mask, then, the selfish or the impulsive systems may present themselves, they can never properly introduce the true ideas of duty or of right.

We may well suppose that Hobbes was sensible of the unfitness of his system, as a foundation for social rights and duties, and that his wish to supply this deficiency led to his hypothesis of a contract upon which society is based. If this was his idea, he was guilty of a great error; for a contract presupposes the moral motive, and in his system is just as impossible as rights and duties.

Men, says Hobbes, feeling war to be the worst possible state of existence, united together; and, desiring at any cost to substitute peace, they agreed to establish a power sufficiently strong to subdue individuals, with the especial object of restraining them, and compelling them to live in harmony. Such, according to Hobbes, was the origin of many communities, and such the foundation of the laws by which they are governed.

Let us adopt the hypothesis, gentlemen, and then ask what is the meaning of such a contract, and what is its authority over the individuals who enter into it.

Let us take, then, two men, constituted as Hobbes supposes all men to be; and now what will be a contract to them, and how far will they feel themselves bound by it? They have entered into certain engage-

ments, for the purpose of securing their highest interests; how far, now, may they depend upon each other's respect for these engagements? If each supposes that the other will be governed by the agreement, only in so far as he sees his own interests are promoted by it, then, I say, the contract is useless; for, before it was formed, each might have expected from the other quite as much. If, on the contrary, either anticipated that the person with whom he enters into the contract will observe its provisions, even where interest impels him to disregard them, then, I ask, on what ground does he rest such a hope? By what reasoning can a man, constituted as Hobbes asserts that we all are, feel himself bound to respect an engagement which is inferior to his interests? On the contrary, would he not, in such a case, have a most manifest and undeniable right to violate it? His promise restrains him, says Hobbes. Ay! it would restrain men made as we are, but not such as Hobbes describes. For why is a promise binding? Because, and only because, reason declares it to be so, and tells us plainly that it cannot be broken without falsehood and infamy. Once admit that there is no good which is absolute, and independent of personal interest, and a promise is an empty word. Now, a promise is the very foundation of a contract, and constitutes its strength. A contract, then, between two such beings as Hobbes supposes men to be, would be unmeaning; for to agree to do a thing, with the reservation that we need not do it, if we think best, is not to make a contract, but a mere mockery; and if this were the only kind of engagement possible among men, the word *contract* would not be found in any language. If



Hobbes pretends, then, to establish social rights and duties upon a primitive contract, in which society originates, he has deceived himself; for contracts presuppose duties, and a system excluding duties, *à fortiori*, excludes contracts. But it is much to be doubted whether Hobbes had any such intention, as we have here supposed. His whole system proves how little confidence he felt in the obligation of any contracts, and how low he estimated them. He admitted two possible modes in which society might originate; — first, the consent of the individuals combining to establish it, or, in other words, a contract; and, secondly, the violent enslavement of individuals by one or many, that is to say, the right of the strongest. And he goes further; he considers one form of society as legitimate as the other, and asserts that one imposes equal duties upon the subject with the other. He had so little faith in the obligation of a contract that he trusted wholly in force to maintain it. And finally, according to Hobbes, government has a perfect right to disregard the contract in which it originated; it is equally guiltless, whether it observes or violates it. Whether it is founded upon contract or force, whether it benefits or injures its subjects, their duty remains still the same. Government may do wrong in the sight of Heaven, and may act in opposition to its own true good, but it still deserves the respect and the obedience of the subject. If Hobbes seriously intended, then, to establish social duties upon contract, he did all in his power to make his readers disbelieve him.

Thus you see, gentlemen, that the word *contract*, in the system of this philosopher, is as unmeaning as the

words *duties* and *rights*. And we might say the same of the word *society*; for what is society but a visionary and impracticable thing, if men are really such beings as Hobbes pretends? Society, as Hobbes describes it, is not a society, but a mere constrained juxtaposition of individuals; its members do not obey; they yield; they are not governed by authority, but by force; the laws which restrain them are chains; and, in a word, all expressions descriptive of the grand relations originating in the social state, lose their proper meaning, and assume a false one, when applied to such communities as Hobbes, in conformity with his system, imagines to exist. And the reason for this is plain; a true society necessarily implies true rights and duties, true contracts and promises, a true obedience and authority, true laws, — each and all of which are impossible, if there is no such thing as absolute good. Every system which suppresses and denies the moral motive, is forced, then, to mutilate at once the complex idea of society, and every elementary idea which this presupposes and includes.

Is this saying that individual interest has nothing to do with the formation of society? By no means. If a philosopher should profess such an opinion, he would be obliged to maintain, first, that the moral motive is the only motive of human volitions, and that the selfish motive neither exists nor exercises any control over our actions; he would be obliged, in other words, in adopting such an idea of society and its constituent laws, to form as false, though an entirely opposite conception of a human being as Hobbes has done. The image of man must resemble the reality in the principles of a system, if

we would have its practical results correspond to what we actually see in human society. When we recognize and admit all the elements of man's nature, his conduct and experience are easily explained, and especially that wonderful phenomenon which we call *society*. The communities of beavers are explicable by the nature of beavers, and human communities are to be accounted for by the principles of human nature. To form an accurate idea, therefore, of the origin and formation of human society, we must set out from a correct idea of human nature; here only can we find true light to guide us — all else is hypothesis and contradiction.

I acknowledge at once that interest has much to do with the first formation of society, and with the whole of legislation; and it would be very absurd to deny it. But to pretend, on the other hand, with Hobbes and Bentham, that interest, and interest alone, is the cause of the foundation, organization, and maintenance of society, — to assert that this principle of our nature is the sole end of all law and right, — is openly to contradict real facts and universal common sense. When we come to the discussion of the science of jurisprudence, I will point out to you the respective influence of the principle of utility, and of the moral principle, in the work of legislation, and will enable you distinctly to apprehend the peculiar function of each. I limit myself, now, to the simple statement of the fact that both of these principles concur in the production of all systems of legislation, and that he, therefore, who attempts to explain the existence of society by the operation

of one of these principles only, must necessarily find much that he cannot explain, and much that he will mutilate and deform.

It will not be unprofitable for us to reflect, in conclusion, upon the circumstances which led Hobbes to this system which he so boldly maintained, which Bentham, in our time, has reproduced, and which will reappear, again and again, in every important era of the history of philosophy, because fully expressing one of the solutions — although a partial and narrow one — of the grand moral problem.

Hobbes lived at the time of the English revolution. Chance, and perhaps also the bias of his character, threw him into connection with the party in favor of absolute power; that is to say, the party of the Stuarts. The sight of the revolution and of its excesses could not but have the effect of confirming him in his principles and his attachments. It seemed to him that society was dissolved, because it was in a state of revolution; and he thought he saw the true cause of its ruin in the overturn of established authority. He was led, therefore, to the conclusion, that societies can exist, and men live in peace, only where power is extremely strong, or, in other words, absolute; and he could not conceive that order was possible upon any other condition. This idea was, without doubt, the moving spring of Hobbes's philosophy; and it was under its influence that he examined the laws of human nature, and of the origin of societies. Hobbes was not a remarkable psychologist; he was a logician; and nothing are more opposed to each other than logic and observation. In his day, psy-

chology was in its cradle; philosophers scarcely regarded it at all; and yet it is impossible to answer questions relative to human nature, if we are ignorant of the laws of that nature.

Hobbes, preoccupied as his mind was with favorite ideas, and passions, and interests, found in man just what he desired to find, and wholly overlooked whatever contradicted his conclusions. I do not condemn him on this account. It was a most natural thing for him to do. But thus it was, that he was led to the adoption of the strange system which I have described, repugnant as it is to all the facts of our nature, and to all the notions of common sense. Others professed similar ideas at the same time; but no one manifested, in the expression of them, equal vigor and intellectual superiority. Among such writers were two of eminence, both natives of France. The first was Laroche foucauld, the author of the *Maximes*. It would be unjust, I think, to consider the author of the *Maximes* chargeable with all the extravagances of Hobbes. The only object of this intelligent man and admirable writer was to show, that there are but few actions—even among those apparently the most disinterested and virtuous—which might not be dictated by a selfish motive. Between such a view as this, and the view that every human action is absolutely inspired by selfishness, there is a very wide distinction. It was the aim of Laroche foucauld to unmask, in every possible way, hypocrisy of conduct, and to examine strictly the motives in which acts originated, before pronouncing them virtuous: he made war upon appearances, and was inclined, per-

haps, to attribute too much influence to selfishness in the determinations of human choice. Thus far Larochevoucauld did undoubtedly go; but this is all that is taught or necessarily implied in his *Maximes*, and I do not think we can justly attribute to him a deeper meaning.

The second philosopher referred to, of whom it is unnecessary to say much, was Helvetius; in whose book, entitled *De L'Esprit*, we find all the ethical maxims of Hobbes clearly and positively announced. Helvetius did not hesitate at all to declare, that man's only motive for choice is the pursuit of pleasure and the dread of pain; and he boldly deduced the consequences of his principle. Helvetius was the child of Condillac; the morality of the former sprung from the metaphysics of the latter. And, indeed, if we once admit that sensation is the germ of all knowledge, we can scarcely avoid the conclusion that agreeable sensations are the germ of all good. The doctrine is in both cases precisely the same; it is only transferred from the intellect to the will.

Like many other authors of bad systems, Helvetius was one of the best men in the world; and his object in writing his book was much more to exhibit talent than to establish truth; and in this he certainly succeeded. No doctrine could offer a better opportunity for that skilful introduction of brilliant expression and piquant anecdote, which renders the book *De L'Esprit* at once so entertaining, yet so full of melancholy suggestions.

Few philosophers have been of greater service than Hobbes. Many writers, who have given a mutilated

and imperfect representation of human nature, have so wrapped it up and veiled it by want of precision of thought and expression, that it is difficult to discover what errors they have made; and, as to the consequences of their principles, sometimes they do not perceive them themselves, or, if perceiving them, they do not dare to push them to extreme results. Not so with Hobbes. He folds his system in no ornamental drapery; his style is perfectly simple, clear, and dry; he never employs an unnecessary word in expressing his thought; and there is no possibility of misunderstanding either the meaning of his language or the scope of his arguments. But this is not his only merit. After distinctly exhibiting his principle, he unhesitatingly deduces from it all its consequences; he fears not to admit and to maintain all that necessarily results from it, destructive though it may seem to morality, freedom, and society. In reading Hobbes, we are compelled to acknowledge the justice of his conclusions, and to grant that we must either adopt them or reject his principle altogether. Now, this, gentlemen, is rendering a great service to the cause of science. It is only when a partial and imperfect system is exhibited with clearness and boldness, that we can hope to expose and refute it. So long as a system is enveloped in mystification, it may be tolerated, however detestable its character; but the instant when its revolting consequences are laid bare, we are constrained to inquire whether or not it is founded on truth. This is exactly what occurred with regard to the system of selfishness. Hobbes's exposition brought out so broadly all its

consequences, that the philosophers of his time were led to scrutinize severely his principle; and they were not long in discovering that he had been guilty of mutilating and deforming human nature; and hence arose that deep study of psychology which has, in our day, brought so clearly to view the true elements of our moral being. And thus to Hobbes's exertions we are indebted for a distinctness and completeness in the sciences of politics, ethics, and psychology, which, but for his writings, we might long have wanted.

END OF VOL. I.



INTRODUCTION

TO

ETHICS

INCLUDING A

CRITICAL SURVEY OF MORAL SYSTEMS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

JOUFFROY.

By WILLIAM H. CHANNING

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS  
OF  
VOLUME SECOND

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LECTURE XIII.	Page.
THE SELFISH SYSTEM.—BENTHAM. . . . .	3
LECTURE XIV.	
THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. . . . .	35
LECTURE XV.	
THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. . . . .	80
LECTURE XVI.	
THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM.—SMITH. . . . .	98
LECTURE XVII.	
THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. . . . .	120
LECTURE XVIII.	
THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. . . . .	152
LECTURE XIX.	
THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM.—SYSTEM OF THE MORAL SENSE.	177

LECTURE XX.		Page.
THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM CONCLUDED. . . . .		202
LECTURE XXI.		
THE RATIONAL SYSTEM.—PRICE. . . . .		237
LECTURE XXII.		
THE RATIONAL SYSTEM.—CRITICISM OF PRICE. . . . .		274
LECTURE XXIII.		
THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. . . . .		306
LECTURE XXIV.		
RATIONAL SYSTEM.—WOLLASTON.—CLARKE AND MONTES- QUIEU.—MALEBRANCHE.—WOLF. . . . .		334

JOUFFROY

100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

109

110

111

112

113

114

115

116

117

118

119

120

# JOUFFROY.

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## LECTURE XIII.

### THE SELFISH SYSTEM.—BENTHAM.

GENTLEMEN,

By the plan marked out for this course of lectures, I should, perhaps,—having exhibited the selfish system under the form in which Hobbes presented it,—pass at once to the consideration of some new system, without stopping to discuss any other form which it has assumed. But I feel that I ought to make an exception with regard to one philosopher—I mean Bentham. The justly-acquired celebrity which this remarkable jurist enjoyed during his lifetime, and which will long endure, as well as the practical influence which his opinions and writings have exerted on his own country and on several parts of Europe, justify me in making this digression. And you, gentlemen, I am sure, will not regret to follow me.

All, who desire to obtain a clear and correct idea of Bentham's system and opinions, should read the work in which he has himself exhibited his philosophy. It was published in 1789, although it had been printed

nine years before, and is entitled, "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation." In this work, Bentham, who was, by nature, nowise a metaphysician, has endeavored to ascend to the philosophical principles from which his system was drawn. It is little known among us, and has never been translated. Our only acquaintance with Bentham is through his detached minor pieces, and the exact and lucid exposition of his opinions, given by M. Dumont of Geneva, in three volumes, under the title of *Traité de la Legislation Civile et Pénale*. No one can estimate more highly than I do this admirable work, or feel more sensible of the service which has been rendered, in substituting, for the concise and rude forms of speech which Bentham adopted, a clear and agreeable style of expression. But still, in this case, as in all others, we should consult the author himself, if we would really be acquainted with his opinions; and I repeat, therefore, that the original work of Bentham, above mentioned, is the true source to which our inquiries should be directed.

It may not be amiss, if I add to this mention of his works a slight sketch of their general character and spirit.

We may designate in two words the distinctive trait of Bentham's philosophy, and at the same time its fundamental principle, by saying that Bentham was not a metaphysician, but a jurist. This distinction explains, as it appears to me, both the direction which his ideas assumed, and the peculiar characteristics of his manner. Allow me, in a few words, to illustrate my meaning.



No one would say, that it was the duty of the legislator to pay no regard to the moral quality—the good or ill desert of actions. On the contrary, he is bound to consider this deeply; and he is no legislator who neglects to do so. This is so plain, that even Bentham himself, as I shall by and by have occasion to show, is unable to explain existing laws, or any laws, except upon this hypothesis. If legislators, in connecting penalties with actions, had reference only to the evil which society incurs, penal laws would be very different from what they now are. The principle of exactly proportioning penalties to the injury done to society, would produce a scale of punishments very unlike to any thing which we find in any code whatever. And a sole regard to the interests of society would not, in the least, require the precautions with which the execution of these laws is guarded, and the various guaranties which protect the criminal. If you will open any criminal code, you will find many regulations, showing that regard is paid as well to the moral quality of acts as to the interests of society; and this I shall fully establish, I hope, when I come to the discussion of social ethics. And yet, gentlemen, notwithstanding this, it is perfectly true, that the real object,—the peculiar and immediate object—of all law is the prevention of such acts as may injure society. It is the interest of society which occupies the attention of the legislator, and all his efforts are directed to its preservation. The end at which the jurist aims, therefore, is an entirely different one from that of the moralist.

This point being established, gentlemen, it is very easy to understand how a jurist may be led to regard human actions under the single aspect of their influence upon society, until he conceives that this is the only mode of judging them, and learns to apply, in his estimate of their morality, the same test and principle by which he determines their legality. Every candid jurist would probably confess, that he was obliged to guard himself against such a tendency. But Bentham, being peculiarly a jurist, and in no sense a philosopher, did not guard himself from this tendency: he yielded to it, and was thus led to believe and support the principle, that the only difference to be distinguished between acts, is the degree in which their consequences are beneficial or injurious; and that utility, therefore, is the only test by which they can be judged.

Another peculiarity of a jurist, which is also characteristic of Bentham, is, that he lays down his axiom of utility as the test of the moral quality of actions, without supporting it by any psychological examination of the motives of human volition; as if philosophy was nowise concerned in such a proposition, and could furnish no evidence either to confirm or to overthrow it. And in this respect it must be allowed, that there is a great difference between Hobbes and Bentham, and that the former has here greatly the advantage. Hobbes does not attempt to establish the selfish principle until he has, as he supposes, thoroughly analyzed human nature; until, from psychological examination, he has arrived at the conclusion, that the only difference between actions consists in

their fitness to produce pleasure or pain. Following this method, Hobbes discusses the purely scientific question, and seeks to determine the motives by which, in the depths of our consciousness, actions are determined and influenced; or, in other words, the nature and number of those considerations, by which we are led to prefer certain courses of conduct to others, and thus to pass judgment upon them. This is the true scientific problem, to be examined and solved, before we can be justified in asserting what is, or is not, the proper test of the moral quality of actions. Hobbes has examined, discussed, and solved this problem, and deduced his system from this solution; while Bentham seems never to have suspected even that there was such a problem to be solved; for the very first step he takes is to lay down as an axiom a particular solution of this problem, as if it was really no problem at all. I am justified by this second consideration, therefore, in saying, that Bentham was not a philosopher, but a jurist.

Another characteristic of Bentham, which also justifies me in saying this, was the singular notion which he cherished of the novelty and originality of his system. Ignorant, indeed, must he have been of the whole history of philosophy to suppose this. The doctrine of utility a new one! Why, it existed in Greece even before the time of the sophists, who preceded Socrates, and was reduced to a system of unequalled perfection by Epicurus, who as much surpassed Hobbes, as a philosopher, as Hobbes did Bentham. The originality of Bentham's system is not in the principle on which it is founded, but in the

application of this principle to legislation. And here, I take at once the opportunity of saying, Bentham has, indeed, displayed a true superiority of mind, and has rendered lasting services to the human race. If Bentham showed any originality in his mode of presenting the ancient selfish system, it was in the boldness with which he professed it. He disguised in no way his principle of utility; he paid no respect to those other principles of conduct, which the majority of mankind have united in reverencing; but he laid down his principle, naked and bare, as the only motive from which men really act; he treated all other principles of our nature only with ridicule and contempt; and once having established his principle, he frankly and unhesitatingly admitted its legitimate consequences.

It was this boldness, gentlemen, in which Bentham was really original, that gained for him such fanatical supporters and warm opponents. No one could be the friend or foe of such a philosopher by halves. And thus the life of Bentham was one continued controversy; and his followers have been, in character, a sect. This has been owing, I repeat, to the peculiar disposition of Bentham, carried into his system,—to the intrepidity with which he professed a principle that shocks not only the good sense of men, but still more the most elevated principles of our nature, and which he, nevertheless, has admitted, with all its consequences, boldly, and without flinching. In this respect, Bentham and Hobbes were on a level, fellow-countrymen as they were. With a true English spirit, they were equally fearless and frank in express-

ing their opinions, however opposed they might be to the common sense of mankind.

Thus much I have thought it well to say of the general character of Bentham's system. It remains for me now rapidly to exhibit his leading doctrines, and the principal consequences which he deduced from them. And this I will attempt to do in as few words and as distinctly as possible.

In Bentham's view, all actions and objects would be equally indifferent, if they had not the property of producing pleasure or pain. This property is the only one by which we can distinguish or judge them. We seek or avoid objects, we desire or oppose actions, with a single reference to this. The desire of pleasure and the fear of pain are the only possible motives which can determine human conduct; and, consequently, pleasure is the only object of pursuit, and the sole end of human existence. These principles are, as you see, perfectly identical with those of Hobbes, and, indeed, are only a repetition of them. But, as I have just shown, Hobbes proves, or attempts to prove, them; Bentham regards them as axioms; and instead of wasting time in endeavoring to establish them, he leaves them to rest upon what to him appears to be their self-evident truth.

As Bentham thus makes no attempt to prove the justness of his principle, and offers us no means for testing the soundness of its foundation, let us for ourselves inquire whether this principle does really need no proof, and whether it is true that it cannot be proved.

In all science, says Bentham, we must set out from some truth or fact, which admits of no proof, and whence, as from a fountain, all reasonings flow. We,

of course, admit this assertion in its full extent ; for it is plain, that if there was no one truth which required no proof, nothing whatever could be proved ; for a proof is an established and acknowledged truth ; and therefore, if it is necessary that this truth itself shall be proved, there can be no proof of any thing. We have, then, to inquire whether, when a philosopher affirms that a certain motive governs all human determinations, he is advancing one of these principles, which, by their very nature, neither can nor need be demonstrated.

If a natural philosopher was discussing the question whether the currents of air in a certain country follow several or only one direction, would he have the right to assume, in support of his own theory, that no proof was required or could be offered on the subject ? Certainly not. The reply would instantly be made, that this was a question of fact to be determined by observation of the wind, through ten, twenty, or any number of years, and that only after such observation could it be known, whether the wind blew always in one direction, or in several directions. Far from being allowed to take a solution for granted, without supporting it by proofs, the natural philosopher would be bound to establish it upon numerous and exact observations ; for the question would be one of facts. And if he neglected to rest his theory upon such observations, it would be valueless. The case is precisely similar with regard to the question discussed by Bentham, and the solution which he has given of it. What is the only motive, or what are the various motives, which determine the human will ? This is the question. The will of man is active ; it is passing through the process

of volition continually ; the motives by which it is governed can be observed ; we can judge by observation whether these motives are numerous, or whether there is only one. It is, therefore, folly to say, when an answer is given to this question, that it cannot, and need not, be proved. It certainly can be proved from experience ; it ought to be so proved ; for this answer, far from being generally admitted, is often disputed. You assert that the love of pleasure or the fear of pain is the only motive to human volition. Others deny it. This would not be the case if your assertion represented an incontestable fact, a primary truth, which neither could, nor need, be proved. It is plain, therefore, that it can, and must, be proved, and that it must be supported by a reference to human nature. To this nature belongs the fact of volition. It is from observing this fact, then, that we are to determine whether it is governed by one, or by several, motives. If by one, then the assertion is a true one ; if by several, it is false. And observation, which is the natural proof of solutions of all moral questions, must decide. If we had no other means for ascertaining the character of Bentham, as a philosopher, than this single fact, that he considers it impossible and unnecessary to prove his favorite assertion, that the love of pleasure or the fear of pain is the only motive of human choice, it would be sufficient to convince us that his philosophical ability was but slight.

You see, from what has now been said, that the principle of utility rests, in Bentham's mind, upon his theory of human volition. He condescends, indeed, to announce this theory ; but, far from attempting to

demonstrate its truth, he denies that it can be demonstrated ; and this is an assumption which no one who knows any thing of the subject can admit.

Such are the great principles of Bentham's system. We hasten now to consider the conclusions which he draws from them.

And, first, he is led to make certain definitions. Setting out from the assumed truth, that the love of pleasure or the fear of pain is the sole motive of action, he determines the true meaning to be given to all words in use among moral philosophers, and attaches a precise definition to certain words, which he adapts and peculiarly appropriates to the explanation of his own ideas. Let me present you with some examples.

Bentham defines *utility*, — the property of any act or object to increase the sum of happiness, or to lessen the amount of suffering, in the individual, or the body of individuals, acted upon.

Now, if this is the true definition of *utility*, and if utility, according to Bentham's fundamental principle, so openly proclaimed, is the only quality by which actions can be judged and distinguished, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that this is the only sense in which we can employ, or understand, such expressions as the *lawfulness* of an action, the *justice* of an action, the *goodness*, or *morality*, of an action. Either, then, says Bentham, we must use these words in this acceptance, or use them without any meaning at all ; and in this he is perfectly consistent with the principles of his system.

With equal distinctness Bentham defines what should be understood by the *principle of utility*. The prin-



ciple of utility, he says, is that which determines the quality of actions by their twofold property of adding to the happiness or suffering of individuals or of communities. Such is the strict definition of the principle of utility. The definitions of a useful action, a useful measure, or a useful law, and consequently of all good, just, and legitimate acts, measures, and laws, are deduced naturally from it.

Bentham, desirous to have no blind disciples, either self-deceived or liable to be deceived, next proceeds to define the conditions by which it can be determined whether a person is a supporter or opponent of the principle of utility; or, what comes to the same thing, the conditions by which it may be known whether a person follows his standard. He who is guided, in his approval or disapproval of acts or objects, by the sole consideration of their beneficial or injurious properties, and who proportions his approbation or disapprobation to the degree in which they possess these properties, without admitting any other consideration whatever to influence his judgment, — such a one may justly be considered a disciple, and a friend of the principle of utility. But he, on the contrary, who pays the least regard, — no matter how small, — to any other test, in making up his judgments, is not only not a follower, but a foe, and full as much so as any who entirely reject and oppose the principle of utility.

According to Bentham's principle, the true interest of the individual is the greatest sum of happiness which he is capable of attaining, and the true interest of society is the greatest sum of happiness of all

the individuals who constitute it. These various definitions are all naturally derived from the main principle, and are so obvious that it is scarcely necessary thus to deduce them. But Bentham, fond as he was of precise notions and distinct statements, has minutely carried out a long series of definitions, into the detail of which it is quite unnecessary that we should follow him.

His own system being thus established, Bentham turns to the consideration of such principles as are either opposed to or distinct from that of utility; and of these he recognizes only two—first, the ascetic principle, or asceticism; and, second, the principle of sympathy or antipathy—as he denominates them. It is important that we should distinctly understand what Bentham's conception was of these two principles; because, according to him, all systems of ethics and legislation, which do not set out from the principle of utility, are derived necessarily and invariably from one or the other of these two principles.

Bentham defines the ascetic principle to be a principle which, like that of utility, determines actions to be worthy of approbation or disapprobation, according to their property of producing pleasure or pain, but which, unlike that of utility, pronounces those good which are productive of pain, and those evil which are productive of pleasure. This definition certainly has point, but, unfortunately, it lacks truth; for Bentham has mistaken an opinion that is merely accidental, and accessory to asceticism, for the principle itself. It is quite plain, that, by asceticism,

Bentham means that solution of the problem of human destiny which I have described to you as mysticism — a system which does, in conduct, often lead its professors to a course of conduct resembling that described by Bentham. That such a course of conduct is a mistaken one, I readily agree; but I entirely deny that it originates in the opinion that pleasure is an evil or pain a good. There have, indeed, been sects and individuals, who have taught that pleasure and pain are things of no consequence, and that it is a matter of indifference which we experience; but there never have existed any, who have laid it down as a principle, that an action is bad, because it is followed by pleasure, or good, because accompanied by pain. Such an absurdity has never found supporters, and the mystics are wholly guiltless of it. I have explained to you, at such length that I need not now go over the ground again, the reasonings by which the mystics were led to acts analogous to those attributed to them by Bentham; but those reasonings were very different from the ones assigned.

Still Bentham does thus define the principle of asceticism; and, positive here as elsewhere, he asserts, that whoever voluntarily sacrifices an atom of pleasure, as such, and condemns it, is therefore a partisan of the ascetic school. Such a declaration manifests, yet more strongly, that he regarded his principle as absolute and unconditional. It follows necessarily from this, — and, recoiling from no consequence whatever, he admits, — that every kind of pleasure, without exception, is good in itself; and, to show you how far he was willing to go, he takes, as an example

the most abominable pleasure which an abandoned villain could feel in the commission of a crime, and says, unhesitatingly, that he who finds fault with such pleasure, and condemns or repels it, is just so far, and by so doing, an ascetic. The pleasure, according to Bentham, is not bad as pleasure, but is good; for all pleasure is good. In what sense, then, can it be considered bad? In this sense only, that the threatening consequences of the crime will produce so much suffering as entirely to overbalance the pleasure experienced. It is not on account, therefore, of the wickedness of the crime, that he condemns the pleasure which the bad man takes in its commission, but solely because its results will be injurious. Such, says Bentham, is the true meaning of the human mind, when it declares delight in crime to be bad; and the man who condemns this delight on any other ground is an ascetic.

Let us turn, now, to the other principle which Bentham refers to—the principle of sympathy and antipathy. Under this general name he classes all moral judgments, by which we determine that an action is good or bad, independently of a consideration of its consequences. Thus every moral philosopher, who decides upon the moral quality of an act upon any ground whatever except that of its utility, adopts the principle of sympathy or antipathy. You see at once what a variety of systems come under Bentham's second category. There are moral philosophers, for instance, who have asserted that man is endowed with a moral sense, which perceives the good or evil of actions, exactly as the taste perceives flavors, or

the smell odors. This was the doctrine of Hutcheson, and of many others. Whoever admits this to be true, asserts that the moral quality of acts is not determined by a reference to their consequences; or, in other words, he teaches that approbation and disapprobation have no reference to the consequences of acts, but are independent of this consideration. Such a principle as this comes, of course, under the general principle of sympathy and antipathy, as one of its forms. The same may be said of philosophers who have maintained that there is a natural distinction between good and evil — a distinction recognized by reason, and instantly perceived as the characteristic of every act, by which its moral quality is judged, independently of its beneficial or injurious consequences. Of course, this principle, which is the foundation of various systems, comes under Bentham's second category. Again, they who think that we have in our minds an innate and primitive law, variously denominated the law of nature, the moral law, the law of duty, which immediately judges actions as they occur, and decides that they are either good or bad, in proportion as they agree with or contradict it, — all philosophers who think this, adopt, according to Bentham, the principle of sympathy and antipathy. And, lastly, they who think, with me, that acts are good which conform to universal order, and that acts are bad which conflict with it, as they pay no regard to the consequences which may result from them, adopt also the principle of sympathy and antipathy.

Bentham recognizes, therefore, only two principles

of moral qualification — or, in other words, only two moral systems — distinct from his own; and these are, first, the system which, like that of utility, judges of acts by their consequences, but pronounces those good which produce pain, and those evil which produce pleasure, or the ascetic system; and, secondly, the system which judges of the moral quality of acts on some other ground, whatsoever it may be, beside the single one of their beneficial or injurious consequences, or the system of sympathy or antipathy.

He does, in passing, however, point out what may be considered a fourth, namely, the religious system, which places the rule of right and wrong — and, consequently, of the proper or improper — in the will of God. But, with good reason, he denies that this is a system at all, because we have still to determine what the rule is which the will of God prescribes; and, as the rule must necessarily be either one or the other of those pointed out by Bentham, the system must merge in that.

Such, then, are the systems which Bentham considers as opposed to his own, and which he pronounces to be false. Instead, however, of attempting to establish the principle of utility, he directs all his efforts to refute the others; and it is in this attempt that he exposes the defects of his own metaphysical science. It is here that we must look for the philosophy upon which his opinions rest; and to this point I shall direct my attacks, when I attempt the refutation of his principles.

Having thus described the principles of Bentham's system, and the definitions which he has deduced

from them, I will now explain to you some of their practical results. Here it is, as I have said, that our jurist displays his originality; and this is the part of his system which is truly interesting, and which alone I care to exhibit; for, otherwise, his system would be identical with that of Hobbes, which I have already discussed. The views which I am now about to present to you are the sources of the high reputation enjoyed by Bentham among students of jurisprudence. And it is by means of these views that he has exercised, and still continues to exercise, so beneficial an influence upon the great work of reforming and improving the laws of all Europe.

You will readily see that, in order to apply the principle of utility practically, it is not enough merely to know that the acts are good which produce more pleasure than pain, and those bad which produce more pain than pleasure, and that they are better or worse in proportion as they produce more or less pleasure or pain. Such principles would remain barren of results, unless we could discover some means of estimating the measure of good or evil resulting from any act, and of determining the relations between them. For, without this, any conclusions at which we might arrive would be useless in conduct. The great distinction of Bentham is, that he has, by an analysis which, though imperfect, is yet remarkable for its extent and depth, attempted to fix this standard of valuation of what he considers the moral good and evil of acts; that is, their property of producing pleasure or pain.

I will endeavor, gentlemen, rapidly to sketch the

elements of Bentham's moral arithmetic, while, at the same time, I advise all who would acquire a perfect knowledge of it to consult the work of Dumont, before referred to, or the original work of the author himself.

Bentham's first endeavor, in forming his method of moral calculation, is to enumerate and classify the various kinds of pleasure and pain. For, as it is the accompanying pleasure or pain which give their positive or negative value to actions and things, it is evidently impossible to measure their value, unless we previously are acquainted with all the kinds of pleasure and pain which they are fitted to produce, and which our nature is capable of receiving. It would carry us too far, and would not be worth our while, to enter into a description of the details of these classifications, arbitrary as all which have thus far been offered are; for it is not my object to teach Bentham's system, but simply to describe it.

This first element of the various kinds of pleasure and pain being once ascertained, Bentham next attempts to fix upon some method of determining their comparative value. And here I must enter somewhat into detail.

If two kinds of pleasure, the result of two different actions, are supposed, we must, before we can judge which of these actions is most useful, determine which kind of pleasure is highest in value. We need, therefore, some method by which to compare them. Such a method could be obtained, if we were acquainted with all the elements which should properly enter into our estimate of a pleasure. It is to the



discovery of these elements that Bentham has applied himself; and he has come to the following result — that, to determine the real value of any pleasure, we must consider it under these six principal relations: first, its intensity — for some pleasures are more vivid than others; second, its duration — for while one pleasure is of a nature to be prolonged, another is transient; third, its certainty — for the various pleasures which we must estimate in moral calculation are all future ones, and will follow as consequences the acts we purpose; the degree of certainty, therefore, with which they will accompany our act, is an element that must be taken into the account; fourth, its nearness — as one pleasure may ensue at the distance of a long interval after the performance of an act, while another will be immediate; fifth, its power of multiplying pleasure — for while some pleasures bring additional ones in their train, others do not; sixth, its purity — for one pleasure may be followed by consequences more or less painful, from which another is wholly exempt.

Such are the aspects under which pleasures and pains must be viewed, before we can determine their value. Only after having tried them by these tests, can we determine, with confidence, which of two actions is the most useful or injurious, the best or the worst, and judge of the difference existing between them. Thus much as to the intrinsic value of pleasures and pains, when compared together.

But another element must also enter into the calculation. Pleasures are not the same in nature to all persons, for there are individual differences which

affect their value. One person has not the same constitution, age, character, with another. There are differences of sex, of education, of habits, and of various other kinds. Now, it is plain that these differences in individuals will variously modify the sensations they experience, so that the same pleasure will not produce identical effects in all persons. Hence, in Bentham's moral calculations, there is a second element, which he has endeavored to bring as fully to light as he did the first, employing an exact analysis, for the purpose of determining all such circumstances as may combine to influence the sensibility of individuals, and thus alter the vividness of the pleasures and pains of which they are susceptible.

He separates these circumstances into two kinds — primary and secondary. Of the primary, I may mention temperament, the degree of health, strength or weakness of body, firmness or softness of disposition, habits, propensities, greater or less development of intellect; all of which circumstances influence, to a considerable degree, not only the intensity, but the durability also, of pains and pleasures, and other elements of their intrinsic value. Bentham draws up an exact catalogue of these various circumstances, and enters into a detailed discussion of them with great sagacity.

But further; if, before we can form our moral estimate of the value of pleasures and pains, we must, on account of the great differences between individuals, consider each individual by himself, our labor will be a most difficult one; for individuals themselves are often unaware of the circumstances which peculiarly affect them. Are there, then, no general cir

cumstances, including these various other circumstances, which may, in some sort, be considered their natural signs, and serve as a ground-work for the acts of the legislator, who, though he cannot be acquainted with the character of each individual, may yet know the world, and the character of the various classes which make up society? Bentham thinks that there are such general circumstances; and he calls them *secondary* circumstances. They are general, and easily recognized, and indicate, with considerable certainty, wherever found, the presence of the primary circumstances. Sex, age, education, profession, climate, race, forms of government, religious opinions, are some of these general circumstances. If we had the time, it would be easy to show that they influence the sensibility only by means of the primary circumstances, which they include. Thus, for example, the feminine sex possesses a delicacy of organization and of dispositions, and a degree of intelligence, which communicate to the pleasures or pains experienced by them an intensity and durability, or, in other words, a value which makes them different from those experienced by man. Now, age, sex, religious opinions, and the circumstances of the second degree in general, are, unlike those of the first degree, discernible to a legislator; he can appreciate them, and, therefore, give them due weight in his calculations. For instance, he will not inflict punishments of equal severity upon women and men; because, in so doing, the pain produced would be unequal. I need only thus point out to you Bentham's

method of forming an estimate of pleasures and pains. You will comprehend it at once.

We have now considered three modes of calculating the value of pleasures and pains. But there are other modes. Thus far we have considered the pains and pleasures of individuals only; but there are pains and pleasures which extend to multitudes. Here, therefore, is a new element of moral calculation, and Bentham has carefully analyzed it. And it is in this analysis that we find, perhaps, his most original and important suggestions. He gives an exact and curious account of the manner in which the beneficial or injurious results of acts extend beyond the agent and the person whom they first affect, through wider and wider circles, till they reach the extreme limits of society. This very ingenious analysis gives us a calculation of all the good and evil which an act produces upon the individual directly subject to its influence, and a description of the laws by which these effects are propagated and transmitted. Bentham's passion for classification, which often is an inconvenience of his method, by obscuring instead of giving light, is here of great service; for his classification is just and true. Although the results to which he comes, would apply equally to good or evil influences, yet it is to the evil exclusively that he applies them, because it is chiefly to the prevention of these that legislators direct their efforts. They have but little power of multiplying good influences by their encouragements.

An evil act being supposed, — that is to say, an act

whose consequences are more-injurious than beneficial, — Bentham, beginning with the evil which the agent inflicts on himself, proceeds to analyze those which ensue to society, and distinguishes them into evils of the first, second, and third classes. The first consists of such as affect certain individuals, who can be known and named. For instance, the evil caused by a robbery extends beyond the person robbed to his wife, children, and family. Independent of the first evil inflicted, there is, in such cases, an added and incidental evil, affecting certain individuals whom the lawgiver can have cognizance of, beforehand. Bentham denominates this an evil of the first class.

But the evils of a robbery extend beyond the family of the person robbed, to an indefinite number of individuals unknown. When a man is robbed, for instance, a greater or smaller portion of society hear of it, and are alarmed; this alarm is an evil, and every one may suffer from it. But this is not all. Independent of the alarm, the robbery does society an actual injury; for, on the one hand, men, who have never thought of such a mode of obtaining a subsistence, learn that it is practicable; and, on the other, the news of such success stimulates all rogues to redoubled boldness and activity. Here, then, are evils incidental to the first evil, but which affect persons unknown to the legislator. They form the evils of the second class.

There is a third class of evils, not, indeed, always produced by a bad action, but which it still naturally tends to produce. For example, when, in any com-

munity, robbery becomes so common as to create a universal alarm, and the danger becomes so great that the law is powerless to repress it; when such a state of things exists, as was prevalent throughout Europe in the middle ages, where brigands, too strong to be resisted, filled the land,—what is the consequence? All travelling ceases, and every citizen, giving himself up to discouragement, retires from occupations whose gains are insecure; general idleness ensues, productive of every vice; and the end of all is a complete disorganization of society. From this example we may see how bad actions,—besides the evils inflicted on the individual who immediately suffers, and on a certain number of his near connections,—besides those, too, produced by awakening an alarm, and by multiplying the sources of social wrongs,—have also a tendency to bring on that state of anarchy, which is the utter ruin of society. This tendency, the last and final result of bad deeds, Bentham calls an evil of the third class. Such is a brief and rapid sketch of this interesting portion of his system.

And now, gentlemen, you are possessed of all the elements of moral arithmetic, or, in other words, of the mode of estimating the usefulness or injuriousness of actions. These elements, you will observe, are four in number. They are—first, all the pleasures and pains of which human nature is susceptible: second, all the intrinsic circumstances which may tend to augment or impair the value of these pleasures and pains; third, the various circumstances which may produce different degrees of sensibility, and thus

indirectly modify the value of the pleasures and pains experienced by individuals; and, fourth and last, the multiplied consequences, which follow a beneficial or injurious action, and which, beginning from the immediate subject of these actions, extend to all who are connected with him, and, thus influencing wider and wider circles, end finally by affecting society at large.

Having thus described these various elements, it remains to be seen how Bentham employs them in forming his moral estimates.

The first question to be asked, of course, when any action is to be judged of, is this: "Is it a good or a bad action?" If it is useful, it is good; if it is injurious, it is bad; and it is useful or injurious according as its tendency is to produce more pleasure than pain, or more pain than pleasure. To answer the question, we must calculate all its possible effects,—its useful effects on the one side, and its injurious effects on the other,—and then weigh them together; if the scale inclines to the side of the useful, it is a good action; if to the side of the injurious, it is a bad one. The second question to be asked is this: "Of two actions, which are both either useful or injurious, which is the most so?" To answer this, we have but to follow an equally simple rule; we have only to balance the results of each, and at once it will be determined, by the preponderance of its effects, which of the two is the worse or better. And, finally, the third problem to be solved, in relation to actions, is this: "How shall we determine, among a given number of useful or injurious actions, the

relative goodness or badness of each?" You see at once that we must follow again the same method of comparison. Thus, gentlemen, it appears that, by means of his moral arithmetic, Bentham is enabled to solve all moral problems, and fix the moral value of every possible act.

This brings us to the application of the whole of this method, which no one would have thought of inventing, except for the purpose of exhibiting the value of the principle of utility. The question which a Benthamite proposes—and it is a fundamental question in legislation—is this: "Have we the right to consider certain actions as crimes, and to inflict penalties upon their agents?" This, with Bentham, is identical with asking—"Will such a measure be useful to society?" If it will not be useful, then we have no right to make laws, and there is no work for the legislator whatever. For what is a law? It is a prohibition of certain acts. And how can they be prohibited without some penalty? Laws cannot exist without a sanction.

To answer this fundamental question, as to the propriety of making laws and inflicting penalties, Bentham reasons as follows:—What is a crime? It is an act whose consequences are evil. We cannot designate as a crime that which produces good, or even indifferent, effects. Wherever this has been done, it was owing to ignorance. On the other hand, what is a penalty? It is an evil. Now, what is the end for which society is constituted? The attainment of the greatest possible amount of good. And what, then, is the duty of the legislator? It is





to adopt such measures as may be productive of this good. The question, therefore, proposed, as fundamental to all legislation, whether certain acts should be treated as crimes, and penalties inflicted upon the agent, reduces itself to a balancing of two evils. The act produces an evil, and the pain of the penalty is an evil. We have to inquire, therefore, in the first place, whether the penalty will tend to prevent the evil act — altogether or frequently; and, if so, whether, in the second place, the evil of the penalty is less than the evil consequent on the act. If it is less, then its effects are beneficial, and we have the right to condemn and punish the act. Such is Bentham's mode of solving the problem; and, in his view, it is the only possible solution. This principle being adopted, it becomes easy to prove that penalties may be effectual to prevent acts which are injurious to society, or, at least, to make them rare in occurrence. And equally easy is it to prove, that, in many instances, the evil of the penalty is infinitely small for society, in comparison with that which it suffers from the bad act. Hence it is just and proper to condemn and punish certain actions.

Having laid down this theory, Bentham next proceeds to seek the means by which a legislator may so influence society as to multiply beneficial actions, and lessen the number of injurious ones. And this leads him to a branch of ethical science called by M. Dumont "moral dynamics," whose object it is to determine the motives which may operate on the will, and of which the legislator may avail himself in shap-

ing men to his purposes. I will finish this lecture by a rapid sketch of Bentham's ideas on this subject.

A motive to action, according to Bentham, must be some pleasure or some pain; for it is his principle, that only these can influence our volitions. Pleasure and pain, therefore, are the only instruments which a legislator can employ; or, in other words, the only sanctions by which he can enforce his laws. In order to the full and distinct comprehension of this only means of legislative influence, Bentham has carefully examined pleasures and pains under this new aspect; that is to say, in view of their fitness to be used as sanctions of law, and motives in the hands of the legislator. He is led, by this mode of observation, to distinguish four classes of pains and pleasures, suitable to be employed as sanctions. The first consists of such as are the natural consequences of actions. Every act brings with it a train of agreeable or disagreeable consequences which may be foreseen, and thus become a motive to the will. To this class of pains and pleasures, Bentham gives the name of natural or *physical*. Independent of these direct consequences, there are others, which arise from our relations to our fellow-men. Thus, for instance, our bad acts bring upon us contempt and enmity. Besides the unpleasantness of this treatment to ourselves, there is additional suffering in the fact, that men are less disposed to oblige us, and to render to us "gratuitous services," to use Bentham's expression; and, according to him, the reason why we prize the benevolence of those around us, is, that this benevolence renders

them willing to aid us without recompense. This second class of pleasures and pains Bentham calls the *moral* sanction, or the sanction of honor and opinion. In the third place, our acts bring upon us pains and pleasures which are adjudged as penalties and rewards by the law; and these Bentham names the *legal* sanction. Finally, if we have a religious faith which teaches us to hope or fear that acts committed here, will be rewarded or punished hereafter, there arise pleasures and pains of a fourth class, which, although they belong to the future, are yet motives to present choice, and form a fourth kind of sanction, called by Bentham the *religious* sanction. Thus the natural, the moral, the legal, and the religious sanctions are the motives by which the human will can be directed, and which the legislator must employ as his instruments. There are no others to be found.

But can the legislator use all of these sanctions? Ought he to use them? Bentham distinguishes the line of demarkation between legislation and ethics. He shows, by admirable reasoning, what has, indeed, been often demonstrated, but never, perhaps, with equal clearness, that there are limits to legislation beyond which it should never go. The legislator has always at his command the legal sanction; he can connect penalties and rewards with acts; but the three other kinds of sanctions are not subject to his power. It is not the legislator, but the established nature of things, which connects with conduct the natural sanction; and it is opinion and faith which connect with it the moral and religious sanctions.

And, having no power to create these sanctions, neither can he control nor direct them. His true instrument of influence is the legal sanction; with this he can act, because he can employ it at his pleasure. But it does not, therefore, follow, that he is wholly to slight the others. By doing so, he incurs the risk, not only of losing the aid which they might give, but of weakening the influence of the legal sanction itself. These forces, which act independently of, and prior to his volition, may oppose, if he offends them,—may assist, if he conciliates them. The first care of the legislator, then, should be, not to array them in hostility against him; his second, to make them his auxiliaries.

Suppose, for example, that some religious opinion prevails in a country; what would be the consequence if the legislator should encourage, by legal sanction, such acts as this religion condemns, or forbid such as it commands. The religious sanction, placed in opposition to the legal sanction, would impair its influence, and weaken the restraints of law. This the legislator should carefully avoid, even when he considers the rites prescribed by religion injurious in their tendency, and the acts which it condemns beneficial. And why? Because the course he would recommend cannot, although a preferable one, be, under such circumstances, adopted; and because it is evident that the greatest good of society will be best secured by gaining the aid of the religious sanction, which, if unopposed now, may come to his assistance in other cases, where it will not only strengthen the legal sanction, but govern those over

whom the legal sanction exerts no control. The same may be said of the habits and customs every where prevalent. The legislator, in disregarding them, arrays the moral against the legal sanction, and his laws become odious as well as powerless. On the other hand, by making sacrifices to this mighty power of opinion, he will be amply remunerated by securing for his enactments the support of public feeling and national sentiment. These examples will suffice to illustrate Bentham's idea, and to show how rich and varied are his developments of it. Bentham studied legislation with profound attention, and consecrated his long life to the observation of society; and his works abound, therefore, with views of the greatest practical utility. Led, as I have been, into various criticisms, and compelled, as I have felt, to bring various objections against the fundamental principles of his system, I am happy to have the opportunity of thus testifying my respect.

Having thus established the limits between ethics and legislation, Bentham proceeds to the consideration of legislation in itself, and lays down the foundations for a penal and a civil code. We will follow him into these practical discussions, when we come to these subjects in the order of our studies. But at present we must omit the consideration of them. I have now given you a summary of Bentham's theoretical opinions; I have pointed out his fundamental principle, the end at which he aims, and the method he pursues. In my next lecture, I propose to test rigorously, the validity of the whole system;

for the objections which I have made to Hobbes, may, with equal force, be brought against Bentham, since the great principles of these two philosophers are identical.

## LECTURE XIV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture, I endeavored to give you a true, although a very general idea of the system of Bentham. If this writer had attempted to prove the truth of his principles, by reasoning, I should have felt it my duty to refute his arguments; but, as he asserts that the principle of utility needs no proof, and is self-evident, what I have already said in reference to Hobbes will apply equally here.

But Bentham, although he offers no proofs of the truth of his own doctrines, does attack those which differ from them. Confident of his own principle, he is entirely occupied with the prejudicial influence exerted by opposite principles, and devotes all his energies to the exhibition of their erroneous nature. And short as this polemical portion of his work is, yet it is here that we must look for the only traces of philosophy to be found in his writings. In the present lecture, then, I will set before you the principal arguments which he uses, and will endeavor to reply to them; because, if any thing could have the effect of making those converts to Bentham's system, who are

doubtful about his main principle, it is, undoubtedly, his objections to all other systems.

I have already explained some of the causes which have given Bentham authority, and have procured him zealous disciples. And now, I would say, that we might, with reason, consider, as one among these causes, the fact, that he offers no proof in favor of his system. When a philosopher lays down a principle, and offers his arguments to support it, his adherents know the ground upon which they admit it; and, however complete may be their conviction, it is still a reasonable one, and can never become impassioned or fanatical. But when, on the other hand, a philosopher lays down his principle, and asserts that it would be absurd to attempt to prove it, then those who receive it adopt it upon his authority, and because the master says it, and room is given for fanaticism. This is what Bentham did; and his feeling, that all proof of his doctrine was unnecessary, reappears in his mode of attacking other systems; for, instead of entering into a serious and full discussion of them, he merely points out the way which one should take, who wished to refute them; so that what he says is rather ridicule than criticism. I repeat, therefore, Bentham's astonishing confidence in his own opinions inspired a like faith in his disciples; and here we see the explanation of their unquestioning assent to whatever he either said or wrote, and the blind zeal with which they defend him.

But a cause, yet more direct and powerful, of the success of Bentham's system, is the fact, that it is of a kind that recommends itself to a class of men



who are proud of their own opinions, and who complacently call themselves practical men—a class worthy of much esteem, and eminently serviceable to society, but yet least calculated of any to distinguish truth from error, in matters of science. Understand my exact meaning, gentlemen; again I say, I honor the men who are called practical, and am perfectly aware of their merits; in all respects, I am most ready to acknowledge their claims, but I deny that the character and habits of their minds are such as fit them for the discovery of truth, or such as entitle them to speak with authority upon scientific questions.

The peculiar characteristic of the practical man, is, that he sees and comprehends nothing which all the world does not see and clearly comprehend, and that he regards and acknowledges nothing as true beyond this; the limit of the most ordinary intelligence, is the limit, he thinks, of certainty; and thus he imposes upon science the narrow range of the most common mind.

Setting out from this principle, the practical man divides all that has been, or can be a subject of thought, into the two divisions of speculation and of fact; and rejecting, without exception, all that is comprehended within the former, he adopts every thing included by the latter. He does not employ these two words, *speculation* and *fact*, in their general acceptation, however, because he designates by the former name whatever he cannot comprehend.

And, first, the practical man calls every thing *speculation*, that has not a direct and close connec-

tion with facts, rejecting, as speculative, all lengthened inductions which it demands some little effort to follow. And thus it often happens that the very strictest reasoning is, in his judgment, mere speculation.

Again, practical men will not admit all kinds of facts even; there is a large class which they reject; I mean facts which are not sensible—that is to say, which do not fall under the observation of either of our five natural senses; so that moral and intellectual, and in a word, all facts, communicated by consciousness, are to them chimerical; and yet this class comprehends at least one half of the phenomena presented to the consideration of the human mind.

Once more; in denying this large division of the facts which fall under our observation, practical men of course deny and cast aside all truths discovered from reasoning by induction or deduction; and, consequently, they reject all sciences based upon these truths; to their apprehension, such considerations are speculative and worthless.

The strictly practical mind goes yet further; it will not admit all sensible facts even; whatever is distant and far removed in space or time, becomes doubtful and unworthy of regard. An event that occurred in Rome two thousand years ago, or which is taking place in China now, or a phenomenon in the heavens, noticed by the astronomer through his glass, is, from being so remote, a thing of speculation.

And not only must a fact be sensible and near, to

satisfy the practical man, but it must also be well known by all the world, and it must have been observed a thousand times: a fact that is novel and unwonted is a speculative thing.

Finally, among facts well known and often observed, only the larger and more important ones seem, to the practical man, worthy of account; the lesser ones he wholly overlooks; in the tree, he sees only the trunk and the main branches; the leaves are too much matters of speculation to be regarded.

Such is the logic of the practical mind; and its psychology is a direct and natural result.

Practical men admit only those faculties in a man whose effects they can appreciate. They make much of a good stomach, of strong limbs, of the five natural senses, and of that common sort of understanding, which, when it is cold on a December evening, conjectures that it will freeze during the night. But as to faculties more refined and elevated in nature, they either despise them, or deny their existence; they have no use for them whatever, and very possibly do not possess them at all.

They consider as foolish, the men in whom such faculties are strongly developed and active. A poet, a painter, a religious man, a metaphysician, an algebraist, a literary man, are, to them, strange monsters.

They consider as idle stories all the products of these faculties. A volume of Lamartine, a dialogue of Plato, an academic memoir on inscriptions, a formula of Laplace, a landscape of Poussin, a beautiful passage of historical writing, are to them mere

trifles, which may amuse, perhaps, the eccentric, but are quite unworthy, because offering nothing solid, to attract the attention of a practical mind. Canals, railroads, steamboats, prices, labor, agriculture, commerce, whatever has value and is salable, these, and these alone, have real worth and importance.

Apply, now, these principles to morals, gentlemen, and you at once have the system of Bentham.

The elevated and impulsive emotions, which act upon our nature, and influence, in so great a degree, our conduct, have no real existence for the practical man; he sees them not, or despises them, and leaves them to women and children.

He admits and recognizes only the motive of interest, or, in other words, happiness; but he excludes from his idea of interest the delicate pleasures derived from the exercise of our highest and noblest powers. The only interests which he can appreciate, are such as are palpable, and can be touched, measured, weighed. He could not comprehend Epicurus, even if he should read him; but he does not read him,—for he was a philosopher and an ancient; he doubts even whether such a man ever existed,—for who can tell what happened two thousand years ago?

Morality is for him a matter of calculation; and it is by sums of addition and subtraction that he judges, in each case, of the propriety of a course of conduct. As a practical man is his standard of comparison, it seems to him as if all the world were governed by the spirit of calculation. He neither believes in nor doubts of a Deity; he does not think about the subject at all; it is too refined and abstract

for him. And, confined in his own narrow round of ideas, he is positive, confident, unhesitating, and content.

Practical men are entirely persuaded that they govern the world, because they every where float on the surface; they make the laws and administer them; they manufacture, and buy, and sell; they are the consumers;—but they never seem to be aware that this world, which they suppose is under their direction, is a mighty force, that, in its movement, is sweeping them onward.

The outward and apparent revolutions in society, which are the only ones apparent to them, conform to their ideas, while the movers of them are hidden from their view; and thus they take the mill-wheel for the water that forces it to turn.

Bentham, gentlemen, belonged to this class that I have now described; and he had all the energy and enterprise, all the sagacity and confidence, which characterize practical men. He could not but adopt, then, such a system as his own; and, encountering a host of other men, similarly constituted and disposed, he naturally delighted them, and rallied them around him. Practical men, the world over, pledged each other to support his doctrine; and here we see the grand and true cause of his success.

And now let us look at these mighty objections, brought in array by Bentham, against all systems which do not concentrate in interest the various motives of human volition. It is in the first chapter of his "Introduction to the Principles of Ethics and Poli-

tics" that the most important part of his controversial writings may be found. He there, in the first place, declares that interest is the sole motive of volition, and maintains that the assertion needs no proof; and then passes on, not to a refutation of the philosophers who have based their systems of ethics and politics on a different foundation, but to an indication of the mode of reasoning by which an advocate of the principle of utility may convince them of their error, or, at least, reduce them to silence. And the mode in which, according to Bentham, a utilitarian should proceed to argue with an opponent of the principle, is as follows:—

In the first place, says Bentham, every body admits that interest, or the pursuit of well-being, is one motive of human volition. So manifest is this, that even the most extravagant defenders of opposite systems do not pretend to deny it. Whoever, then, may be the person with whom you are arguing, he will admit the principle of utility to be one among the moving springs of human action; only, in addition to this, he asserts that some other principle is also active—in this alone does he differ from you. Well; ask him now to analyze this other principle, and to examine whether it is really a distinct one, or whether it is not interest under a new and different form. This seldom fails to produce conviction; for there are few men, who, when they ask themselves what they mean by the words *good* and *evil*, *virtue* and *vice*, *honor* and *meanness*, will not admit that they use them in the sense in which they are employed

in the system of utility; and thus you may make converts, says Bentham, of the unreflecting opponents of your principle.

But suppose that, according to his sincere conviction, your antagonist does admit, in addition to the principle of utility, some other principle, truly distinct from it; in this case, it must be the principle of sympathy or antipathy. It is the peculiar characteristic of the principle of utility, that it determines the quality of actions, and judges of their title to approbation or disapprobation, by a view of their consequences. We can conceive of but one different principle from this; for, if we do not judge of acts by their consequences, we must judge of them by some consideration, independent of these consequences; or, in other words, we must associate naturally with acts a sentiment of approval or disapproval anterior to, and quite independent of, the perception of the effects of the action; and, under whatever form of expression you may conceal it, the fact remains unchanged, and constitutes what I call, says Bentham, the principle of sympathy or antipathy. But, if every man does thus attach an *à priori* idea of good or evil to actions, one of two things must happen; either that a single individual will consider himself as having the right of imposing his peculiar moral judgments upon all men, or else that each one will have his own views of right, and will follow them in conduct. According to the first hypothesis, you may say to the opponent of utility, Your principle is tyrannical; for the mere fact, that you judge in a particular way of actions, and that your reason or

instinct determines one to be good and another bad, gives you no right to impose your private sentiment upon all human beings; for this would be to substitute your instinct for theirs—to subject their judgment to your own—and, therefore, the exercise of such a principle is a tyranny over the human race. On the other hand, if you allow an equal authority to the sentiments of each individual in his estimate of actions, inasmuch as individuals are different, their judgments will be various, and thus the principle is a source of anarchy. There is no escape from this dilemma, if you renounce the idea that actions are to be judged by their consequences; for the moment that you abandon this test, you substitute, for consequences which are positive and can be calculated, and which present the same appearance to all men, mere sentiments, as the basis for moral judgments—that is to say, facts peculiarly individual, and consequently variable—sentiments which it is tyrannical to impose, and anarchical to recognize, as a basis for moral judgments.

This argument being exhausted, says Bentham, let us go further; let us ask the opponent of the principle of utility whether his *à priori* principle, by which he pretends that acts are estimated, is a blind one or not. If blind, then is it a pure instinct; it can neither be justified nor explained; and all that we can say of it is that it exists. If it is not blind, then it is rational; or, in other words, it is a law and rule, applied by yourself, and from which you deduce your *à priori* estimate of actions. If such is the position of your adversary, continues



Bentham, demand of him an explanation of the nature of this high law, by which he judges that an act is good or bad. Examine this rule with him, and see whether it indeed is something distinct from the principle of utility. And, if it appears to be so, oblige him to define it, and express it under some formula, so distinct as to enable you to comprehend and apply it.

Go yet further, pursues Bentham, and, admitting that there are two independent principles, the principle of utility and some other one, request your antagonist to distinguish and separate them; let him determine the limits within which the principle of utility may be applied, and the point where its authority stops, and where the other principle begins to act; in other words, lead him to establish, rationally, the bounds to the operation of these two principles respectively, and to prove that the limits which he assigns them are the just and proper limits.

But once more, says Bentham, suppose that the opponent of your system does define his principle, and does fix the limits to its lawful control, and to that of utility, it still remains to be asked whether its assumed jurisdiction is a real one, and whether this principle, distinct from that of utility, does really possess this pretended authority. Urge, then, the advocate of this principle to point out the peculiar influence of this principle over human nature, and beg him to show how it may be exerted; for the mere imagination of a principle, and the assertion that it is a motive of human volition, will not suffice to give it real power and control; it must actually possess

and exercise this sway over us, or it is but a chimerical principle. Whoever believes in the existence of a motive distinct from utility, is bound, therefore, to show that this motive is one which has the power of exerting a determining influence over the human will.

Bentham supposes that no opponent of the principle of utility can resist such arguments as these; if he escapes one of these snares, he must inevitably, according to him, fall into some other.

In looking over the works of Bentham, I have found, in addition to this plan of attack upon the opponents of his principle, only two other arguments against them. And, in order that you may have a distinct and complete idea of all that he has said in the controversial part of his writings, I will now exhibit these to you.

A law, according to Bentham, must be something exterior to the subject of the law. Utility is thus exterior to the individuals controlled by it, and is made up of material facts, which can be easily estimated, and which, as they result visibly from our actions, can neither be disputed nor denied. Utility, therefore, is an exterior thing, that can, in every case, be calculated with entire certainty, and that can, consequently, be imposed as a law. On the contrary, says Bentham to his opponent, the motive by which you pretend to judge of the good and evil of actions, being an inward phenomenon, cannot be considered as a law, either for the being who experiences the sentiment, or, for a much stronger reason, for him who experiences a different sentiment, or

none at all. In a word, it cannot be, in any sense, a rule.

His second argument is as follows: If you admit the principle of antipathy and sympathy, you must adopt the conclusion, that the legislator should measure his penalties by the degree of repugnance which actions awaken, that is, by the instinctive disapprobation which they excite. But experience proves that legislators have never followed such a rule, and good sense commends their conduct; for to do so would lead to the grossest absurdities in legislation.

And here ends the list of Bentham's arguments against the opponents of his principle. It becomes, now, our duty to take them up successively, and to show how powerless they are against the systems they attack. But, first, let me draw your attention to a great confusion of ideas into which a mind, so little philosophical as Bentham's, has easily fallen; I must carefully remove it in advance, or my replies to his arguments would be complicated and obscure.

It is the more important that this confusion should be pointed out, because it has been employed by many partisans of the system of utility, as a means of escape from those consequences of their opinions which are most repugnant to common sense. Some, like Bentham, have fallen into it instinctively and unawares; others have been conscious of it, and have endeavored to justify it; while it was Hobbes's distinction, that he saw it, and refused to avail himself of its aid.

This confusion consists in substituting the rule of general interest for that of personal interest, of the utility of the whole for private utility, — as if these rules were identical, — as if the former was merely a different mode of expressing the latter, — and as if it was derived, naturally and legitimately, from the fundamental principle of self-love.

It is undeniable, as has fully appeared, from the exposition which I have given of his system, that Bentham did thus substitute one rule for the other. As you will remember, he proceeds, after having laid down his principle, to establish some modes of valuation for the moral worth of actions; to discuss the question whether it is proper to consider certain acts as crimes, and to subject the agent to penalties; to examine the different sanctions for law, which legislators can employ, and the limits to be observed in using them; and, in all his reasonings on these points, he regards no longer individual interest, but general interest; the former he wholly loses sight of; the latter alone occupies his attention; it is by a reference to their effects upon society that he teaches us to judge of actions, and to determine their worth; it is from the consideration of their influence upon society that he establishes the propriety of penal laws; and it is from a view of this influence that he defines the due limits of legal restraints. One who should read this portion of his writings only, would suppose it to be his principle, that the motive of choice, the end of action, and the rule for conduct, should be the pleasure, happiness, and welfare of our fellow-beings; for the ideas of personal pleasure, happiness, and

welfare, wholly disappear; they are not even mentioned.

Equally undeniable is it, that Bentham was quite unconscious of thus substituting one rule for the other. Had he perceived at all that he was doing so,—had he once thought of the difference in the mode of expression, even, between the phrases *private interest* and *general interest*,—he would have been struck with it, and would have felt bound to remove any doubt from the minds of his followers, and to have established the identity of the two rules, and their equal affinity with his fundamental maxim, that pleasure and pain control the acts of man. There is not a trace, however, of any such consciousness in the writings of Bentham; for the use of the word *utility* completely disguised from him the transformation which his ideas had undergone, and the mere difference of expression did not attract his regard.

Bentham, then, actually made this substitution, and he did it quite unconsciously. Let us inquire, now, whether he was justified in so doing. And, to determine this point, let us, in the first place, ascertain more precisely the nature of this substitution, and, then, judge how far it is compatible with the principles of the selfish system.

What do we really mean, when we propose, as the rule for conduct, individual utility? We mean, unquestionably, that it is right and proper to do whatever will give *us* the greatest amount of pleasure, and save *us* most from pain. Now, what do we mean,

on the other hand, when we propose, as a rule, general utility? We mean, that it is right and proper for us to do, in all cases, what will be productive of the greatest amount of good, not only to those immediately connected with us, but to the community of which we are members, and to the human race at large. Such is the true import of these two rules respectively; and to substitute general for private utility, is to establish one of these rules in place of the other.

What, now, is the fundamental idea of the selfish system? Bentham exhibits it in the very first passage of his work, in saying, that pleasure and pain govern the acts of men; and he explains his meaning yet more clearly, by adding, that man can be acted upon by nothing but pleasure and pain; that pleasure and pain are the sole motives of choice; that the only quality by which acts or objects can be estimated, is their property of producing pleasure or pain; that, in every other light, they are indifferent to us; and thus, in fine, that the prospect of pleasure or pain must always determine our judgments. The fundamental hypothesis of the selfish system, admitted and professed, as it has been, in similar terms, by Epicurus, Hobbes, Helvetius, and all advocates of the system, without exception, could not be more clearly expressed.

It remains to be seen, whether this hypothesis, which is the essential element of the selfish system, is as much in harmony with the rule of general interest, as it is with that of personal interest;

whether, in other words, it justifies, and makes legitimate, one equally with the other. For myself, I assert that it does not.

When we assume, as Bentham has done, the principle, that pain and pleasure govern mankind, and that man is, and can be, influenced by nothing but pleasure and pain, of what kind of pleasures and pains are we understood to speak? Evidently, sensible pains or pleasures. Now, what, for any individual, are sensible pleasures or pains? Evidently, they must be those which he himself experiences, and not those which others experience; for he does not feel these latter, and, not feeling, cannot be influenced by them. If it is true, then, that the only thing which acts upon men is pleasure and pain, it is equally true, that the action of pleasure and pain upon the individual is limited to such as he personally experiences; for, to repeat what was just said, the pleasures and pains of other individuals are not his, and, consequently, have, for him, no existence. What, then, is the legitimate conclusion of Bentham's principle, that pleasure and pain govern mankind? Certainly, that each individual is impelled to act solely by his personal pleasures and pains; or, to say it all in a word, that the end to be pursued by every one is his own greatest pleasure, utility, and private interest. Thus, utility, interest, pleasure, personal well-being, is the rule, and the only rule for conduct, to be drawn from the principle that sensation is the sole motive of volition. Now, nothing can be more widely separated than this rule and that of the general interest. For what does the law of

general interest prescribe? It commands the individual to act with reference, not to his own private good, but to the greatest good of society and of mankind; or, in other words, it sets before him as his end, not his own peculiar interest and utility, but the sum total of human interests; the interests of all men must he labor to increase, and for their utility is he bound to exert his energies. Such an end is good, and I cannot but approve it; reason easily forms the conception, and my idea of it is perfectly clear. But if pleasure and pain are the only motives to action, how shall I be impelled to devote my energies to this end? If it be replied that I should thus act, either because I suffer, through sympathy, with the pains, and rejoice, through sympathy, with the pleasures, of my fellow-beings, or because, by respecting and laboring for the interest of others, I lead them to respect and labor for mine, and that thus, when the matter is well considered, I am calculating wisely for my own good, — then I answer, that, according to either explanation, I am acting, not for the general good, but for my own private good; so that the end to be sought is not changed, for this still remains my own good; and neither is the motive changed, for it continues, as before, to be the love of my own good; the general interest, then, is only a means to this end, and an instrument for this motive; the pretended rule, therefore, of the general interest, is a false one, and individual utility alone, is left as the only true rule for action. Nothing can be plainer than that this is true; for, according to the first of these explanations of the rule of general



utility, if I feel that the pleasure of possessing another's good is greater than the pain of sympathy in seeing him deprived of it, I have, then, a right to rob him; and, according to the second explanation, I have the same right, whenever I find it more profitable, on the whole, to violate than to respect his claims. Singular rule of general utility, indeed, that thus authorizes me to steal! And let no one say, in reply, that, by stealing, I shall injure my true interest, and thus disregard the consideration presented by the second mode of explanation; for on what ground, I ask, if I am influenced by nothing but pleasure, shall I prefer your manner of understanding your interest, which I do not comprehend, to my manner of understanding my interest, which I do comprehend? And, even granting that I see how my private interests are always included in the general interests, and how, by promoting these, I secure my own, yet it still remains true, that I regard the former only as a means of advancing the latter; and how, then, is the general interest a rule for me? So far, then, from showing, that the doctrine of pain and pleasure, as the only motive for choice, justifies the substitution of the law of general utility for that of personal utility, both explanations fully prove that such a substitution is impossible; and, as no third mode of justifying such a substitution has ever been offered, it seems to be clearly demonstrated, that the rule of general utility is not a consequence of the principle of self-love, and cannot be deduced from it. The only rule for conduct, which the principle of self-love can give, is that of private interest,

and every philosopher of the selfish school has been reduced to the narrow alternative either of confining himself to this rule, or of removing the fundamental principle of selfishness, that is to say, of giving up his system altogether.

Such, gentlemen, is the distinction which I have felt bound clearly to point out, before proceeding to answer the arguments of Bentham; for, had I not done so, I should, in consequence of the confusion of his ideas, and of his continual, though unconscious substitution of a rule, which is not to be derived from his principle, for that which does necessarily proceed from it, have been called upon to discuss two different systems at the same time, instead of one. Here, then, we have Bentham simplified; I have a right to reduce him to this single rule of personal interest; and I know well with whom I have to do.

You must not think, gentlemen, that I am treating Bentham with injustice, or misinterpreting his design, by reducing him to this rule. Independently of his fundamental principle, from which it is necessarily derived, I may bring proofs of his opinions from his description of the several virtues and of the social affections, all of which he explains by the interest, not of society, but of the individual. Ask Bentham, for instance, why we should speak the truth. He will answer, Because you thus secure confidence. Or, why should one be honest? To gain credit; and he adds, that we must have invented this means for making a fortune, if it had not naturally existed. Why should we be benevolent? Because others will

then be kind and obliging to us. Ask him again, for what reason it is right to avoid the commission of crimes in secret. He will reply, that there is danger of contracting bad habits, which will, sooner or later, betray themselves; and that the efforts to keep our acts unknown, will cause constant inquietude. Once more; how does he explain the pleasure of being loved? Our pleasure, according to him, arises from the prospect of the spontaneous and gratuitous services which we anticipate receiving from those who love us. What is the pleasure of possessing power? It is the feeling, that we can procure the aid of our fellow-beings, either through fear of the evil, or hope of the good, which we can render. Lastly, what is the pleasure of piety? Bentham declares that it is the expectation of the favor of God in this life and another. Hence you see that Bentham has fully comprehended the true motive which should lead the lover of self to respect general utility, and that, in the detail, he is as strict as Hobbes, in following out the consequence of his principle, although much less consistent in his theory. Let me mention one more of his opinions, from which you will be enabled fully to understand his ideas upon this subject. Why should a man keep his promise? Because, says Bentham, it is useful to do so. He may break a promise, then, if it would injure him to observe it? Certainly, he replies. I have not, then, done Bentham the least injustice, in reducing him to the rule of personal interest; and it is on this ground, therefore, that I meet him to discuss the validity of his arguments.

And, in the first place, gentlemen, it is an undeniable fact, which I have no desire of disputing, that every one does admit, as Bentham asserts, that the motive of utility is one among those which determine human action. This motive, undoubtedly, controls many of our volitions, and, consequently, many of our acts. Now, the question to be decided is, whether this is the *only* motive of choice, or whether others are also active in human nature. In other words, we are to inquire whether we do distinguish between actions only by an anticipation of their beneficial or injurious consequences, or whether, on the contrary, we have also some other tests by which we judge.

If I, then, was the adversary whom Bentham was trying to convert, and he should ask me to examine this other motive, seemingly so different from that of utility, already admitted by me to be active, and to see whether it was not really this principle of utility in disguise,—I should reply, that I was perfectly convinced it was not, and that the reason for my conviction was the fact, that the characteristics of the two principles were not only very dissimilar, but altogether opposite. For what is the meaning of *utility*? It means something that is good for me, agreeable to me. Whenever I judge and act, then, on the ground of utility, I do so from a personal motive. It is from a consideration of the influence of the action upon myself—an influence which is good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable for myself—that I judge of its expediency, and determine upon its performance. The motive of judgment and ac-

tion is personal, therefore, when I determine upon a course of conduct, because it is useful. Now, nothing can be more unlike such a principle as this, than the other principle, which I also recognize, and which I have called the principle of order. When I determine upon an act, under the influence of this principle of order, I do so, not because it is good for me, but because it is good in itself; not because it is agreeable to me, but because it is proper in itself. Acting from this principle of order, then, and regarding actions not in their relations to me, but to something different from me,—that is to say, order,—I am impelled, not by a personal, but by an impersonal motive. Not only, therefore, is this other principle recognized by me, as not the principle of utility in disguise, but nothing can be imagined more entirely unlike and opposed to it; because, in the first place, its characteristics are completely opposite to those of the principle of utility; because, secondly, the volitions which I form under the influence of this principle, differ from those which result from the influence of utility; and, thirdly, because it is the effect of the act upon myself which I regard in the one case, while, in the other, I look only to the nature of the act in itself, independently of its effect. No two things, therefore, can be, I will not say more distinct, but more entirely contrary to each other, than the principle of utility and the moral principle.

I admit, then, all that Bentham wishes me to admit; I recognize, in the first place, a principle which is distinct from utility, and which is not utility in

disguise; and I recognize, in the second place, that this principle does not, in its estimate of actions, judge of them by a view of their agreeable or disagreeable consequences, but by a quite different test.

And now let us go a step further, and ask whether it is true, as Bentham asserts, that such a principle must either be despotic or anarchical. This I entirely deny, and maintain that the only principle which really is subject to this alternative, is the principle of utility itself.

And, to enable you to judge of the correctness of this assertion, consider, for a moment, the arguments adduced by Bentham in favor of his opinion. Bentham says that, as the consequences of actions upon the well-being of an individual are material, visible, and palpable facts, it is impossible that men should disagree as to the good or evil nature of these consequences. This I may readily grant; I may admit that a jury of unprejudiced and unbiased men, assembled to consider whether a certain act will be productive to an individual of more or less pain than pleasure, would probably agree in their opinion; but I assert that to put the question, as to the tendency of the two principles, in this way, is entirely to misstate it; and, therefore, that the argument drawn by Bentham from the unanimity of the jury, does nothing whatever to prove the point which he pretends to establish.

For what is the fair conclusion to be drawn from the unanimity of the answer? Simply this; that, when the selfish definition of good is admitted, men

may easily agree as to what will be for the good of any particular individual.

But if, on the other hand, still defining good in the same way, different individuals should be led to consider, as good for themselves, objects and acts which are quite opposite and unlike, would there not then arise quite as much strife, and consequently anarchy, as there had before been accordance?

That, with the selfish definition of good before them, a jury might agree as to what would benefit a certain individual, I readily admit. But if, with the same definition of good, this jury should equally agree that what was good for this individual was bad for another, its unanimity would then only serve to prove that the good of the first was the evil of the second, and that what one has the right to do, the other has the right to prevent him from doing; from which it would appear that the selfish definition of good leads directly to anarchy.

Bentham misstates, therefore, the question, and his argument is a sophism. The true question is this: "Does the selfish principle—or, what amounts to the same thing, does the definition that it gives of good—tend to divide or to unite individuals?" Thus put, the question receives, from both reason and experience, an answer exactly contrary to that which Bentham has seen fit to give.

If good for myself and for every other person is the greatest amount of pleasure which I or they can enjoy,—and if, consequently, each has the right to do whatever will conduce to this end,—is it not evident, unless I always find that most for my pleasure

which others do for theirs, and unless they always find that most for their pleasure which I do for mine, that we shall be brought into conflict, division, and anarchy? Thus says reason. And what is the lesson of experience? Experience declares that, in a vast number of instances, what seems useful to one is judged to be injurious by another, and that the very same act has a wholly different, and often altogether an opposite, influence upon the interests of individuals; so that, should every individual do, in all cases, just what seemed most advantageous to himself, without regarding any other considerations, society would be in a constant state of anarchy. Experience declares that the cause of the strifes which disturb society, and which would wholly overthrow it, were it not for the restraints of law, is the fact, that so many individuals do give themselves wholly up to the pursuit of their own private interests; and she adds, that this same principle introduces strife between nations as it does between individuals, and thus scatters through the whole human race the same anarchy that it produces in separate communities, unless its action is checked; so that, to profess the legitimacy of individual pursuit of interests, and to assert that whoever seeks his own private good does right, is to proclaim the principle of universal anarchy at once. Such are the dictates of reason and experience, and, as you plainly see, they nowise accord with the opinions of Bentham.

Suppose, now, that you dislike this anarchy, and that you desire to repress or prevent this conflict among individual interests;—I ask in what manner,



according to the selfish system, you would proceed. Good being altogether an individual thing, you can set up and establish no law but that of personal well-being; and the interests of different individuals being at the same time opposed, and yet equally legitimate, the law cannot be executed without trampling under foot the interests of some individual or other, which interests are nevertheless legitimate; that is to say, the final result of anarchy, according to the selfish system, is the forcible triumph of one particular interest over all other interests in the community. Now, what is such a triumph as this except a despotism? Here, again, experience entirely confirms the results which we arrive at by reasoning. For what other origin does she assign to despotism, or what other nature does she recognize in it, than these which I have just described — namely, that the interests of one or of a few have triumphed over and trampled down the interests of all others? According, therefore, to the judgments of universal common sense, self-love, or the selfish principle, is the source of all anarchy and despotism. What would become of the world if it was governed exclusively by selfishness?

I well know — and I have already fully admitted it in my remarks upon the system of Hobbes — that there are so many and such active social principles coöperating to produce individual happiness, as to render wholly impossible the state of war which this philosopher has supposed natural. But observe, gentlemen, this is wholly owing to the fact that man is constituted as he now is, and not as the selfish system

supposes him to be. For how happens it, that a man, pursuing his own good, according to the principle of interest well understood, acts with justice and kindness to his fellow-men, and follows in his conduct the rules of social love and charity? It is because, in human beings, such as we find them, other principles beside self-love are active; because man has the conception of order, and loves it, and has an inward enjoyment when he feels in his soul the sentiment of it, and acts in accordance with it, and, on the contrary, an insupportable pain when he opposes it; because the social and benevolent instincts are perfectly in harmony with order, and receive from this correspondence a peculiar force and sweetness, which give to their gratification a greater power of producing happiness than any merely selfish instinct can possess. If we suppose men to continue as they now are, the pursuit of personal well-being will not necessarily bring them into conflict; on the contrary, it allows of union and concert, and therefore have I asserted that Hobbes could not legitimately conclude, from his principle, that the state of war was the state of nature, except by mutilating the element of pleasure. But if, on the contrary, we conceive of human beings under the selfish point of view, and admit it to be true that they are acted upon by nothing except pleasure and pain, then, with the natural authority of order, disappear at once all pleasures and pains which the sentiment of order produces, and all the energy which it communicates to the action of the benevolent affections; the balance and harmony of the faculties is destroyed; the selfish impulses subdue

the social impulses ; the pursuit of interest well understood leads to entirely different results, because the elements of good itself are changed ; and Hobbes may then with truth declare, that anarchy and war are the state of nature. Hence we see, that, though Hobbes has been false to human nature, in proclaiming that anarchy or despotism is the natural alternative which results from the pursuit of individual interest, yet has he been perfectly logical in declaring that this is the strict consequence of the selfish principle. Hobbes, willing as he was to reason, and to follow out the tendency of his principle — Hobbes, who had nothing of Bentham's contempt for discussion — saw distinctly the end to which the principle of self-love leads, and the narrow alternative to which it reduces mankind ; while Bentham, so far from being aware of it, brings this charge, to which the selfish principle alone is liable, against systems which declare the existence and action of an impersonal motive, and which, consequently, cannot deserve the reproach.

Consider, now, for a moment, the test which the moral principle applies to conduct, and see, gentlemen, whether it is not precisely what we need to save the world and human society from the terrible alternative which Bentham has seen fit to attribute to its influence. Bentham declares that the moral judgment of actions must be obscure and uncertain ; but nothing, in truth, can be simpler or more clear.

Suppose, for instance, that we see a mother and child ; will any one say that these two beings have no connection with each other, and that, independently of, and prior to all human judgments, there

are no relations between them, which reason did not invent and cannot destroy, but sees to be already existing? No one would deny that they do sustain such relations. From the mere fact that one of these beings is a mother and the other a child, they are united together by a tie which is peculiar, *sui generis*, and distinct from all other human relations. I ask, now, a second question. Do there not result from this peculiar relation, as a necessary consequence, feelings and acts which are proper and suitable between these two beings? In other words, I ask whether, from the fact that one of them is the mother, it does not seem right, in the view of reason, that she should take care of her child, satisfy its wants, protect its weakness, supply the defects of its intelligence, and under no pretext whatever abandon it; and whether, again, from the fact that the other being is the child, it does not seem equally proper and right, that, as soon as it is able to comprehend its relation, it should manifest gratitude and respect towards its mother, and serve and protect her, and never desert her in her old age. Can there be even a shadow of doubt upon this point? Can a human being be found, who would hesitate to approve this conduct upon both sides, and to disapprove of the opposite? And not only so, but also to command the first as a duty, and to forbid the second as a crime? Thus, from the nature of this relation, which unites the child to the mother, and the mother to the child, arises a distinct conception of the treatment which is proper and right, from one towards the other; and this conception arises wholly, you

will observe, from the idea of this relation; for it is independent of all other considerations. The nature of the conduct, which is on both sides becoming, is nowise altered by the disagreeable qualities of the child in its youth, or of the parent in its age. However much the mother may love pleasure and repose; however much the care of her child may cause trouble and sacrifice; and, on the other hand, whatever the considerations of interest which may lead the child to regret the necessity of protecting and sustaining the declining years of its parent,—the relation and its appropriate duties remain unchanged, and the very beings most interested judge of them as an unconcerned beholder would. This is precisely because this judgment is based, not upon the prospect of the utility of right conduct to either being, but upon a conception of the eternal order of things; therefore it is, that it pronounces this conduct good in itself; and it is because this goodness is absolute and universal for all beings, that it declares it to be obligatory, and a duty. If, then, I should be asked whence I derive my estimate of the moral quality of actions, my answer may be readily inferred from this example. I derive it from the nature of things, from the eternal order established by the Creator; and it only needs that a being should be reasonable, to conceive of this order, and comprehend what acts are becoming and proper in all the relations of life. For instance, I bring to the test of this moral principle two men, who are both desirous to increase their property at each other's expense; and by the authority, and in the name of absolute good, I pass

a judgment upon their rival pretensions, which would meet with the approbation of every rational being, and to which they cannot refuse to listen. They may find this decision contrary, indeed, to their interests, and with reason, because interest is personal, and private good is far removed from absolute good; it is very possible, too, that they may reject it, and prefer what is profitable to what is right; but even while doing so, they will be obliged to recognize its justice, and respect its truth; and reason will compel them to acknowledge that it does express and declare that which is absolutely right, and which ought to be done.

Whence, now, gentlemen, comes the universal respect for decisions drawn from the moral principle, even in the minds of those whose interests it may injure? From the single fact that this principle is impersonal, and passes judgment, not with reference to what is agreeable to you and to me, but to what is right in itself and in the nature of things. Now, as the nature of things is permanent, and of a character to be recognized by all rational beings, the actions upon which judgment is passed in reference to this standard must be equally manifest to all; and, as the mode of judging is universally approved, and the conduct conformable to these judgments is universally obligatory, the rules thence resulting may be imposed upon all as duties; while, on the contrary, when acts are judged of by the test of personal interest, there will be as many different estimates as there are individuals, each individual approving only what is agreeable to himself, and finding

every thing else odious and detestable. The estimate of acts, then, by the rule of utility, is necessarily anarchical, and can be enforced practically only through despotism. In so far, therefore, as mankind do escape this alternative, between anarchy and despotism, it must be owing to the existence of a mode of judging conduct, which, as it is based upon something permanent and universally recognized, conducts all reasonable beings to uniform judgments, and which, as it is approved as good in itself, is admitted to be right, and is respected even by those whose interests it injures, and who refuse to be bound by its decisions. Whether it is a king or beggar, who declares, "Thou shalt not steal," the command neither gains nor loses its authority; the robber and the robbed alike acknowledge its justice. All men, then, are morally united by this principle, and acknowledge that they are legitimately subject to its sway.

I have thus repelled, altogether, as you see, the charge of producing anarchy or despotism, brought by Bentham, against what he calls the principle of sympathy and antipathy, and have clearly shown that it applies to his own principle of utility.

Bentham has further inquired, whether this principle is a blind instinct, or a rule to be definitely expressed, and rationally applied, in the estimate of actions. The developments into which I have already entered answer this question at once. Unquestionably, the laws of order are something perceptible to reason; and when we act in obedience to these laws, we do so intelligently, and not from instinct. I only remark further, that it is true in

relation to these laws, as to every province of human intelligence, that different minds will recognize them with different degrees of distinctness, and, consequently, will form of them a more or less complete and perfect idea. Practical men, who cannot conceive of shades of distinctness in the ideas of men, will not, of course, admit these differences, and, not admitting, will not trouble themselves about them. That human minds should be full of such shades and differences, and that it is precisely these which distinguish individuals, is a matter of little moment to them; these are facts which they overlook, and of which their philosophy takes no heed. These differences do exist, however; and though not for the sake of practical men, yet for yours, gentlemen, who are capable of comprehending them, let me here remark, that intelligence, and, consequently, conscience, is developed very unequally in different men, and that these differences are innumerable. There are those in whom the perception of order is so indistinct, that it resembles a sentiment more than an idea; and the estimates and volitions resulting from it seem more like the effects of instinct than the consequences of a judgment. This it is which has led some philosophers to consider human conscience as a sense, that perceives the moral good or ill of actions, as taste and smell perceive flavors and odors. In truth, judgments, arising from a sentiment, do closely resemble those which result from a confused idea; and it is under this indistinct form that the laws of order are recognized by those in whose minds intellect is but imperfectly developed.



that is to say, by the greatest portion of mankind. Moral ideas, therefore, are subject to the same law with all our other ideas; they begin in indistinctness and confusion, and, in most minds, always remain in this state; and, it is while thus indistinct, that they exercise the most influence, for then are they poetical: the poet presents his ideas under indefinite forms; the moment he expresses them clearly and distinctly, he becomes a philosopher, as I have so often explained. These confused views of order, however, may become more and more precise, in infinite degrees, in proportion as individuals receive from education, and from the experience of life, a more complete culture of their powers; so that, in certain minds, they may finally be transformed into perfectly bright conceptions. Between moral ideas, as they exist in the consciences of the majority of men, and in such a mind as Kant's, when he was writing his work on the principles of ethics, and the rules of duty, there may be innumerable shades of clearness. Often do we see men in whose minds portions of the laws of order are perfectly distinct, while others still remain confused; and this is owing to the fact, that particular circumstances of their lives have led them to reflect upon parts of the moral law, while upon others they have never had occasion seriously to reflect. Such men judge of the moral worth of certain acts in a perfectly reasonable way, while, in their estimates of others, they are guided merely by sentiment, like other men. This example will suffice to show how ideas of the moral law may be developed unequally in dif-

ferent minds, and how they may become entirely distinct in the few. But no single human being is wholly destitute of them; for they exist even where they are most confused and obscure. It is the effect of a good education to develop the reason, by removing from our moral ideas the shades of indistinctness which first enshroud them, and which the experience of life rarely clears away, unless reflection, early directed to their contemplation and study, is prepared to receive their teachings.

My answer, then, to Bentham, is, that the moral principle is not an instinct, but the combined truths which are perceptible to reason, and of which all men have a view more or less distinct; but that, even when this view is confused, it still exerts an influence, as universal experience attests, and is sufficiently active, as experience also proves, to make those in whom it is found responsible. This responsibility is weakened only, not destroyed, in those in whom the idea of order is obscure; while its full obligations rest upon all in whom the view of these laws is clear.

Once more, Bentham requires, that, if we are obstinately bent upon admitting another principle beside that of utility, we should define the limits of these several principles, and explain the reason why the authority of one should cease at a certain point, and the influence of the other there begin. He requires, in a word, that we should mark the bounds for the action of each principle, and our reasons for so doing.

Nothing is easier than to give this explanation,

and thus escape from the difficulty. It hardly needs, indeed, to be explained. Which of the two should we do — what is right in itself, or what is to us agreeable? This is the question; and, I ask you, gentlemen, should you have a moment's hesitation in replying? Would you not at once tell me that it was better to do what is right than what is agreeable? Bentham's question, then, is answered. Without a doubt, good or absolute right is a higher rule of action than relative good or private utility. Whenever, then, these two rules come in collision, personal well-being is to be sacrificed — so says reason in the mind of every human being; and it decides thus, because it perceives that one of these goods, being absolute, has in itself an obligatory and sacred character, while the other has no such character in itself, and cannot have, except through its conformity with what is absolutely good. It is perfectly easy, then, to mark the limit so imperiously demanded by Bentham; one principle is lawful — the principle of good in itself; the principle of personal good, on the other hand, is neither lawful nor unlawful; its demands and requisitions assume this character only in so far as they are more or less conformed to the rule of absolute good. This is the simple truth as we find it in our nature. And again I repeat what I have so often said before, that I have no wish to do injustice to the motive of personal interest; for it exists in us — it is a part of our nature — and therefore is it good. The instinctive tendencies of our nature are also good; but this nowise prevents personal interest, which is only these natural impulses made intelligent and rea

sonable, from being a better principle of conduct. Why, then, should not the view of absolute good have a like superiority over that of personal good?—and who can deny that it has? Instinct, self-love, morality—these are the three stages by which a human being rises from the condition of the brute to that of the angel; and to destroy either of them is to forget the lowness of its origin, and the loftiness of its destiny; in other words, it is to mutilate, on one side or the other, the history of its development. And these three states are but three phases of one and the same development. As interest is only instinct understood and comprehended by reason, so, from an elevated point of view, we might say that morality is only self-love understood and comprehended; for, if the sentiment of our being in harmony and coöperation with universal order is the happiest that our nature can experience, is it not a sure indication that the true vocation, and unseen, though final end, to which its impulses and its self-love unconsciously conspire, is to unite with universal order without losing itself; or, in other words, to coöperate intelligently, according to the measure of its power, with the grand end of the universe? But, however this may be, the limit demanded by Bentham is still easily fixed; for, if there should be collision between the principle of self-love and the moral principle, we know which should lawfully rule. Regarded from an elevated point of view, such a collision must be rare; and, when the true relations of things are fully understood, there never can be any.

Once more, Bentham asks us to examine, whether

the principle which we suppose to be acting, in addition to the principle of utility, has, really, any power over human nature, and does, really, exert an influence in our acts of will. This, gentlemen, is a subject for simple observation. The question is, whether a view of actions, as conformable or contrary to order, as good or evil in themselves, does, or does not, exert an influence over the mind, which conceives it; and it is a question for experience to decide. It is certain, that, for men, constantly pre-occupied with their own interests, and accustomed from the effects of education and the influence of their occupations, to regard all acts in reference to these interests, the influence of the moral motive will be so slightly apparent, that many might be disposed entirely to deny its action; and, in fact, among such men, the selfish motive does triumph over and impede the action of the moral principle. But, without taking into consideration men, who, on the contrary, are governed habitually by the moral motive, I assert, that, even among those who are usually governed by motives of self-interest, the moral motive does exist, and that, in many cases, it does modify, and sometimes even wholly control, the action of self-love. We must have observed men very superficially, and gained but a slight knowledge of their nature, not to perceive how often, in the lives of those who seem exclusively devoted to the pursuit of private interest, there are partial sacrifices to considerations of absolute good. Could we have spread out before us the inward experience of any individual, selected at random, from those working and mercan-

tile classes, of whom so much evil is spoken, we should be confounded at the many acts of probity, the generous purposes, and generous deeds too, which it would exhibit; and I mean purposes and deeds of conscious generosity, for I would not confound with truly disinterested acts those which are so only in appearance, and which are, in truth, concessions made for the sake of gaining reputation, or from fear of public opinion. But, let us ask, whence comes this very public opinion, and the necessity for respecting it, if self-love alone controls the purposes and acts of men. They never have studied human nature with any degree of profoundness, who admit the thought, that a man could be found at court, in shops, or even in prison cells, over whom the idea of order, and the considerations of what is just and right, have never exerted any influence. Such a man never has existed, and never could exist; for human nature is uniform; its elements are all found in every individual; and, however repressed and mutilated, there still is not one which does not retain some measure of activity, and exert some degree of influence over all spirits.

Suppose, now, that it should be further asked, why the view of an action, as conformable to reason, should control our will; and the question may be met by asking, in turn, why should the prospect of useful consequences influence us. Whatever answer may be given to this question, and however much its meaning may be veiled in obscure phraseology, still it must amount merely to this — that it is human nature to be thus influenced. I am impelled to pursue pleasure because I love it, and

I love it because I am so constituted ; and thus it is, because I naturally respect order, that I am impelled to act in conformity with it ; and it is because I am so constituted that I do respect it. Between my reason and order there is a like affinity, as exists between my sensitive nature and pleasure ; and these two affinities are both, and in an equal degree, facts, which, though we may comment upon, we cannot explain ; for they are ultimate, and cannot be resolved into any thing more simple. It is quite as inexplicable that pleasure should act upon my sensibility, as that order should have any influence over my reason. And if it should be asserted, as it has been by many philosophers, that sensibility may influence the will, but that reason cannot, I answer that this is untrue in point of fact ; but even if it was true, that self-interest, being a calculation of reason, could no more exert an influence on the will, than the idea of order : it is plain, however, that self-interest does act so strongly upon the will, as to triumph frequently over the passions, which are simply sensitive impulses. If, finally, it should be objected, that self-love is strengthened in its controlling power over our volitions by the general desire of happiness, which is a sensible fact, I answer, that the contemplation of order derives equal energy from that love of order and of beauty, which is also a sensible fact. In whatever light we may regard the subject, we shall find that it is impossible, by any mode of reasoning, which has the least appearance of common sense, to avoid the undeniable fact, that the moral motive, or the view of absolute good, has power to influence the will. Bentham's objection, therefore, has no force.

Finally, Bentham argues that interest, being an external motive, may become a law ; while all other motives, being internal, are incapable of assuming such a character. And here Bentham's profound psychological ignorance fully displays itself; his statement is exactly the contrary of truth. Interest is a personal motive ; order, an impersonal one : which, now, of two such motives, should be called external, and which internal — the personal, or the impersonal ? Which, naturally, wears the authority of a law ? What do I obey when I follow interest ? Myself. What do I obey when I respect order ? Something different from, and superior to, myself, which controls all other individuals, as it does me. In which motive, then, I ask again, do we behold the distinctive characteristic of being external, and all other characteristics which are necessary to constitute a law ? Bentham is, indeed, singularly unfortunate in this argument ; his objections would fully reveal, if this were at all necessary, the weakness and defects of his whole system, because they have no force whatever, except when directed against this system : the moral system they cannot affect, for they leave it wholly untouched.

I come now, gentlemen, to the last argument which Bentham brings against the moral motive. He asserts, that, if we recognize this motive, we shall be obliged, in legislation, to proportion all penalties to the degree of disapprobation which we feel towards certain acts — an idea that never yet entered, as he thinks, the head of any legislator. To this I reply, that the consequence does not follow from the principle. Suppose that I disapprove a certain act more strongly than I do



some other ; or, in other words, that in my judgment it appears to me more opposed to the rule of order, what follows ? Simply this — that the agent in the one case will seem to me more culpable, that is to say, more deserving of punishment, than in the other. But because one merits a severer punishment, than the other, it by no means follows, that society should inflict it, and for the simple reason that it is not the mission of society to punish guilt and reward virtue ; this is the prerogative of God, and of conscience ; in its reverence and fear of God, conscience does indeed execute retributive justice ; within ourselves and by ourselves are our acts really punished and rewarded ; and compared with these joys and torments, which conscience administers, outward pains and pleasures are but trifles. It is not, then, with the view of just retribution, that society in a few, and but a very few cases, inflicts penalties ; but it is governed in so doing by the totally different principle of a regard for its own well-being, and with a view of self-preservation simply. For this reason it is that it punishes only the single class of crimes which threaten its own peace ; all others it leaves to God ; and here, too, we see the reason why it so seldom bestows rewards. The principle of all criminal legislation is the interest of society ; and therefore do we find, as we should expect to find, that the laws neither punish every crime, nor do they proportion penalties to the degree of moral demerit in the acts which they condemn. At the same time, however, it must be said, that the moral principle has never been wholly lost sight of, nor forgotten, in the construction of any code of laws ; utility alone cannot account for, nor explain, all the provisions

of any system of legislation, however unreasonable. The fact is, society, before proceeding to attach a penalty to the commission of acts which injure its interest, proportioned to this injury, asks a question, never suggested in the system of Bentham; it asks whether it has the moral right to punish; whether, in producing pain in the individual, it does not treat him unjustly; in other words, it inquires whether the individual is really culpable, and whether he is justly liable to the infliction of the penalty. And it is only when satisfied of the justice and equity of its acts that it dares to punish; it will do nothing which retributive justice does not authorize and approve, although acting solely with a view to its own preservation. Thus the moral and the selfish principles unite in the construction of criminal codes, though in unequal degrees; for the former merely restrains and directs the latter, while this, in its action, gives origin to the laws. Thus much it is indispensable we should know, to be enabled to understand penal legislation; it is otherwise inexplicable. Let Bentham explain, if he can, why the criminal code pardons a man who has done society an injury, if it is proved that he was unconscious of the wrong; he cannot explain it except by sophistry; for the reason plainly is, that the man is innocent; but the word *innocence* has no meaning in the system of utility. I might easily produce yet more striking examples. But I will sum up what I have said with the remark, that, unquestionably, penal legislation does not originate in the moral principle, and consequently cannot be explained by it; but it does not follow from this fact, that the moral principle has no existence nor power of ac-



tion; it merely follows, that penal legislation originates in another principle of our nature, which I also recognize and admit — the principle of utility. Penal legislation, however, though not emanating from it, does still manifest the power and influence of the moral principle; for there is not a code which it does not modify and help to form. Here then, once more, and for the last time, observe, that this objection of Bentham establishes the very principle which he wishes to destroy.

This is all, gentlemen, that I have to say of the inconclusiveness of the arguments brought by Bentham against the existence of a principle in our nature distinct from that of utility: you may think, perhaps, that they little merit so long a consideration; and I freely confess, that my reply would have been much more brief, if the system of Bentham had not been so celebrated, and in some respects so worthy of regard.

## LECTURE XV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

FOR the purpose of making you acquainted with the selfish mode of explaining the moral problem, I have selected and described the systems of Hobbes and of Bentham—the two most celebrated among the modern systems, which have adopted and professed the selfish principle. As these two systems, and the observations suggested by them, have sufficed to give you a clear and complete idea of the nature and defects of this theory, I have limited myself to these examples. And yet, gentlemen, you have seen, in the doctrines of Hobbes and of Bentham, only one form of the selfish system, while sometimes it appears under other characters, in which you would scarcely recognize it. I regret, therefore, to be compelled by the plan of this course, which is rather dogmatical than historical, to put an end to my expositions. To supply, however, as far as possible, the necessary void, I have determined to devote the present lecture to a further consideration of the selfish system. My object is twofold: first, I wish, in a more precise manner, to define the essential

element of the selfish system; and, secondly, to describe the various distinctive forms which it has assumed. And, though the subject is a large one, I will endeavor, by the definiteness and precision of my statements, to complete the discussion of it within the narrow limits of a short lecture.

The peculiarity of the selfish system, you will recollect, is, that it misunderstands and suppresses two of the modes of human volition, and preserves only the third. The two modes of volition which it destroys, are the impulsive and the moral. An ethical system which should recognize, that, in certain cases, we seek truth, desire power, aid our fellow-beings, from the simple love of truth, of power, and of our fellow-beings, without regard to self, or the relations between these acts and our own good, would thus prove that it is not a form of the selfish system, because it would thus deny that the pursuit of our own good is the only motive of choice and of action. Again, a system which should assert, that, in certain circumstances, the idea of absolute good acts upon us directly, and determines our conduct, independently of any anticipation of our own good, and even when we are called to make a sacrifice of our own good, would prove, by such a statement, that it was not a form of the selfish system, because it would deny, equally with the former, although in a different way, the fundamental maxim of the selfish theory. The selfish system, then, has this psychological characteristic — that it denies the impulsive and moral modes of volition. It can be main-

tained only by subjecting human nature to this two-fold mutilation.

Besides these two modes of volition, observation offers only one more, which I have called the *selfish* mode. And, as philosophy has no power of inventing what does not exist, a philosopher who misconceives and rejects the two first-named modes, is necessarily compelled to elevate the third into being the sole and universal mode of human volition; for there is not a fourth. But by what consideration are we determined, when we act from the selfish motive? By the prospect of our own personal well-being. Personal interest, then, recognized and proclaimed as the single motive and sole end of all human action — this is the characteristic of the selfish system.

The words *personal well-being*, however, represent a fact in human nature, which is complex, and made up of divers elements. It may readily be conceived, therefore, that, among the philosophers who have recognized personal well-being as the end and motive of action, some may have seen more, others fewer, of these elements; and, again, that the elements observed by them may have been different. And we can well understand that this system should have manifested itself under various forms, in proportion as the analysis of the fact upon which it is founded has been more or less exact. We should ascertain, then, if possible, the number and the nature of these forms; and this is precisely what I wish now to do.

The method to be followed in this inquiry is at

once simple and sure. Philosophy may omit, though it cannot create; it may overlook, though it cannot invent. If philosophers of the selfish school have differed, then, it is owing only to their having found more or fewer elements in the common fact, which they have all considered to be the only mode of human volition. To discover all the diverse forms, therefore, of which the selfish system is susceptible, it is only necessary that we should determine in how many different ways this fact may be mutilated; and to this end we must analyze and disengage its several elements. Let us review, then, gentlemen, our analysis of this fact; let us count its several elements; and thus shall we arrive infallibly at the end we seek.

Our nature is, by its organization, fitted for certain ends, and manifests this fitness by various instinctive tendencies. At first, it sees nothing beyond these ends, to which it feels itself impelled; but, when reason is developed, the truth, before hidden, is revealed; for reason comprehends that these ends are not our real good, but only means to produce it, and that our good itself is the satisfaction of our instincts, and our greatest good the fullest satisfaction of these instincts. Thus, to take a common example, the appetite of hunger impels us instinctively to seek food, which food, we suppose, in the first instance, to be the final end of the appetite itself; but, when we become rational, we comprehend that the true end to which the appetite tends is the feeling of satisfied hunger, and that food is only the means of producing this satisfaction. Henceforth, we consider this gratification our good, and cease to look

for it in the objects which give this gratification. The same may be said of all our other impulses and thus we ascend by degrees to the idea that our good is the satisfaction of our natural tendencies, our highest good their fullest satisfaction.

But our nature is sensitive, and therefore no passion can be gratified without an agreeable sensation. This agreeable sensation is quite distinct, however, from the gratification. I am hungry; I eat, and experience a pleasant feeling; and why? because my appetite is satisfied. The pleasure, then, is the effect of the satisfaction, and is not that satisfaction itself: even if pleasure was not felt, then, the appetite would still be satisfied, and the good of our nature accomplished. Pleasure is the sensible effect of the good, but is not the good itself: the two ideas are distinct; the two phenomena are different.

Now, unfortunately, these two phenomena are inseparably united, and therefore the ideas are united also; unfortunately, also, one of these facts, being a sensible one,—that is, pleasure,—is easily recognized; whereas the other—that is, good—is less apparent, because contained within the sensible fact. The human mind easily, therefore, confounds these separate facts, and, in the confusion, it is the least apparent which is overlooked and forgotten; hence the mistaking of pleasure for good, and the identifying of these two ideas in the single one of happiness.

In what I have now said, I have explained some of the mutilations of the idea of personal good, and some of the various forms which the selfish system has assumed. Our analysis has exhibited three facts



entirely distinct; first, the satisfaction of our nature, which is our good; secondly, the pleasure accompanying this satisfaction, which is happiness; thirdly, the objects fitted to produce the satisfaction that results in pleasure: these are useful. A selfish system, to be true and complete, must neither overlook these several facts, nor alter their nature, nor modify their functions, nor diminish the importance of any one. And now you can imagine how many ways there are of failing to fulfil these conditions, and of giving, in consequence, an imperfect representation of the selfish system. I have time to indicate only the most important and the most common.

The one most frequently met with is that which confounds the fundamental and secondary elements, and defines good to be *pleasure*. This form of the selfish system may be called the sensual form. It is self-love deprived of its essential principle—the effect of personal good mistaken for the good itself; in a word, it is a monstrous though natural mutilation of the fundamental fact. The practical effect of this doctrine is not only the effeminacy which results from this substitution, but, yet more, the various mistakes resulting from this substitution, which lead the individual astray in the pursuit of his own good. Nothing is more common than to see the pursuit of pleasure terminate in results the most disastrous possible to self-interest; and, notwithstanding the close connection which unites pleasure with good, it is easy to perceive the cause of such an unfortunate result.

Pleasure is a fact so apparent, that it has never

been overlooked by philosophers of the selfish school ; but there are few only who have had the good sense to perceive that pleasure was not itself our good, but only an accessory element of it ; and who have recognized, as the true end for self-love, the satisfaction of the different impulses and faculties of our nature. From this latter view has resulted a form of the selfish system, at once more austere and more nearly true, which may well deserve to be called its *rational* form. In more than one instance, the selfish system, thus conceived, has defined the good of the individual to be that *which is conformable to his nature* — a definition which elevates self-love almost to the rank of morality, and which, as it is better calculated than any other to make the principle an intelligent one, has produced fewer evils in practice. This form of the selfish system, by its superior truth, has resulted in a comparatively elevated theory, and in an enlightened and pure rule for life. Among individuals of weak minds, however, its influence is to create all the miseries of excessive prudence, and all the meannesses of a close calculation of interest ; while the pursuit of pleasure, on the other hand, leaves to its followers greater liberality of ideas, less hardness and dryness of feeling, and more freedom in their mode of action.

I know no philosopher, who has committed the error of mistaking the means of happiness or good for the happiness and good itself, and who has founded upon such an error a system ; but nothing is more common among men at large, and, therefore, this, too, should be classed among the different forms of

the selfish system. It is the delusion of the multitude, who mistake wealth, lands, houses, furniture, for the end really pursued in acquiring them, and who, instead of using them for this end, turn all the energies of their minds to simple accumulation. The error is so truly absurd, common though it is, and its practical effects are so obvious, that it would not be worth our while to describe them.

Such are the three principal forms which the selfish system may assume in the minds of those whose views are narrow and incomplete, and who imperfectly understand the three facts, which I have exhibited to you by analysis. Each of these forms is susceptible of various modifications, according as the leading fact is differently comprehended, and as the influence of other elements enters more or less into the system.

This, however, is not the only source of diverse forms of the selfish system; there is another, equally productive of variety, which I will now proceed to describe.

Our good, gentlemen, is composed, as you will observe, of several particular goods, and so also is our pleasure; the satisfaction of our nature thus resolves itself into the satisfaction of its various impulses and faculties; and to the gratification of each of these belongs a particular pleasure. Now, in his estimate of the elements of good or of happiness, a philosopher may easily be so preoccupied with the idea of a certain class of these, as to misunderstand or wholly neglect all others; he may even go further, and not only misunderstand or neglect them, but systematically

condemn them as injurious to our greatest good and happiness, and never describe them, like other pleasures, as something to be sought. You see, at once, to what various mutilations of good and of happiness, and, consequently, to what new and different forms of selfishness, such views might lead; I will limit myself to the exhibition of but a few.

And first, gentlemen, the instincts of our nature are of two kinds; first, those which can find their satisfaction only in the good of other beings, and which are, therefore, called *social* or *benevolent*; and, secondly, those which do not require such a condition for their gratification, and are commonly denominated *personal* or *selfish*. Friendship, love, and all sympathetic impulses, are embraced in the former class; curiosity, the desire of power, and a number of other instincts, in the latter. It is unnecessary to observe, that, essentially, impulses of the first class are no more disinterested than those of the second, nor impulses of the second more interested than those of the first; such epithets have no meaning, when used in reference to instincts; they apply to self-love and the moral motive only; all our tendencies crave gratification equally, only in one case the good of our fellow-beings, and in the other our own good, is the means by which they are satisfied.

These two classes of impulses have given rise to forms of the selfish system, which differ from each other by very marked characteristics. Some philosophers, either believing that the gratification of the benevolent tendencies is the most productive of good and of happiness, or thinking that thus they might

redeem self-love from the charge of being a personal and unsocial principle, have sought for good and happiness, in the exercise of the social affections, and have made this their fundamental maxim; hence a class of selfish systems, which have defined happiness to consist in the development and satisfaction of the benevolent instincts of our nature. In their practical results, these systems approach so nearly to the moral systems, that they have often, on that account, been classed among them; but this is an illusion which the least reflection will remove. The end proposed to man in these systems is always his own private good and pleasure; the good and pleasure of others is only a means to this; but the moral system proposes no such end; it neither sets before man, as his end, his private good, nor the good of others, but only absolute good, or, in other words, that which is conformed to the nature of things; this is a higher end than any other, recommending neither personal good nor the good of our fellow-beings exclusively, but approving both in so far as they are in conformity with order, and no further. Between the practical results, too, of the moral system, and of these forms of the selfish system, there are most noticeable differences, which we may see fully illustrated in the philanthropy of the day. I allude particularly to a heartlessness of charity on the one side, and an imprudence in bestowing benefits on the other, which are equally to be condemned; the first, for the selfishness of its motive; the second, for the blindness of its acts: the benevolence of impulse escapes, at least from the first of these

defects; though only that benevolence which finds its inspiration and its direction in the love of order, can avoid them both.

To this class of selfish systems a third may be added, which merits particular attention: it has originated with philosophers, who, perceiving that, of all our agreeable emotions, that which follows the performance of duty is the most delightful, while at the same time it is more under our own and less under others' control than any other pleasure, have thought that its pursuit is the best means of securing our own happiness, and that we should sacrifice all others to obtain it. More than once it has occurred, that, in eras when selfish systems have prevailed, such a system has gained for its author the reputation of being the restorer and avenger of morality; and yet, gentlemen, you must see, that, in such a system, pleasure is still the end, and virtue only a means, and, therefore, that it is truly quite as selfish as the systems of Hobbes or of Epicurus. It is, however, infinitely more absurd; for virtue, transformed into a means of pleasure, ceases to be virtue, and gives no longer pleasure; so that the system destroys the very end which it recommends for our pursuit. I should say the same of the doctrine which exhorts us to practise virtue as a means of gaining the rewards of another life: this form of the selfish system implies the same error, and differs from the former only by being more thoroughly interested. The partisans of the former might well be called the Epicureans, and those of the latter, the Benthamites of virtue.

With these two systems, which make virtue a

means of securing pleasure, we might class another, which regards virtue as delicate, noble, and beautiful, while it looks upon selfishness as vulgar, gross, and ugly, and prefers the first from motives of taste. This system might be classed, either among those which we are now considering, or among those which, seeking the principle of morality, in a conception of the reason, misunderstand our nature, and overlook the truth. It may be considered as belonging to the latter, when it looks chiefly at the beauty of virtue, and to the class of selfish systems; when it is principally occupied with thoughts of the gratification of taste which virtue gives, and recommends virtue as the means of procuring it. This system may be considered the highest refinement of selfishness; and it is adopted, though quite unconsciously, by a multitude of well-born and highly-cultivated people, whose conduct is marked by acts of disinterestedness, not so much from elevation of soul as from delicacy of taste, and who dislike selfishness as they do bad odors, only because it affects them disagreeably; they are as selfish in their repugnance as the selfishness which displeases them; and vice can seduce them, if it will but cover its deformities with perfumed flowers.

Such, gentlemen, are some of the selfish systems, produced by preferring pleasures which come from the prospect of another's good, to those which are called peculiarly *personal*. Opposed to these systems are others, in which a preference of a contrary character appears to prevail; I say *appears*, because it is only rarely that such a preference can be expressed

in any distinct and definite form of language. The principal obstacle to the selfish system being found in that moral faith of every human being which utterly contradicts it, attempts to reconcile them must be frequent; hence numerous systems which have endeavored to effect this reconciliation by presenting the pursuit of pleasure under its most agreeable and social aspects. But as no such reason exists for mutilating pleasure in an opposite way, while all considerations, on the contrary, direct the attention of philosophers to its social character, the selfish tendency of this element of our nature has been seldom exaggerated. The systems, therefore, to which I now allude, are marked, not so much by a systematic as by an implied preference of the purely personal elements of self-love; and in this they are distinguished broadly from others which have professed such a preference boldly and openly. The system of Hobbes, for example, is an exceedingly gross form of the selfish system, so nakedly and unreservedly does it expose its purely personal tendencies; and that of Lamétrie is yet more remarkable; indeed, it may be said that, in this system, the mutilation of the element of pleasure is avowed; so exclusively are the most selfish tendencies of our nature regarded as the only source of happiness. Selfishness, under this form, becomes harmless; for it drops its mask, and displays its hideous features. And it is when it assumes this form, too, that it loses all pretensions to be considered philosophical, as I have already explained. Practically, however, this form of the selfish system is nowise rare; it is, of course, utterly



hostile to society, and against it are the laws principally directed.

Such are the chief varieties of the systems of selfishness. Narrow as is its principle, you have seen that it is still constantly met with, both in philosophy and in social life. This mutilation of human nature has itself been mutilated in various ways; so complex are the volitions originating in the influence of this element. You have seen that it is to various modes of imperfectly analyzing the phenomenon of self-love that the different forms of the selfish doctrine are to be referred. The phenomenon of self-love, indeed, presents two kinds of complexity—good ~~or~~ pleasure, as the consequence, and utility, as the means, constituting the first, and the different sorts of good and pleasure of which we are capable, the second. If you examine this twofold complexity, you will find each represented by a peculiar form of the selfish doctrine. Such, gentlemen, are the conclusions to which it has been my wish to lead your minds in the present lecture.

But I should leave my work imperfectly done, if I should neglect to remind you of the two different attempts which have been made to deduce from the principle of self-interest the rule of general interest—attempts which have produced two new varieties of the selfish system, to be added to those which have arisen directly from the analysis of the fundamental fact; and these exhaust the possible forms under which the system can be presented.

These two new varieties of the selfish system agree in pretending that the substitution of the rule of

general interest for that of private interest is legitimate. They differ from each other in this — that the one finds the proof of the legitimacy of this substitution in the phenomenon of sympathy, the other in the necessity of our advancing the interests of others as a means of securing their aid.

In my refutation of Bentham, I have sufficiently explained both the nature and the fruitlessness of such attempts; I am not bound, therefore, in the present lecture, to go over that ground again, and I limit myself to saying, that the selfish system has very frequently presented itself under this disguise, and that its chief victories have thus been gained; and, if the follower of this system would but live up to his rule, undoubtedly it is the form which, of all others, would practically approach most nearly to morality. Faithful to this rule, however, no one can be; for, the general good being considered merely as the means of securing private good, every individual feels that he has continually the right to violate it, if he thinks that he can, by so doing, advance his interests. Practically, then, we do not find that this form offers any surer guaranties of right conduct than other forms; although it has always one good effect — that, by leading men to consider the various relations by which they are united to their fellow-beings, it induces them to think of them oftener and respect them more.

I have now finished my notice of the various forms of the selfish system; and it only remains to be remarked, that, under all, its essential character and radical defects continue unchanged. Whether the

individual pursues the gratification of impulse, or the accompanying pleasure, or the different objects fitted to produce them; whether he prefers, as most fitted to promote his highest good, the satisfaction of certain tendencies and pleasures; or, finally, whether, for the attainment of his end, he adopts the circuitous means of general interest, or the direct pursuit of his own,—it is of little consequence to determine: he is impelled to act, in each and every instance, by calculations of what is best for himself. His motive is always at once personal and reflective—in other words, interested; it is essentially distinct, therefore, from the motive of impulse, which is personal without being reflective; and from the moral motive, which is reflective, but impersonal—or, in other words, disinterested. Self-love remains essentially the same, therefore, under all its forms, and impresses a similar character upon the various schemes of conduct to which it leads. One selfish rule for life is preferable to another, only because it may approach more nearly the rule given by the moral motive. But even should these, in any case, appear to be identical, the identity would be confined to external acts; and, though doing precisely what the moral and impersonal motive would command, the individual's conduct would be as far removed from virtue as if his action were directly opposite.

Finally, it should be mentioned, as a characteristic of the selfish system, which is never lost, that it suggests, and can suggest, no idea of obligation; and this characteristic modifies the influence of every impulse which it gives. As the motive is always

the good, the pleasure, or the interest of the individual, this motive must have itself a character of obligation, before it can communicate it; but such a character it neither has nor can have. In vain do you say that an act will be agreeable or advantageous; I do not, on that account, feel myself bound to do it. To tell me that I ought to do something because it is good for me, is a deduction which I cannot feel to be just, so long as I distinctly recognize in my reason that it is always what is absolutely good which should be done. It must be proved, then, that what is a good for me is good in itself, before I can feel a sense of obligation to secure my own good; and this is but saying, in other words, that the motive of self-interest is not a legitimate one in itself, but needs the sanction of the moral motive to give it this character of legitimacy.

Yet more; it might be said that the selfish motive does not even offer a reason for acting. A reason is an evident truth, throwing light upon and explaining the particular question to which it is applied. Shall I, or shall I not, act? This is the practical question to be settled. Self-love answers—Act, because your nature demands it. That this may be a reason, it is necessary that it should express an evident truth; but so far is this from being evident, that reason at once demands its proof. If I am satisfied with the reply of self-love, I obey not a reason, but a natural desire. As a matter of fact, then, the follower of interest acts not from reason, but from passion. He does, indeed, reason as to the best means of gratifying this passion, and so far, it may be said, his conduct

results from reasoning; but it is to an impulse of passion, and not to a conviction of reason, that he yields as a motive; and, therefore, although he reasons about his acts, yet cannot he be called reasonable in performing them. We act reasonably only when we act morally; because then alone do we obey a reason or an evident truth, which is this—It is right that absolute good should be always done.

If we complete our analysis, we shall find that to say to any one, Do this, because it is for your good, is to say, This is good, because it is good for you—a proposition which is very far from being self-evident. Not only, then, are the suggestions of self-love not obligatory, but they imply a proposition which is not, and cannot be, an evident truth, until individual and absolute good are proved to be identical. So far, therefore, from proving the obligation of certain acts, self-love does not even supply a reason for their performance. Thus, in the attempt to explain and justify the selfish principle, do we escape from its control; and in the very reason which we find for yielding to it do we form a conception of the moral motive.

## LECTURE XVI.

## THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM.—SMITH.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE endeavored, in preceding lectures, to give you an idea of the systems which find in the love of self the principle of morality. They form the first class of systems which, in their examination of human nature, either overlook or mutilate the moral principle. To-day I pass to another class.

The radical error of the systems now to be discussed is a far less important one than that of the systems already considered. These latter, by placing the principle of morality in the pursuit of personal good, do nothing less, in fact, than deny the existence, in human nature, of any disinterested motive—than which a grosser error cannot be committed. The systems which now come under our attention are guilty of no such wrong as this: they admit the existence of a motive distinct from self-love; they recognize the fact of disinterestedness, and find in this the principle of morality: their mistake is, that they overlook the real fact, or misapprehend its nature. To-day, then, gentlemen, we are to enter upon the examination of systems which teach that

man does often act disinterestedly, but which, in their attempt to ascend to the source of this disinterestedness, miss the way, or see it but dimly, and thus misrepresent the true principle of morality.

Disinterested systems, if I may call them so, have originated in modern times, as they have in all the great philosophical eras with which history makes us acquainted. When the spirit of philosophy first awakes in any country, no inquiry is made as to the principle of morality; for the human mind meets with questions of more pressing importance, which it is long occupied in solving. But the time comes, when philosophy finally begins to discuss the moral problem, and seeks to learn the destiny of man, and, from a knowledge of it, to deduce rules for conduct; and, in all cases, the first solution adopted is the doctrine of happiness, or the selfish system. The reason for this is plain. Good sense suggests that, in our attempt to solve the moral problem, we should look for the determining motives of human volitions; and, among these motives, none is so apparent at once to the eye of the observer as the love of pleasure and the dread of pain. In every philosophical movement, therefore, when the human mind has commenced its search for the principle of conduct and the motive of action, has the selfish system first appeared. In most cases, the doctrine has been taught without a perception of its consequences; but, whether its discoverer and promulgator has recognized them or not, sooner or later they practically display themselves; for never in the world can a principle be introduced without a development of its natural fruits: in the

course of events, earlier or later, are they all necessarily revealed. Now, the consequences of self-love are odious in their effects on human nature; and they are so, not only because they mutilate it, but because it is the noblest part which they reject. Universal sympathy accompanies disinterested purposes and acts, while antipathy is oftener felt for interested ones. The true consequences of self-love cannot be seen, then, without exciting against them a general indignation and disgust, in time extended to the system in which they originate. Observe, the doctrine contained in the fundamental maxim, that the pursuit of happiness is the end of man, has nothing in itself which shocks our minds; on the contrary, we may say, that, understood in a large and comprehensive manner, it is true; so that the system, regarded merely in its principle and its superficial influence, has nothing to excite alarm, and has often been received by the noblest minds without a scruple or a doubt; as, for instance, in the seventeenth century, it was adopted by Leibnitz on the one side, and by Bossuet on the other, though nothing could seem more opposed than the doctrine of interest to the Christian spirit of the latter, and to the gigantic and severe intellect of the first. As soon, however, as a more thorough analysis has brought to light the strict and necessary consequences of the system, and revealed its real tendencies, conscience becomes alarmed, good sense raises its voice, and a philosophical reaction follows, the first object of which is to prove that there is something disinterested in the human soul, and consequently another motive than the pursuit of selfish



good. Then follows a more philosophical and rigorous analysis of the different motives which influence the will — an analysis whose object is to find the sources of disinterestedness in human nature, and in them the spring of all virtue and devotion. To discover this disinterested principle demands a far more attentive study of psychological facts than to see the principle of self-interest. For this plays on the surface, if I may say so, while the operation of the other is profound; and it may therefore with truth be said, that the philosophy of self-love is the philosophy of children. To find this solution of the moral problem demands no reflection, no study of man. But the principle of disinterestedness is apprehended with more difficulty — so deep in our inmost nature does it act; so that, in the reaction to which I have alluded, many errors and half-truths are advanced, before the true principle of morality is conceived with precision. Therefore it is, that, in modern times, we have seen such a multitude of systems, which — all proclaiming the fact of disinterestedness, and pretending to indicate its real source — have given, nevertheless, such different explanations. A like diversity characterized, in ancient times, the disinterested school, although it was then more limited, because human opinions, in those ages, were moulded into simpler forms than in modern days, and because, as analysis extends further to shades of ideas, and multiplied systems are invented to represent them, these systems blend and assimilate more together, and are less marked by distinctive traits.

The systems which profess to base morality upon

the foundation of a disinterested principle, are of two kinds. The distinction of the first is, that it finds the origin of disinterested volitions in an intellectual perception of moral good and evil. In other words, the first class of these systems explains the existence of our ideas of moral good and evil by an operation of reason, which judges acts to be good and bad in themselves, and absolutely. According to this doctrine, therefore, the perception of moral good and evil is a rational fact—a phenomenon, not of the sensibility, but of the intellect.

The second class of disinterested systems, on the contrary, explains the distinction between good and evil in the soul, and the disinterested volitions thence resulting, by facts which belong to the sensibility, and not to the reason; so that disinterestedness, according to this doctrine, is not the result of a judgment, but of an instinctive impulse.

Sentimentalism and rationalism are, therefore, the two characteristics, by which systems professing to be disinterested, and, under some form or other, opposing the selfish system, may be distinguished and classified.

My desire is, gentlemen, by an exposition of a few of the systems embraced under these two categories, to give you an idea of all which either one class or the other may include. I cannot attempt to describe each of these various doctrines, for the task would be endless; and it will be quite sufficient, if I show you, by a few examples, how some, by seeking the disinterested element in the sensibility, and others in reason, have disfigured the true principle. These

systems are all worthy of our highest regard; the intentions of their authors were generous and noble; and, though they have erred in their search of the disinterested motive of volition, they yet have put faith in disinterestedness, and some have caught glimpses of it, and approached it nearly.

I will begin with an exposition of the sentimental systems; and from them I will select the one which, of all others, is the most ingenious and original — I mean that of Adam Smith, as it is exhibited in his work entitled “The Theory of Moral Sentiments.” In the present lecture, it will be my purpose to give you some idea of the principles of this most remarkable system.

Smith is the most original writer that Scotland has produced for a hundred and fifty years. With his great work on political economy you must already be somewhat acquainted. Of that science he was truly the father — establishing it, as he did, upon a foundation of such facts as would have escaped the attention of any mind less penetrating than his own. With him, philosophy was, comparatively, a secondary interest; and the principal results of his inquiries upon such subjects may be found in his work on the moral sentiments. The views which this work contains, however, are characterized by all the originality and richness of his mind; and, deceived as he undoubtedly was as to the principle of morality, it may yet with truth be said, that the facts of human nature, by him brought to light and analyzed, make this book one of the most precious and useful that can be consulted in studying the science of human nature. I will limit

myself to a description of the chief facts upon which his system is based ; they are perfectly true in themselves, and his error was only in deducing from them consequences which they do not justify.

Whenever we see a man deeply affected with any sentiment or passion, our nature, without the intervention of either reason or will, tends to reproduce the sentiment or passion ; in other words, our nature is disposed to place itself in the situation of the person who is the object of our regard. This phenomenon, though obscure in certain cases, is perfectly clear and apparent in others. When we gaze upon a mother, whose whole look and air manifest warm love for the child upon her knee, we cannot but feel a similar disposition springing up in our own hearts ; and, in a thousand instances, which it is not worth our while particularly to notice, the same thing might be observed, as every one will testify. Yet more ; this natural inclination to feel in ourselves the emotions which we witness in another human being goes so far, that we even experience it in regard to beings of other species, when they are to any considerable degree animated, and bear affinity to ourselves. We cannot see, for instance, a dog manifesting deep inward pain, without feeling a similar emotion ; and the joyfulness and vivacity of a bird, as it skips singing from bough to bough, awakens in our minds also joyful emotions. And this instinct acts even when the object that excites it is repugnant to our taste. The sight of a serpent creeping with undulating movement on the ground inspires us with some disposition to imitate him. And, in general, whenever a sensible

phenomenon, of which we ourselves are capable, is observed in any being whose nature is at all similar to our own, there springs up a desire to feel and do the same. This property of human nature is sympathy, or, at least, the root and germ of that to which we give this name.

That our agreeable or disagreeable sentiments acquire new force and acuteness when shared by a fellow-being, is a fact demonstrated by innumerable circumstances. When we are in a theatre, where but few are assembled to behold the representation, we experience infinitely less pleasure than when the room is crowded, and we are conscious that all around us are minds affected like our own; this is notorious. The mere thought that our souls are in unison with other souls — that the sentiments which they experience are similar to ours in nature and degree — this mere thought is in itself a source of pleasure; in this mere sense of harmony we deeply rejoice.

To these two facts a third may be added. So strong and instinctive is our desire for this agreement of feeling between ourselves and those around us, that, whenever we experience an emotion, and express it where any person is present who is not similarly affected, involuntarily and unconsciously we lower our tone and soften down the utterance of our feeling, that we may thus be brought more nearly into harmony with his calmness; while, on the other hand, the unexcited person is quickened by the sight of our emotion, till, by an instinctive complaisance, his sympathetic feeling rises as high as our original feeling. This fact is one of such constant occurrence,

that all must have observed it. When you are strongly moved by any passion, I ask, do you manifest it in its full force in the presence of indifferent spectators? Certainly not. You temper its expression, from a regard for their feelings. And they, on their part, being conscious that you are under the influence of a certain impulse, and that you are partially concealing it from a desire of being in harmony with them, not only share your feeling through sympathy, but, by an effort, seek to be animated with equal strength of passion, that the state of their sensibility may correspond with yours. These three facts, which have now been noticed, are purely instinctive; neither reason nor will concur to produce them.

There are various laws governing this principle of sympathy, which the acute mind of Smith succeeded in discovering and establishing. I wish to give you an idea of them, before proceeding to describe the moral consequences which were deduced from them by this philosopher. But, first, let me present a single observation upon one point where I differ from Smith. Smith thinks that this natural propensity is not one which, in every case, takes the form of sympathy, but that often, far from feeling a desire to imitate, we are conscious, instead, of an antipathy. For instance, when we see a man impelled by some malevolent passion, our nature, Smith thinks, experiences a repugnance, rather than any wish to be inspired with a similar feeling. This fact I am, of course, not disposed to deny; but I explain it quite differently. I believe that the first impulse of every human being, without exception, where signs

of any emotion in a fellow-being are manifested, is to be similarly affected; but this impulse, it appears to me, is, in many instances, restrained and modified, either by reflection or by a sympathy yet more powerful for emotions experienced by other beings. This, however, is a point which is of importance only as a matter of science. It is perfectly true that there are cases in which sympathy is simple, while in others it is divided among two, three, or more objects, according as more or fewer persons are affected by the passion manifested. And it is to the laws which govern sympathy in such cases that I now wish to direct your attention.

Let us suppose that we see a man who is excited with the passion of anger, and not without adequate cause; instantly two facts of sympathy appear. On the one side, I sympathize with the anger which is manifested; on the other, I sympathize with him who is the object of this rage, because I see that he is threatened with a danger. Whether the individual is conscious or ignorant of his danger, imagination still represents him to me as exposed to it, and I feel as a human being should who is the object of another's hate. Sympathy places me at once, then, in the situation of the angry man, and of the person against whom his indignation is directed; my sympathies, therefore, become divided; part attach themselves to him who is in a passion, part to him who is the object of aversion. From this it follows, that if I myself am excited with anger, and experience the desire felt by all men, in different degrees, of being in harmony with their fellow-creatures, I must moderate the ex-

pression of my passion ; for in proportion as I control myself will their sympathy with the object of my anger lessen, and their sympathy with me increase. This guarded exhibition of passion, in the presence of fellow-men, is instructive in all, especially if the persons around are strangers. A man alone in his chamber gives way to the full violence of his rage ; in the presence of his wife and children, he restrains, in some degree, the utterance of his passion ; but in the presence of one whom he holds in high esteem, and whose respect he desires to gain, his excitement at once and instinctively disappears. This fact is an additional proof of that need of sympathy, which, as we have seen, all human beings feel. Sympathy demands that the expression of any passion should be moderated, and instinctively it is done ; sympathy requires that the least manifestation of them should be repressed, and they are repressed at once. Suppose—although the supposition is incredible—that I am animated by a purely malevolent affection ; or, in other words, that unjustly, and without cause, I am filled with a desire to do some one an injury ; in such a case, according to Smith, this malevolent feeling would excite no sympathy ; according to my idea, it would, although the sympathy would be controlled by that felt for the object of my malevolence : in either view, the result is the same. In a case where such malevolence is exhibited, sympathy tends to attach itself exclusively to the being who is threatened. The man, then, who feels it, is naturally inclined, not only to express it with moderation, but not to manifest it at all ; it is the bad, therefore, who are hypocrites ;



and hypocrisy is instinctive in them, and not the result of reflection only; reason, indeed, may give new force to the instinct, and the love of esteem may lead to dissimulation; but the feeling precedes the act of reasoning, and this instinctive impulse, according to Smith, is only one form in which is manifested the desire of being in harmony of feeling with our kind.

Thus have I shown you some instances in which sympathy is composed of several and of opposite elements; there are others, where it is simple, and, consequently, of a uniform character. Sympathy of this sort may be seen in cases where our emotions have no reference to the well-being of others; for example, in the love of truth: however strong this feeling may be, it cannot affect the happiness of our fellow-beings; the disposition, therefore, can excite in other men only emotions of pure sympathy; and there is no motive of instinct or reason why we should conceal them at all, or prevent the expression of our whole feeling. However much I may love beauty or truth, I see not why I should moderate the utterance of my pleasure in the presence of others; for I have no ground for supposing that they are animated by any opposing sentiment.

Finally, there are inward emotions which may excite sympathies of various, though not opposing kinds. Thus, when I see a man full of emotions of pity, charity, love, friendship, a twofold sympathy arises; I sympathize with the benevolence of the one party, and the gratitude of the other — with the object of the benevolent feeling, and the object of the grateful

feeling. Now, as you will see, these two kinds of sympathy, so far from being opposed, tend to strengthen each other : it follows, therefore, that the benevolent affections are, of all others, those which inspire most sympathy, and which, consequently, contribute most to produce among men that harmony of feeling which all instinctively desire ; and finally, it follows, that there can be no necessity for dissimulation, by restraining ourselves in giving them expression.

From this short exposition, you may see, that the analysis of the phenomenon of sympathy has furnished Smith with an explanation of a vast variety of the facts of human nature—an explanation which is as ingenious as its fundamental idea is simple. How he employs it to account for moral facts, properly so called, I will now proceed to show.

What, asks Smith, is the approbation or disapprobation of another's sentiments ? In what cases do we approve—in what disapprove them ? On reflection, we shall see, that we approve when we share them, and disapprove them when we do not ; that we approve them entirely when we share them entirely, and partially when we share them partially ; in a word, that approbation and disapprobation are not only in our reason an effect of the purely sensible phenomena of sympathy and antipathy, but in every case are an exact representation of these feelings. If this is true, the origin of approbation or disapprobation, in reference to others, is perfectly explained ; they spring from sensibility—from the instinctive phenomenon of sympathy. Our judgments upon the sentiments and acts of our fellow-beings are really only the ex-

pression of the degree of our sympathy or antipathy for these sentiments and acts. But we thus account for only a part of our moral judgments; it remains to be seen, how those arise which are directed to our own sentiments and acts.

Smith asserts, that if a man should live alone, he would never judge of his actions as being good or bad; for the only means by which he could determine the quality of actions would be wanting. This singular opinion of his is founded on the idea that sympathy is the principle from which is deduced the rule by which we estimate the moral qualities of all acts, whether of ourselves or others, and distinguish the good from the bad. Now, as it is absolutely necessary that two human beings at least should exist, before the sentiment of sympathy can be developed, it is impossible that the solitary man should conceive this rule, and thus judge of the morality of actions. But how does sympathy enable him to conceive this rule? Let us see.

Smith states, as a fact, that we have the power, whenever we are animated by any disposition, or perform any act, or follow any course of conduct, of looking upon this sentiment, act, or conduct, as an indifferent spectator, and of experiencing, in some degree, such a sentiment of sympathy as we should at seeing such sentiments, acts, and conduct in another person. Now, is this fact upon which Smith rests his explanation exactly true? Have we really the power of making ourselves spectators of our own dispositions and acts, and of feeling at the sight such sentiments as the dispositions and acts of other beings

excite? For my part, gentlemen, I am ready to say that we do, undoubtedly, possess this power; and, with a few exceptions, I am ready to recognize the effects which he ascribes to it.

Smith declares that when we are carried away by a violent passion, this passion still continues to act, though in so feeble a manner that its influence is scarcely to be traced; and, further, that when the passion is abated and calmed, it reappears in full energy with all its consequences; and this is true; for then do we represent vividly to ourselves the appearance which we have exhibited, and feel, in all their distinctness, the sentiments of sympathy or antipathy which our acts are fitted to awake. It is of little consequence, in Smith's opinion, whether these feelings of sympathy or antipathy are more or less acute, or whether they are manifested earlier or later: the important fact is, that we do really experience them: he asks us only to grant that we have the capacity of being thus impressed, and his system, he thinks, is justified.

If, says he, we have an urgent natural desire to be, in our dispositions and sentiments, in harmony with our fellow-beings, it is only necessary for us to feel that a particular disposition would excite their antipathy, to make us consider it bad; and if, on the contrary, we are conscious of a disposition which would excite their sympathy, we shall think it good; and, finally, should we be aware that our state of feeling is one which would excite their mingled sympathy and antipathy, we should judge it to be neither perfectly good nor perfectly bad. Hence a principle by which

we judge of our own sentiments and acts, by sympathy, as we should those of our fellow-beings; so that, just as we should estimate the acts of others, by the sympathy or antipathy which they excite in us, do we estimate our own, by the sympathy or antipathy which they are fitted to excite in others,—a sympathy and antipathy, for which, in both cases, we are indebted to our power of placing ourselves in the situation of other persons, and thus entering into their feelings.

From these two principles, for the moral estimation of the sentiments and acts of ourselves and others, results a more general principle, by which to judge of all dispositions and modes of conduct: it is by means of these that we ascend to the general maxim, which, according to Smith, is the fundamental principle of morality—that the goodness of an act is in direct ratio to the approbation which it receives from others, and that the best acts are those which are fitted to excite pure and universal sympathy,—a sympathy unmingled with antipathy,—the sympathy not of a few, but of every individual of the human race. Hence, gentlemen, a scale of the moral good and evil of acts, graduated by this universal standard, and a code of rules for conduct.

In proportion as experience teaches us to recognize the acts which are fitted to awaken pure sympathy or antipathy, or mingled sympathy and antipathy, do we learn to estimate their value, and impress on the memory their moral quality. Hence the maxims and rules which we find in the minds of the mature. When once discovered by experience and stored in

memory, we become able to form judgments immediately, by means of these ascertained and established rules; and thus the labor of making estimates of our own and others' acts is abridged, and self-command strengthened, in cases where passion is so violent as to deprive us of our power of judging by sympathy. At such times, I may rely for direction on the rule which pronounces the emotion good or bad, and yield to or restrain it, without fear of feeling remorse when my calmness is restored. The same is true of those instances in which the perplexities and cares of life prevent me from freely entering into the inmost feelings of others, and subjecting their dispositions to the test of my sympathy or antipathy: the test by which I must then judge is the rule that pronounces what sentiments and acts are proper in any given situation. Hence we may appreciate the utility of the rules which result from experience, and are the fruits of repeated applications of the principle of sympathy or antipathy.

Such is the manner in which Smith explains, by sympathy, the fundamental phenomenon of moral distinctions. And of course he finds no difficulty in accounting for secondary moral phenomena. But, as time will not permit me to follow him into all these details, I will select, as a specimen, the origin, which, with entire fidelity to his main principle, he assigns to the sentiment of merit or demerit.

You are already well informed as to the nature of this phenomenon; you are aware, that, when we contemplate a good or bad action, a judgment of reason accompanies our sensation of pleasure or pain,

and that, in the one case, we consider the agent worthy of reward, in the other, of punishment, and are thus inclined to wish them happiness or suffering. This phenomenon admits of a very simple explanation in the system of Smith. When I witness an act of benevolence, I experience not only a feeling of sympathy for the state of mind of the benevolent person, but also for that of the object of his kindness. What is this? It is gratitude. And what is gratitude, except a desire of benefiting him who has done us a favor, and because he has done it? Participating as a spectator in this feeling, I wish well to the author of the act; I feel, in other words, that he merits happiness as a reward for his conduct. What happens, on the contrary, when I see a man animated with malevolence? I feel no sympathy for him; but all my feelings are directed towards him who is the object of hatred, into whose situation and state of mind I fully enter. Now, what are your emotions when you perceive yourself to be regarded with aversion? Instinctively, you desire to return ill for ill; a spectator, then, who sympathizes with your feelings, must judge your enemy to be worthy of punishment; that is to say, deserving of the pain, which, in his malevolence, he seeks to inflict on you. Such, in Smith's view, is the natural explanation of the judgment of merit and demerit.

With apparently equal facility, he explains the pleasure that we experience when we have done well, and the remorse which accompanies wrong doing. By my power of becoming a spectator of my own dispositions and acts, I feel for myself, when I have acted

right, a sentiment of sympathy; and this emotion makes me conclude that others, who behold the act, feel for me a similar sentiment. I am conscious, therefore, of a profound accordance between my conduct and their feelings, and between their emotions and my own; and we have before seen how delightful is this sense of harmony. In this, then, consists the pleasure of doing well. Yet more; having established the rule by which to determine the moral quality of acts, I feel authorized to pronounce my conduct right, because I have learned that all conduct is right which secures the sympathy of others. In this consists the approbation which I feel for myself, and which blends with the sensation of pleasure. For the opposite reason, I feel, when I have done wrong, the peculiar pain which is called *remorse*, and disapprove and blame myself.

Thus have I exhibited the general elements of Smith's system; and you can readily imagine how it may be carried out and completed. In his work, however, the applications of it are innumerable, and their ingenuity and delicacy are infinite.

As soon as a man's nature is developed, and the principle of moral estimation and the rules of experience are established in his mind, he possesses all necessary elements for the approbation of any benevolent act which he may behold. He experiences a twofold sympathy; first, for the motives of the agent; secondly, for the happiness and gratitude of the object. Again, he perceives the conformity of the act done with the rule of morality communicated by experience; so that, independently of the instinctive judgment,



here is also a judgment of reason upon its goodness. A mature man, then, feels, in the contemplation of a good action, not only a sentiment of sympathy, and a kind emotion for the agent, but to these is added a rational judgment of approbation. In children, and often in men of vulgar minds, this third element, indeed, is wanting; for, before it can exist, reason must have created; or experience introduced, the general rules of morality whose formation we have explained; and approbation, as a judgment of reason, is only the recognition of an act as conformable to these rules; it necessarily, therefore, presupposes them. But this is not all; the action appears to us fitted, by its nature, to promote such a general system of conduct as will tend to bring the sentiments of all men into harmony. Now, this universal harmony is felt to be eminently beautiful, or, rather, as we might say, to be moral beauty itself; and we pronounce the act, therefore, not only good, but beautiful. It is here that Smith finds the principle of moral beauty, which he esteems the source of all beauty.

As this latter point may seem less clear than those already mentioned, let us dwell a little longer upon its consideration.

If all men should conduct themselves in such a way as to secure for their acts the sympathy of their fellow-beings, it is plain that there would ensue an entire accordance of feeling, and consequently a state of perfect harmony. It is this harmony that is beautiful; and Smith compares the pleasure, which the

prospect of it affords, to that which we experience when gazing upon a complicated piece of mechanism, whose various movements resolve themselves into one. This gratification of taste is felt, to some degree, in the contemplation of every action that is morally good.

Smith has not overlooked nor concealed the fact, that, in many instances, a good act, far from securing the kind affections of men, subjects us, on the contrary, to their hate; and he explains this anomaly, by saying that men are often animated by passions and prejudices which are themselves discordant with the universal laws of morality. He acknowledges, therefore, that there are circumstances, in which a good man is called upon to brave the antipathy of his immediate associates, that he may win the sympathy of mankind at large. And it is here that the application of the principle of sympathy becomes peculiarly delicate and difficult, and its insufficiency displayed. But it must be fully granted, that Smith has not hesitated to bring his system to this test; he has admitted, that the virtuous man must often, in doing what he ought, — and precisely because he does what he ought, — place himself in opposition to the spirit of his country and of his age, and thus bring upon himself the antipathy of his contemporaries. Smith might have passed by in silence this case, which it is so embarrassing, by his principles, to explain; and, therefore, although his attempted explanation does but little credit to the logical powers of the philosopher, yet the candor, with which he has stated

the difficulty, secures our respect for the probity of the man.

Such, then, gentlemen, are the fundamental ideas of Smith. In my next lecture, I will present some critical remarks upon this ethical system.

## LECTURE XVII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

ETHICAL systems are characterized and distinguished by the nature of their answers to certain questions, which every ethical system must attempt to solve. The destiny of man on earth—that is to say, the end to which his efforts should be directed—the test by which good is distinguished from evil in conduct—or, in other words, the rule by which the moral quality of acts may be determined—and, lastly, the motive which impels us to act conformably to this rule, and insures its supreme control over our wills—such are the fundamental points, which it is the object of every ethical system to determine, and which different systems determine differently. A system, which should give no answer to either of these questions, would not be an ethical system. In answering any one, however, it answers all; for, so closely connected are the end of life, the rule of moral estimation, and the legitimate motive for action, that, when one is determined, the answer to the other two naturally follows; and, consequently, if we know the

opinion of a philosopher upon either of these points, we are acquainted with his entire ethical system.

These considerations indicate the proper method of discovering the true character of an ethical system. If we desire to ascertain definitely the character of a system, and to obtain an expression of it, precisely as it is, the true way is to seek a reply to these three questions, or to some one of the three; when its answer is given, we shall know all that can be known about it, and can classify it.

Answers to these several questions are not given with equal readiness by all systems; the replies of some are immediate and direct; but those of others are so subtle and equivocal, so inconsistent with themselves, and contradictory to the common sense of men, that we cannot, without difficulty, disengage the thought which they express, and strip the disguise from their real meaning.

Selfish systems give the clearest answer to the three questions which we have suggested. And hence arises the simplicity of their solution of the moral problem, derived as it is from an order of phenomena of which every individual has a distinct and vivid consciousness. A system, which teaches that pleasure is the end of life, is comprehended at once; and, if the pursuit of pleasure is the end, it is evident that the motive must be the desire of happiness, and, consequently, that the test of goodness in conduct is the tendency of acts to promote our welfare. Nothing, then, can be simpler or clearer than the selfish systems; and the only difficulty in regard to them is to detect the shades of difference which distinguish them.

This is far from being the case with systems which seek in instinct for an explanation of the moral facts of human nature; these are as obscure as the instinct itself. Obligated, in establishing their foundation, to describe, in their primitive aspect and subsequent transformations, numerous facts, — which, as they belong to the spontaneous part of our nature, are most subtle and transient, — these systems do not present that appearance of simplicity, by which the selfish systems are characterized; and it is necessary, therefore, if we would understand exactly their answers to the fundamental questions of morality, to analyze them with care, and follow the various windings by which they attempt to evade them. And, true as this is of the instinctive systems in general, it is peculiarly so of the system of Smith, whose mind was so ingenious and fruitful, that it sacrificed willingly, to the pleasure of describing facts and of displaying their various relations and consequences, the rapid and methodical order that never loses sight of the thread of its inductions, but proceeds, with clearness of reasoning, from the phenomena by which it professes to explain moral questions, to the precise conclusions fairly involved.

I have studied Smith's system with all the attention which it demands, that I might be able to give a thorough and exact idea of it; and I feel prepared to describe its precise answers to the three great questions which every ethical system is bound to solve. It is necessary, if we would judge of the truth of this complicated system, that we should see its exact nature; and we can do this only by bringing

it to the test of these three questions, and determining precisely its answer to each. This, then, I shall attempt to do; I shall successively present to the doctrine of sympathy these questions, state its answers, examine each of these answers in itself and in comparison with human nature, and thus endeavor to determine the adequateness and truth of the system. It may seem as if such an examination must be unnecessarily long; but, besides the consideration that it is absolutely required by the obscurity of the system, it may be said that we shall really gain time in pursuing this course; for, if we can but discover the error of Smith's system, we shall have equally detected the mistakes of all other systems which seek, in the spontaneous impulses of human nature, a solution of the moral problem. And be assured, that the instinctive system will lose nothing in being judged by the system of sympathy; its defence was never in better hands. Smith was a profound observer, an ingenious dialectician, and a fine writer; no other philosopher has ever surrounded the system with such an air of plausibility, nor brought to its support so many facts, nor strengthened it by so many analogies, nor applied it in such a variety of specious ways. And, in addition, this system has the merit of being founded upon the very instinct which seems most entitled to respect. I do not hesitate to say, that, if Smith cannot maintain the system of instinct, its defence must be hopeless.

To resume, then; the method by which I shall be governed in this examination of Smith's system, is as follows: — I shall inquire, first, what rule or principle

it recognizes for moral estimation; secondly, what motive it supposes us to be impelled by, when we act conformably to this rule; thirdly, and lastly, what end it assigns to human conduct in the present life. I shall then take up its various answers on these different points, determine whether they are consistent and admissible in themselves, and then compare them with the real facts. Let us now proceed to the first point proposed.

Our moral judgments extend to two classes of actions — those performed by other beings, those performed by ourselves. We determine the character of these acts, and pronounce them good or bad, by means of some principle. What, in Smith's opinion, is this principle?

Our judgments upon acts, according to this philosopher, are only the consequence of those passed upon the affections and sensible emotions which produce them. Sensible affections are, in his opinion, the peculiar and direct objects of moral estimation, which is limited to these affections when they issue in no acts, and extends to acts when the affections are followed out. Now, before we can estimate the moral worth of an affection, we must contemplate it under two points of view; first, with reference to its exciting cause; next, to the effects which it is fitted to produce. Considered in relation to its cause, it may be proper or improper; considered in relation to its tendency, it may have merit or demerit. Propriety, then, and impropriety, merit and demerit, are the moral properties by which affections, and consequently acts, may be estimated. By what principle or rule do



we judge whether an affection is proper or improper on the one side, and has merit or demerit on the other? Such is the question to be determined. If we can discover this principle, from which, according to Smith, this twofold judgment is derived, we shall have discovered the principle given by his system for the moral estimation of actions; because, to determine the moral quality of affections, or of acts, is, in his opinion, the same thing. Let us inquire, then, what this principle is, by which we judge our own acts and the acts of others.

Our manner of judging of the propriety or impropriety of the emotions of others is as follows:—To a certain degree, the impartial spectator experiences, through sympathy, the emotion he beholds; and, as he can approve only so far as he shares an emotion, the degree of his sympathy determines how far he will consider and pronounce it proper; in proportion as it is manifested by the person who feels it, in a stronger or weaker degree than this sympathy, will it be considered too weak or too strong, and, consequently, disapproved as improper. For instance, a man receives a blow, and gives signs of pain: I, as witness of his sufferings, am aroused to sympathy, and partake his feeling; but, in me, this sympathetic emotion rises only to a certain height; if the original subject of the emotion manifests it in a stronger degree than this, it seems to me improper; but if in a similar degree, then it seems to me proper. This common example will serve to indicate the principle of all our judgments of propriety and impropriety, both of the dispositions and acts of others.

Affections will differ from each other in regard to their propriety or impropriety; in the benevolent affections, for example, the spectator may participate in the highest possible degree, while there are others in which he cannot share at all, such as envy, and other malevolent feelings. These latter, therefore, are radically improper, as well as all acts which emanate from them; the expression of them must be entirely suppressed, and on no account must they be allowed to influence our conduct. Between these two extremes may be ranked the various emotions of which our sensibility is susceptible.

Such is the rule by which we judge of the propriety or impropriety of the affections of other beings; and, as you see, it is nothing else than the sympathetic emotion of an impartial spectator. The degree of the sympathy determines the degree of the propriety or impropriety of all affections, and, consequently, of all acts, in which they issue. Let us pass now to the consideration of merit and demerit.

The tendency of emotions may be beneficial or injurious. In the first case, they excite in their object gratitude; in the second, resentment. I, as an impartial spectator, am impelled to share in the feelings which I see exhibited. I am animated, therefore, at once, by the benevolent or malevolent disposition of the agent, and by the gratitude or resentment of the object. Well: according to Smith, when the impartial spectator sympathizes entirely and unreservedly with the feelings of the object of these dispositions, he participates in them, and approves them, and therefore adopts them altogether. His judgment is, then, that

the affection of the agent is deserving of recompense in the one case, and of punishment in the other ; for what is gratitude except the desire of rendering good for good ? or resentment, except the desire of rendering evil for evil ? Such, then, is the origin and true nature of the judgment of merit and demerit.

But in what cases does the impartial spectator sympathize entirely with the gratitude or resentment of the object ? He sympathizes entirely with the gratitude of the object, when he also sympathizes entirely with the affection of the agent—that is to say, when he judges it to be proper ; and he sympathizes entirely with the resentment of the object, when he cannot sympathize at all with the affection of the agent—that is to say, when he judges it to be improper. On this twofold condition does the impartial spectator sympathize entirely with the gratitude or resentment of the one party, and, in consequence, judge that the dispositions of the other have merit or demerit.

Hence, gentlemen, you see that it is the sympathy of the spectator which determines the merit or demerit of emotions and acts, just as it determines their propriety or impropriety. When is an affection, and the action emanating from it, and the agent experiencing it, judged by me to be deserving of punishment or reward ? It is when I partake entirely of the gratitude or resentment which the affection inspires in the person who is its object. And when is sympathy thus perfect ? It is when I participate fully in the benevolent emotions of the agent, and feel nothing of his malevolence. It is sympathy, then,

that instinctively determines for me, the impartial spectator, the merit and demerit, as it does the propriety and impropriety of sentiments, actions, and agents. Here, then, according to this system, is the principle of all our judgments of other beings. And now let us inquire what is the principle by which we judge of ourselves.

With regard to our own emotions, and, consequently, our actions, and ourselves, we are capable of judging, as we judge in the case of others; that is to say, we form estimates of them, under the twofold aspect of propriety and impropriety, of merit and demerit. What is the nature of this phenomenon, and what is the principle of these judgments? Let us observe the explanation which the system gives.

Smith maintains that I can judge of my own affections and actions only by placing myself in the situation of an impartial spectator, and by regarding them from his point of view. Without this mental process, which would be impossible, of course, for a solitary man, we should never pass moral judgments upon ourselves. When I am animated, therefore, with any emotion, and wish to determine its propriety or impropriety, its merit or demerit, this is what I do — I place myself in the situation of an impartial spectator, and, with the power which I have of entering into the feeling of others, I feel, at sight of this sentiment, precisely as an impartial spectator would himself. I am able, therefore, to judge of its moral quality exactly as others would judge, and as I should myself judge, if the sentiment were displayed by another, only with greater precision, because my

knowledge is more accurate, both of the sentiment itself, of its relation to its cause, and of its actual tendency.

Smith does not deny, that when emotions are strong, it is difficult, at the moment, to contemplate them impartially, and thus sympathize with them. But this only shows, that, in such cases, we judge amiss, and it still remains true, that this operation of mind is necessary for a correct judgment; and a strong proof of this is, that we never form as just an estimate of our affections, as in moments when we are not under their influence; or, in other words, when there is no obstacle to my thus placing myself in the situation of a spectator.

Thus, gentlemen, it appears, that the system is consistent with itself; and that the principle, by which we determine the moral quality of our own acts, is the same as that by which we judge of the acts of our fellow-beings. In both cases, it is the sympathetic emotion of the impartial spectator that decides. The only difference between the two cases is, that, in the first, the sympathy is felt immediately, while in the second, it is awakened only by an indirect operation of mind.

One other point remains to be mentioned, to complete a fair and full analysis of Smith's system. Smith asserts that an experience of the judgments passed upon others, and expressed by them, gradually teach us to know what affections are proper or improper, and have merit or demerit. Hence arise general rules, which impress themselves on our memories, and become those laws of morality which are so

often considered primitive in our nature, but which really are only generalizations from particular judgments of the instinct of sympathy. Now, when these rules, resulting from experience, are once established in our minds, it often happens that we pass judgments without regard to sympathy; and thus our mode of moral estimation, originally instinctive, becomes reasonable. Such is the fact, and you can comprehend it perfectly. What, in such cases, is the principle of moral qualification? Is it altered? By no means; for these rules are only the expression of emotions experienced by the impartial spectator, and have no other authority than his sympathy. It is the emotion of the impartial spectator, which, in this case, as in all others, judges and decides.

In every possible application, then, the system is consistent, and its answer is always the same, whether we judge of our own affections or of the affections of other beings, — whether we judge instinctively or by rules, — whether we consider acts in the light of their propriety or impropriety, their merit or demerit; the mode of moral appreciation remains the same, the system reiterates its principle, and asserts that its rule of the sympathy of the impartial spectator is a sufficient test for moral judgments. Such is the exact answer of Smith's system to the first question proposed.

And now, gentlemen, this rule of moral qualification being fully determined and brought to light, we are prepared to judge of its correctness, and appreciate the truth of the system which is based in part upon it. This must be our next step.

The first difficulty presented by this rule is, that it cannot be easily comprehended. I perfectly understand that the supposed spectator may feel sympathy; but I cannot explain the impartiality, which Smith requires. What kind of impartiality is it that he speaks of? Evidently, it is not an impartiality of the judgment; for reason must not be allowed to enter into moral estimates, or they will no longer emanate from simple sympathy, and the system is destroyed. When I see a man moved by some affection, I feel for him, according to Smith, an instinctive sympathy, by which, and by which alone, I judge of his conduct; intellect has nothing to do with the forming of this decision. By the impartiality of the spectator, then, cannot be meant the impartiality of reason, for this has nothing to do with the moral estimation of the act. We are compelled, therefore, to understand the expression as applying solely to sympathy. And here the difficulty presents itself—How shall we comprehend this expression? What interpretation shall we put upon the word? What means the impartiality of an instinct? We speak of a man as impartial, but when is he so? Only when he exercises judgment. Suppose the faculty of judgment suppressed, and the word means nothing. Impartiality is possible only where there is judgment; and when we say that judgment is impartial, our idea is precisely this—that it is influenced by no passion. Why can I not be impartial in regard to a friend? Because sympathy biases my judgment in his favor. And I cannot be impartial in regard to an enemy, for an opposite reason. It becomes all the more difficult to compre-

hend what is meant by the impartiality of sympathy, because, in the common acceptation of words, it is the absence of sympathy that constitutes impartiality. And let no one suppose that this objection consists in a mere play upon words; this error in expression actually betrays the error of the principle. Undoubtedly we may make instinct our rule of moral judgment; but we cannot, without abjuring good sense, adopt, as the law for conduct, the impulses of any thing so essentially capricious; we must make choice, then, among these impulses, and admit the influence of some, while we reject that of others; in other words, we are compelled to regulate this rule. And it is in this attempt that we are led to conceive this idea of the impartiality of instinct, or some other similar idea, such as cannot be correctly expressed, for the reason that it seeks to represent what has really no existence. It is because this system does violence to the nature of things, that it cannot be described without doing violence to language.

But let us overlook this objection, and pass to an examination of Smith's rule for moral estimates. And I assert that this rule is one which is peculiarly fluctuating and unsettled, and, consequently, that it can be determined only with great difficulty.

Let me suppose myself in the presence of a great number of persons of different ages, sexes, and professions; and, to fulfil as far as possible the condition of impartiality required, let me suppose, in addition, that I am a perfect stranger to them, and that there is no connection whatever between us, of friendship, of interest, or of any other kind; and now let me



manifest, in the presence of these spectators, some emotion; what will be the consequence? These various sensibilities will sympathize with me in very different degrees. Lively sensibilities will partake vividly of my emotions — cold ones but feebly; minds preoccupied will feel nothing, while others, which are attentive, may be profoundly touched; between the emotions of the men and women, of the young and old, of the man of the world and the peasant, of the merchant and the soldier, of one who has a sad and another a joyous temperament, there will inevitably be infinite shades of difference; in a word, circumstances whose number cannot be counted, nor whose influence estimated, will modify the sympathy which my emotion excites. Which of these kinds of sympathy shall be my rule, which shall I select as a test of the propriety or impropriety of my feeling? Shall I adopt the sympathy of this or that particular person? or shall I take the mean of all the sympathies? But why should I adopt this mean? or how shall I determine what it is, among so many which are unknown and not to be appreciated? And how, then, can I determine, according to the doctrine of Smith, whether my emotion is proper or improper?

But now let me change my position; let me in turn become spectator of another's emotions. This morning, I should have entered into his feelings more than I do now; this evening I shall share them less; if I am hungry, I shall be indifferent; if I have dined, I shall be complaisant; my mind is full, perhaps, of philosophy, or of business, and I pay no heed; I am in an imaginative mood, and I am

affected even to tears. Which, now, of these feelings of sympathy, shall I select for my test of moral appreciation? Even should I be able to fix upon my rule, yet age, sickness, a thousand circumstances, may enter in to make me change my rule, and plunge me in uncertainty. And if I, a single spectator, and distinctly conscious of my own emotions, find it difficult, in my judgments of others, to decide upon the rule of impartial sympathy in my mind, how shall I, when called to judge myself, select such a rule from the infinitely diverse, impartial sympathies, not only of society around me, but, as Smith demands, of the human race at large? How can you expect that I should identify myself with the men of all places and times, and draw from feelings so various and mutable, and which often I cannot know, that rule of the *mean* of sympathies needed for the moral appreciation of my own sentiments and acts? Assuredly, to subject us to such conditions in acquiring a rule by which to judge and act, is to make morality impossible.

But yet more is to be said, gentlemen: not only is the rule a mutable one, and, therefore, hard to be determined, but, even supposing it known and fixed, it is still, as even Smith himself acknowledges, inadequate; for, as I have already said in my exposition of the system, cases will and must arise, in which an upright man will feel that in acting in a certain way he does right, and yet that, far from obtaining the sympathy of his fellow-beings, his conduct will excite their antipathy. If he is acting in some public capacity, he may, indeed, hope to receive

from the justice of history the sympathy of after ages; but, as to his contemporaries, he is sure of losing the sympathy, not only of a few persons, but of his whole nation. Smith has the candor to acknowledge that such cases may arise, and the fairness to confess that a man is then bound to follow the right and despise public opinion. But how can he do this without denying his system, and abjuring his rule of moral appreciation? Much as we may admire the ingenuity with which he has attempted to escape from this dilemma, it is impossible not to see that his efforts are fruitless, and that his theory is wrecked upon this difficulty. You shall judge.

I have already told you, that when we are deliberating as to the conduct which it is right, under certain circumstances, to pursue, we have, in the opinion of Smith, but one means of deciding; and that is, to place ourselves in the situation of an impartial spectator, and allow our minds to be affected with his emotions; for his sentiment is not merely the true test, but it is the only one by which we can estimate our acts. Now, who is this impartial spectator? Is it John or Peter? No! but an abstract spectator, who has neither the prejudices of the one nor the weaknesses of the other, and who sees correctly and soundly, precisely because he is abstract. It is in the presence of this abstract spectator, who is another *me*, separate from the impassioned *me*, and its judge, that, in my deepest consciousness, I deliberate, decide, and act. Not only is this spectator no particular man, but he does not even represent any portion of society — no age nor sex, no village nor city, no nation nor

era; he represents humanity—he represents God. The sentiments of this secret witness, whose impartiality is so perfect, give us the true principle of moral estimation, and the true rule for conduct.

Assuredly, gentlemen, this would be giving a most ingenious turn to his principle, were it nothing more; but it is, in fact, doing something very different; it is introducing an entirely new view, into which Smith has unconsciously entered, without perceiving that he was not led into it by setting out from his own principle, and that he cannot return from it to his principle again.

How, according to Smith's system, do I become acquainted with the moral worth of actions? By a knowledge of the sentiments of others; their approbation is my rule; and, as this depends upon their sympathy, their sympathy is my rule; to form a judgment, therefore, I must place myself in their situation, and strive to enter into their feelings; and so truly is this, according to Smith, the only rule for estimating sentiments and acts, that if I was alone in the world, or cast away on a desert island, I could not pass judgment upon my acts or sentiments, and they would have no moral character in my eyes. Such, unquestionably, is the doctrine of Smith; and all his illustrations confirm it. Now, what is it that I do, when, for the sentiments of actual spectators, I substitute those of an abstract spectator? Most evidently, gentlemen, I not only abandon the rule of sympathy, and adopt another in its place, but I even deny this rule, and pronounce it false, and condemn it; for this abstract spectator does not exist, and never existed;



and his sentiments, therefore, have no reality, and are wholly fictitious. It is no longer by the sentiments of others that I judge, but by my own. The sentiments of others I reject wholly, and prefer my own; this abstract spectator is one of my own creation; he has no existence in the world without; he is neither a real individual, nor a combination of real individuals; he is an emanation from my own sentiments. I judge, then, by my own sentiments, which, according to this system, are incapable of judgment, the sentiments of others, which, as it teaches, are the only judge; I reverse the system so far as it can be reversed; I make supreme the rule which it pronounces false, and reject the rule which it approves; I enter into another world and another system — a world and system where sympathy is no longer regarded, and where the sentiments of others, so far from being the test for mine, are judged by mine.

In this fiction of an impartial spectator, then, Smith recognizes implicitly that there is a law, superior to that of sympathy; for, by the sentiments of this abstract spectator, which sympathy did not communicate, and which can only be my own, I form moral estimates of the sympathies of other beings, and condemn them, and look only to those eternal laws of right and wrong which conscience and reason reveal.

In truth, gentlemen, it is quite plain that this abstract spectator, imagined by Smith, is nothing else than reason, judging, in the name of order, and of the immutable nature of things, the mutable and blind decisions of men. It is a consciousness of the reality

of this supreme faculty, that embarrasses Smith in the exposition of his system; and he has pictured to himself this faculty, which judges of our own and others' acts, and weighs, impartially, the decisions of others' sympathy for us, and our sympathy for them, under the image of an abstract spectator, because, of all symbols by which conscience can be represented, this is the one which seems most in harmony with his fundamental hypothesis, that we can judge of our own actions only by entering into the feelings of others towards us. Instead of the words *conscience*, or *reason*, therefore, he makes use of the expression *abstract spectator*; in his strong prepossession in favor of his system, he believes that it is by representing to ourselves the sentiments of this imaginary being, that we are able to pass judgment upon our acts; and he is quite unaware, that, in so doing, he contradicts his assertion that a solitary man would form no moral estimates; for, in the most desert island, this abstract spectator would still be our companion, and enable us to judge of our acts, our sentiments, ourselves.

Thus have I shown, as I believe, that the rule of sympathy is one which it is difficult to comprehend; that it is mutable; and, lastly, that it is an inadequate one. And now I will submit it to a yet severer test: let it be granted, for the moment, that it is clear, fixed, and applicable to every case; are these such qualities as are sufficient to secure for it our respect? By no means. These merits must pass for nothing, if it is not the real rule—the true rule of moral judgments. For what is it that we seek in ethical

science? Not imaginary rules, which may explain our moral judgments, but those real rules which do actually determine them. Consciousness alone can decide this point. Smith has pretended to describe the manner by which we estimate our own and others' acts, and consciousness must decide whether this is the way in which we really judge. To consciousness, then, let us appeal.

Are we conscious, then, when we are to judge of the acts of others, that we first give loose to our sensibility, and observe how far it sympathizes with the sentiments by which they are animated, and then determine, from the nature and degree of our own emotions, taken as a rule, what judgments we shall pass? For my part, gentlemen, I say, that, so far from being conscious of such a process of mind, we are even conscious of an opposite one. When I wish to judge impartially of the conduct of my fellow-beings, I make it my first care, if I feel that it excites me, to stifle my emotions and forget them. And why? Because thus I secure the impartiality of my judgment. Singular proceeding indeed, if it is my sensibility which should be the judge! It is not at the moment when I behold some exhibition of strong passion, that I feel most capable of appreciating its propriety or justice; for then my sensibility overpowers me; emotions of sympathy or antipathy possess my mind; and I am perfectly aware that the feeling disturbs my judgment, and destroys its proper freedom and clearness of view. And why should it not be so in regard to moral judgments, when we know that it is in regard to judgments of taste?

When an accomplished reader recites a piece of poetry, if I wish to judge of its beauty, I must not yield to the impression produced by the reading, or I shall be a prey to the emotion which the skilful declamation has awakened; I must await the publication of the piece, and peruse it coolly; and then shall I be competent to form an impartial judgment. Far, then, from being conscious of the facts described by Smith, when I judge of the acts of my fellow-beings, I have a distinct consciousness of quite opposite facts, which make known a wholly different rule of moral appreciation.

His description is equally wanting in fidelity, in relation to judgments on our own acts; although, in this case, I do recognize a phenomenon which may explain, though it cannot justify, his opinion. When I am animated with some emotion, and desire, before yielding to its influence, to determine its character, I often distrust my own judgment; and, if the emotion is very strong, I feel distinctly that my judgment is not in a condition to be impartial. It is fully capable in itself of appreciating the moral good or evil of an affection, and of distinguishing a right from a wrong action; this I am perfectly aware of, and am not anxious on that account; my only fear is, that, in the present instance, it is not in a condition to be impartial. What shall I do, then? I appeal to the sentiments of other men; I place myself in the situation of an indifferent person, and strive to imagine what his opinion would be of the emotion which I experience, and the act to which it impels me. But why this appeal to the sentiments



of a fellow-being, and this effort to enter into them? It is because I believe that, as regards this emotion and act, the judgment of another is freer than mine from the influence of such sentiments as may prevent a correct moral estimate. It is from a regard to that impartiality of which his judgment is capable, while mine is not, that I wish to consult his opinion; and not at all because I consider his sympathy as the true and only rule of the morality of my affections and conduct; for I feel, all the while, that this rule, which I believe him to possess, exists also in my own mind, and it is not this, therefore, which I seek; I seek only an impartial application of this rule.

Such, according to my understanding of our sentiments and acts, is the only fact that has any analogy with Smith's ideas, and from this, perhaps, his system took its origin; but Smith has altered the real nature of the fact, by transforming into the rule of our judgments of ourselves what is merely a means of controlling them. And the proof that this recourse to the sympathy of others is nothing more, is the fact, that, in numerous cases, there is no such recourse; and that, even when it does take place, we often do not follow the opinions of other men, but prefer our own, as Smith himself acknowledges.

Consciousness, therefore, contradicts Smith's system, and does not recognize, in his pretended rule of moral appreciation, the rule which actually dictates our judgments. It is not true that we seek in our own sensibility the judgments which we pass upon others; and neither is it true that we seek in the opinions of others the principle of moral estimation

for our own sentiments and conduct. As to the former point, the rules of moral appreciation are to be found in ourselves; and, as to the second, they consist not in emotions of sympathy, but in conceptions of reason. It is true that Smith may say, in answer, that he recognizes these inward laws, and gives a perfectly clear explanation of their origin. But consciousness cannot confound the rules which he acknowledges with those of morality, nor the decisions of sympathy, of which they are the generalization, with the true moral judgments given by reason. Consciousness does not admit that the true laws of morality emanate from the successive decisions of sympathy upon the acts and sentiments of ourselves and others reciprocally; and it perceives that, if there is any thing in the code of sympathy which is more than a generalization of the opinions of those about us, it can still be a rule of conduct for vain and ambitious men only, but never for a good man.

I must ask your attention for a moment longer, while I examine Smith's principle of moral qualification under another point of view, and inquire what is its authority.

The ethical philosopher has something more to do than to point out a rule of moral estimation; this rule must be shown also to have a moral authority over the will—an authority which is undeniable, and such as can explain the moral facts of human nature, and the moral ideas which we find in human intelligence; and as among these ideas are duty, right, obligation, all of which imply the idea of law, this principle must have the character of a law, and impose

obligations, and thus give obedience the character, not of propriety merely, but of duty. Let us see whether Smith's principle fulfils these conditions.

When I examine the authority of Smith's moral rule, I find that it represents only the general law of an instinct. In all possible cases, if you generalize and reduce to distinct decisions what the sympathy of an impartial spectator declares, you will have, according to this system, the laws of moral conduct. And these moral laws have no other authority than that of an instinct of sympathy. What is this instinct of sympathy? Is it our only instinct? No: it is one only of several. This system elevates, then, the impulses of one particular instinct into being the laws of morality. But whence does this instinct derive its marvellous power of communicating to its impulses the character of a law, with all its peculiar authority and supremacy? If I ask Smith, he gives me no reply. If I examine human nature, I find no explanation of this wonderful prerogative. I have an instinct of sympathy, as I distinctly recognize; I agree that this instinct is developed according to certain laws; I do not deny that it influences my will as a motive; but I have a multitude of other instincts also — instincts which are purely personal — the instinct of love, the instinct of imitation, the instinct of knowing, the instinct of acting — all of which are phenomena of a similar nature. Whence comes, then, the peculiar right and power of sympathy? Whence does it derive its title? By what process do its impulses become rules by which are to be judged, approved, condemned, the impulses of all

other instincts? and not only these, but the acts of all our faculties — even those of intellect and reason? If this mysterious privilege of sympathy cannot be explained, at least I ask whether it is one which we feel and are conscious of — whether these rules of sympathy do speak to us with the tone of command — whether, in a word, although ignorant of the source of their power, we are yet aware that they do exert this right of obligation.

It is wonderful to observe, gentlemen, by what gradual substitutions of equivalent expressions, and by what insensible transitions, Smith attempts to elevate the impulses of sympathy into the condition of rules, and by which he finally succeeds in communicating to them some appearance of this character. We must follow the series of these ingenious sophisms, if we would comprehend his system, and lay bare all its imperfections.

Smith's mode of reasoning is as follows:—How am I affected by the exhibition of another's emotions? Sympathy is awakened, and either I participate in them, or I do not. When do I approve a sentiment? When I participate in it. Approbation, then, is a consequence of sympathy; and, in all its degrees, is only a faithful transcript of the emotions of sympathy. To say that I approve a sentiment, is to say that I participate in it; and to say that I participate in it, is to say that I approve it; and reciprocally to say that I do not approve it, is to say that I do not participate in it. What can be simpler or more proper than to substitute the word *approve*, therefore, for that of *participate*? Well, then, says Smith,

what is morally good? Is it not that which we approve? And what ought we to do? Surely that which is good. Can any thing be more plain, more natural? Will any one deny, that to *approve* and to *pronounce good* are the same things, or that that *ought* to be done which is *good*? How plausible are such propositions! Observe now the conclusion; that which *ought* to be done is precisely what impartial sympathy approves; the instinctive emotions of sympathy, therefore, are the laws of human conduct, and the rules of morality; such is the strict consequence of the preceding reasonings.

I trust that you already perceive the sophistry of such an induction; it consists in pronouncing things to be equivalent which are not so. Let us expose, successively, these false equations; the system itself must bear the blame.

To participate in the sentiment of another being, is simply, according to Smith's system, to feel an emotion equal to that which he experiences: the phenomenon is purely a sensible one. To approve this sentiment, is, in the language of ethics, to consider it proper, good, lawful: this is a purely intellectual fact. Are these two things identical? Not at all. A judgment is a judgment; an emotion is an emotion; but an emotion is no more a judgment than a sensation is an idea. There is no more reason for identifying these two things than there is for declaring them equal. Is the emotion, then, of such a nature, that, when presented to the view of reason, the judgment is an immediate consequence? In other words, do I approve every emotion which I feel to be

equal to yours? Whence comes the necessity of any such consequence? I can see none, and facts contradict it. I share a thousand emotions, without morally approving or disapproving them; I condemn many emotions which I share; and, on the other hand, I approve many things which are neither emotions nor the result of emotions; and I even approve emotions which I not only do not participate in, but which are absolutely displeasing to me. There is no reason whatever, therefore, for pronouncing the sensible fact of sympathy to be equal to the rational fact of approbation. Any equality which there is between them, is only in appearance, and the appearance consists wholly in words. So much for the first sophism.

Our author proceeds to say, that, when I approve an emotion, I feel it to be good; to which I answer, This is not the way in which the human mind reasons; from the goodness of the act we are led to approve it, but not from our approbation to pronounce it good. For what is it that merits approbation? It is that which is good; but that is not necessarily good which is approved. Before we can infer the goodness of an act, as a conclusion, from the fact of its being approved, it must be proved that the approbation is merited, which is saying, in other words, that it is good; this shows that the approbation is a consequence of an antecedent perception of goodness. Smith reverses this order of nature, for he makes the approbation the sign and proof of the goodness. Instead of the true equation between that which is good and that which merits approbation, he sub-

stitutes a false equation between that which is approved and that which is good. This is the second sophism.

Once possessed of the word *good*, Smith dashes on with full sails, and without difficulty arrives at the idea of obligation; for what is more evident to reason than that that which is good ought to be done, and that which is evil avoided? But what mean such words as these, in a system which preserves nothing of moral good but its name, while it destroys the reality? Obligation is attached, not to words, however, but to things; and the word, which is but an appearance, can produce only an apparent obligation. Such is the third sophism.

And now, gentlemen, our conclusion is, that, in establishing as the principle and rule of moral approbation the emotions of an impartial spectator, Smith has elevated into a law of conduct a fact that is purely sensible and instinctive — a fact possessing no more authority than every other instinctive and sensible fact — and, consequently, possessing none at all. Under whatever disguise, therefore, this fact may be enveloped, and through whatever ingenious transformations it may be made to pass, it is still impossible to communicate to it the character which it wants: there is not, therefore, in the system of Smith, any such thing as a moral law; and it is incompetent to explain our ideas of duty, of right, and all other such ideas as imply the fact of obligation; and if it attempts to do so, it must, necessarily, fall into sophisms, and come to empty conclusions, which vanish when we approach to examine them.

Thus, gentlemen, — and with the consideration of this point I shall close my lecture, — Smith himself is conscious, that, after all his efforts, his principle of moral qualification is still wanting in the character of obligation; and he has been compelled, therefore, to employ one further mode of evasion, which it is well you should be acquainted with, if only to convince you of the power of truth, and to show you what embarrassment systematic minds must feel, and to what sophistries the loftiest genius must descend, in its attempt to endue error with a character which it cannot justly claim.

It is the strict consequence of the system of Smith, that whatever others approve and praise will appear to me good, and whatever they blame and disapprove will appear to me bad; and that the rule of conduct, therefore, is to be sought in the approbation and praise of our fellow-men.

Now, conscience revolts instinctively at this idea of finding a rule for conduct in the opinions of others. There are so many occasions when the opinion of the world must be wrong; the principle subjects our conduct to such a dependence upon the caprices and mutations of opinion; and, finally, it is so often assigned as a motive for conduct, by men who are wholly governed by vanity or ambition, — that a doctrine professing this principle is much better calculated to repel than attract us. Smith himself, indeed, has too much good sense to allow himself to believe or teach that the desire of praise and the fear of censure is the only motive for good men. He is driven, therefore, into finding some means of es-



caping from this consequence of his system; and you shall see how he has attempted to do so.

We cannot, he says, desire to be praised, or fear to be blamed, without desiring to be the legitimate object of praise, and fearing to be the legitimate object of blame. The desire of praise and the fear of blame is succeeded by the desire of being praiseworthy and the fear of being blameworthy; and this latter sentiment soon becomes, in all sensible minds, infinitely the stronger of the two; the other remaining prevalent only in vain and frivolous natures.

You see, gentlemen, the transition by which Smith endeavors to substitute for the love of praise the love of that which may merit it, and for the fear of blame the fear of that which may deserve it. If the transition was legitimate, the true end and the true rule for good men would be found; for what we should seek or shun is not the praise and blame, which the world so blindly distributes, but the qualities which make us worthy to receive them; and Smith, being a good man, feels and allows it. But he does so by availing himself of the most sophistical and false equivalent expressions.

We can comprehend, as I readily acknowledge, that the desire of praise may create a desire of being the object of praise; but why? It is because these two desires are really only different forms of the same desire; to love praise and to love to be its object are the same thing. The motive of the good man is not to be found in either one or the other; the motive of the good man is the desire of being

the *legitimate* object of praise, whether he obtains it or not. Between this and the desire of praise there is as wide a difference as possible ; for, to have the latter, we need only to know what praise is, and we can gratify it by performing, in any case, the acts which are necessary to obtain it ; while, to have the former, we must know what conditions are necessary to make us legitimate objects of praise ; and, to gratify it, we must fulfil these conditions. Now, the system of sympathy cannot make us acquainted with these conditions, because it has no other sign or measure of what is worthy and good, than the praise itself. The desire of being the legitimate object of praise is impossible, then, in such a system ; and Smith really admits a new principle of moral appreciation, perfectly distinct from that which sympathy gives, and which is the only one that it can give, when he substitutes for the desire of praise the desire of being worthy of it. He saves his system from absurdity only by abandoning its principle, and his pretended equation of the desire of praise and the desire of deserving it is only a sophism.

And now let me recapitulate what has been said in this lecture. Smith's rule for moral judgment is one, then, which, in my opinion, it is difficult to comprehend ; supposing it to be comprehended, it is so fluctuating a one that we cannot settle it ; even if it were settled, it would yet be inadequate, because there are cases to which it does not apply ; but allowing that it is adequate, it is not the true rule which we are conscious of obeying ; and this last idea is confirmed by the fact that it has no authority and

no character of a law, and thus cannot explain the moral facts and ideas of human nature.

Such are the observations which I have felt bound to submit to your attention, in relation to the answer given by the system of sympathy to the first question proposed as a test. They have led me so far, that I am obliged to postpone until the next lecture a consideration of its answers to the other two questions. This is giving a great deal of time to the discussion of a particular system, to be sure; but you will find the criticism so interesting, I trust, as not to complain of its length. And, in my view, the remarks suggested by Smith's system extend to all others which seek in instinct for the laws of morality; and I feel, therefore, that time thus employed is really gained, not lost

## LECTURE XVIII

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last lecture, I examined Smith's system, for the purpose of determining what answer it gives to the first of the three questions, which every ethical system is bound to solve; and I described and discussed this answer. I proceed to-day to test this system by the two remaining questions, and to criticise the solution of them.

The first of these two questions is this: What is the motive to which we yield when we act right? Let us first inquire, then, how Smith answers it; and, having determined the motive to which he ascribes the legitimate decisions of will, let us examine its authority, and see how far it explains our moral ideas.

We act well, according to any system, when we practise the different virtues which it recognizes. By inquiring, then, what Smith considers the principal virtues, and seeking to know the motive that impels us to perform them, we shall determine the motive to which we yield in doing right, according to the doctrine of sympathy.

You know that, in Smith's opinion, we judge of acts by the affections which lead to them; and that we judge of the affections themselves under a double point of view; first, in relation to the object calling them forth, in which case they are pronounced proper or improper; and next, in relation to their tendency, in which they are considered as having merit or demerit. Propriety and merit are the two moral qualities, of which affections, and consequently actions, are susceptible; such, in other words, are the two elements of moral good.

To the first of these two qualities of affections correspond, as Smith teaches, two virtues. The effort to restrain within proper limits the manifestation of our affections, constitutes the first of them, which is self-command, the source of all honorable virtues. The opposite effort of elevating our sympathetic emotions as nearly as possible to a level with the original affections of other persons constitutes the second, which is benevolence, the source of all amiable virtues. Both have a common end, which is a harmony of affection. In tempering the violence of our original affections in the first instance, and elevating the tone of our sympathetic affections in the second, we seek the same result, which is to bring our sensibility into unison with that of our fellow-beings; in both cases, we anticipate their emotions, and, in this mutual drawing near of affection, meet them half-way. Self command and benevolence—such are the two virtues, by the practice of which, in our double capacity of spectator and actor, we impress upon our affections and acts the character of propriety, and realize the

greatest possible degree of harmony between the sentiments of our fellow-beings and our own.

To the second moral quality of affections, merit, two virtues also belong — charity and justice. The repressing of all affections which could produce the ill of others, indignation alone excepted, constitutes justice; the development of affections which tend to increase the good of others, constitutes charity. Charity is the source of all meritorious virtues; justice of all estimable ones; for, as the only end of justice is to prevent wrong, it cannot produce merit, while charity, by multiplying good, makes us the proper object of the gratitude of others, and, consequently, meritorious.

Such, gentlemen, according to Smith, are the four cardinal virtues, into which all others may be resolved. From the practice of these four virtues, results, as this philosopher teaches, all the morality of human conduct. And now, let us inquire, to what motive we, in his opinion, yield, in practising these several virtues.

Virtuous acts, Smith says, are sometimes instinctive, sometimes reasonable. They are instinctive when they spring from the direct impulse of sympathy; they are reasonable when they flow from the rules, which, as we have seen, are the generalizations of these impulses. Let us consider these cases separately.

To what motive do we yield, when we confine, within the bounds of propriety, the expression of an original affection, and when we elevate our sympathetic emotions to a level with the affection of

another? To the instinct of sympathy, answers Smith; that is to say, to the desire which every human being feels of harmonizing, in his affections, sentiments, and dispositions, with those of his fellow-beings. Sympathy is delightful to him who experiences it, and to him who is its object; we are instinctively impelled to give and to seek it; and from this results the instinctive effort which constitutes self-command on the one side, and benevolence on the other.

We yield to the same motive, says Smith, in the instinctive exercise of justice and of charity; but, in this case, it assumes a peculiar form. When I am charitable, I seek not so much the sympathy of others as their gratitude; and when I am just, I seek rather to avoid their resentment than their antipathy. But is not gratitude the strongest sympathy, and resentment the strongest antipathy? In seeking gratitude and avoiding resentment, then, we really are only striving to gain, and dreading to lose, their sympathy. The spontaneous practice of charity and of justice is determined, therefore, by the same motive which produces the other two virtues; that is to say, by the sympathetic instinct, which impels us to seek a harmony between our own sentiments and those of our fellow-beings. The practice of all virtue, then, emanates from this one motive.

You will please to remark one thing, gentlemen; which is, that, according to Smith, this motive is an instinct, and not a result of calculation. We can desire the love, benevolence, and esteem of our kind, from a prospect of the agreeable or useful conse-

quences of such sentiments. Smith denies, however, that it is from such considerations that sympathy makes us desire them. Sympathy seeks them, Smith declares, for their own sake, because they are its proper objects, as food is the object of hunger. In adopting the sympathetic instinct as the motive of virtue, Smith thinks, therefore, that he refers virtue to a disinterested motive; and it is thus that he pretends to establish the fact of disinterestedness in human nature. Without doubt, Smith has good reasons for saying that the sympathetic instinct is not interested; but whether he is justified, therefore, in calling the volitions produced by it disinterested, and in finding in them the type of true disinterestedness, is an altogether different question, to be considered hereafter.

When, instead of being instinctive, the practice of these virtues is reasonable, to what motive do we yield, in the opinion of Smith? To the authority of rules. Whence comes the authority of these rules? From the fact that they represent the conduct by which we may merit the sympathy of our fellow-beings, and avoid their antipathy. These rules are the generalization of particular judgments of the sympathetic instinct; their only merit in our eyes, and sole title to obedience, is, that they indicate the true course of action to be pursued in the satisfaction of our desire for sympathy. This desire, therefore, is the true motive of obedience to these rules. And it is to this we yield in the reasonable, as in the instinctive, practice of virtue.

The result to which we come, then, is, that the



instinctive desire of sympathy is the motive of all virtue, and, consequently, of all right conduct — a motive that influences the will sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, by rules, but always exclusive of other motives. Not only is this the result naturally given by the principle of sympathy, but I now say, in addition, that this result is not altered by the two expedients which, as I showed in my last lecture, Smith has employed to give to his principle an extent to which it has no claim, and to deduce from it consequences which have no connection with it. A few words will suffice to show that this is true.

The first of these expedients is the notion of an abstract spectator. This is the means by which Smith hopes to prove that sympathy is not limited to a knowledge of the conditions necessary for obtaining the sympathy of our countrymen and contemporaries, but that it is competent to make known the conditions upon which we may merit the sympathy of the human race, of present and of future generations, of men enlightened with perfect wisdom and reason. That this hope is futile, and that it is impossible to deduce logically such infallible moral judgments from any generalization of particular estimates of instinctive sympathy, I have, as I think, unanswerably demonstrated in my last lecture. But, whether the instinct of sympathy has a wider or a narrower range, Smith's idea as to the motive of virtue remains unchanged: either he believes that the conditions for obtaining the sympathy of the human race are made known by the instinct of sympathy, or that they are not. In the first case, he is consistent in his belief that

the motive of our volitions in fulfilling these conditions is the desire of sympathy; in the second, he manifests a consciousness that his system is false, and that it is not adequate to explain the rules of morality; and then it is unimportant to inquire what the motive is to which he attributes our obedience; for it is one foreign to the system of sympathy, and it is only the motive to virtue presented by this system that we seek.

The same must be said of Smith's second expedient, by which he endeavors to show that the love of praise, directly emanating from the instinct of sympathy, immediately begets the desire of being praiseworthy; which desire no sooner becomes supreme, than we endeavor to act in such a way as may make us the legitimate objects of approval, even should this conduct awaken their displeasure. Smith has unquestionably failed in this attempt, as well as in the first; but, whether he has or has not proved the justness of attributing this influence to sympathy, the motive assigned remains the same; and again he is exposed to the dilemma, either of sincerely and thoroughly believing that the principle of his system really produces this desire of being praiseworthy, or that it does not. If he allows that sympathy cannot explain this desire, then he is conscious that his principle cannot account for all our acts of will, and he is forced to admit another and independent principle; and thus he destroys his system, acknowledges that it is false, and there is no further need of asking what motive for virtue he adopts. If, on the contrary, he considers that the desire of praise and the desire

of being praiseworthy are equivalent, then, although he may be deceived, he is still consistent in believing that the desire of sympathy is the single motive of all virtuous acts.

Thus, gentlemen, it appears that Smith has not altered, by either of these attempts, the conclusion legitimately to be drawn from his principles; and, therefore, the only motive of all legitimate actions, acknowledged in his system, is seen to be the instinct of sympathy. And now let us inquire what is the authority of this motive, and how far it is adequate to explain our moral ideas.

In absolute truth, the reason why we ought to do good is so included in the very idea of good, that there is no difference between the moral law and the motive which makes obedience to it our duty. But when we substitute a false law of morality for the true one, the authority is no longer recognized in the law itself, and we are obliged to seek it in the motive to which we yield in obeying it. This is precisely what becomes necessary in the system of sympathy. Good, in this system, is that which is conformable to the emotions of an impartial spectator. Such a rule has, as we have already seen, no authority; it remains, then, to be seen whether the authority, which does not reside in the rule, may be found in the motive which influences us when we act in accordance with it. Let us inquire.

What is the desire of sympathy? An instinct. Is this instinct the only one active in human nature? Far from it: I have many other instincts. Are the instincts the only motives by which I am impelled?

No; for I do not always act instinctively: sometimes I am governed by views of interest, sometimes by a sense of order, by a love of truth, or by some other conception of reason. To judge, then, of the authority of the motive of sympathy, I must compare it with these other motives, which also influence my will, and see what is the nature of its superiority. We will begin with the instincts.

In comparing the action of the instinct of sympathy with that of any other personal instinct, I find that, whenever these are brought into opposition, sometimes one, sometimes the other, triumphs; and that the determining cause of this superiority, unless some considerations of reason enter, is always the greater energy which either may at the moment possess. Experience proves, then, that, in its impulsive force, the instinct of sympathy is exactly equal to all other instincts. But what influence has an instinct over my will, except this power of impulse? and on what ground can it be considered entitled to supreme sway, except that of its energy—an energy of which the pleasure following its gratification must always be the essential element? This energy—which is the only claim of superiority, then, that the sympathetic instinct can possess—sympathy itself, then, cannot communicate.

Its superiority must come, then, from a judgment of reason, declaring its title to be better than that of any other instinct. But, if reason thus decides, it is by means of some rule foreign from, and higher than, instinct; and, therefore, if, governed by this judgment, we prefer the inspirations of instinctive

sympathy to all other impulses, our motive is no longer derived from instinct, but from this higher rule; that is to say, from reason; but this the system of sympathy cannot admit. According to this system, then, the instinct of sympathy, both by right and in fact, is neither more nor less than equal to every other instinct, and can have no real title to superiority.

And now let us compare this sympathetic instinct with self-love. Is its superiority here manifest? Far from it. As a matter of fact, when the instincts of sympathy and of interest well understood come in conflict, the former yields at least as often as it triumphs, and, as a matter of right, the superiority of interest well understood is clear. Whenever these motives clash, one of two things happens: either self-love approves or disapproves the instinct of sympathy; approving when it sees that there will be a gain in yielding the will to the sympathetic impulse, and disapproving when it anticipates suffering as a consequence of so doing. In the first case, our volition is determined by two coöperating motives; and far from feeling that the motive of interest is secondary, we recognize it, on the contrary, as the principal one, at least so long as the instinct acts unaided, and derives no support from a motive of reason. In the second case, sometimes the instinct, sometimes the judgment triumphs; but, unless the instinct is directed by some rational motive, we always feel, in yielding to it, that we should act more wisely in obeying the dictate of self-interest. The instinct of sympathy, therefore, far from appearing to be superior to self-love, is acknowledged by us to be

inferior; and this superiority of the motive of interest is owing to its character of being rational: on this ground, and on this ground alone, does it legitimately rule over the instinctive impulse; and if at any time the sympathetic tendencies of our nature appear to have the nobler character, it is communicated to them by a motive, also rational though yet higher — the moral motive.

Is there any need, now, of attempting to show, that a superiority of the instinct of sympathy over the disinterested motives of reason is a yet more chimerical supposition? Influenced by these motives, by the love of order, for example, reason sometimes approves, sometimes disapproves the impulses of sympathy; for it is an error to think that its approbation is uniform; there may be, and are, cases in which reason decides that we ought to resist our best sympathies, even that sweetest and most sacred of all, the love of a parent to a child. In cases where it approves, we obey two motives; and far from the instinct seeming to us to be the principal, it is the rational motive, which always appears to us to wear this character of superiority. The same is true of cases where reason condemns the instinct; for, then, whether we do or do not yield to the impulse, we still recognize that we ought to obey the judgment.

Whether we compare, therefore, the action of the instinct of sympathy with that of other instincts, or with that of either the selfish or disinterested motives of reason, we can find no signs of its superiority; it has no more authority than every other instinct, and it has far less than the rational motives. If,

then, this is the motive to which we really ought to yield, no reason appears why we should do so; and the authority, which we could not find in the idea of good as given by the system of sympathy, is no more to be found in the motive, which, according to this system, impels us to right conduct.

This Smith seems to have thought himself, and his efforts to establish the authority of the instinct of sympathy are manifest. Unfortunately, they led only to evident paralogisms. Instead of proving that the instinct of sympathy is the true moral motive, he describes the characteristics of this moral motive, and then gratuitously attributes them to the instinct of sympathy; thus proving, to be sure, that, if the instinct had these characteristics, it would be the moral motive, but forgetting altogether the evidence that it possesses them.

No one has better described than Smith the supreme sway of the moral motive over the appetites and instincts, and all the faculties of our nature; and the passages in which he establishes this point are perfectly true as well as beautiful. Whatever may be our idea of the moral faculty, to it always belongs, says Smith, the direction of our conduct, and, consequently, the superintendence of all our faculties, passions, and appetites. It is false, that the moral faculty is like our other faculties, having no more right than they to prescribe laws. No other faculty passes judgment upon its kindred faculties; love does not judge resentment, nor resentment love; these two faculties may be in opposition, but they neither approve nor disapprove each other; it is the special function of

the moral faculty, on the contrary, to judge, approve, and censure the other faculties; it is a sense, of which all other principles of our nature are the appropriate object. Each sense is sovereign judge as to its object; there is no appeal, in a question of color, from the eye to the ear, nor from the ear to the eye, in a question of sound; that which is pleasing to the eye is beautiful, to the taste sweet, to the ear harmonious; and the peculiarity of the moral faculty is a power of judging of the degree in which the ear should be charmed, the eye delighted, the taste gratified — of the degree, in other words, in which it is proper, meritorious, good, that either of our faculties should be restrained. The words *good, bad, just, unjust, merit, demerit, propriety, impropriety*, express what is pleasing or displeasing to this faculty; it is, therefore, the governing power in our nature. Its laws are real laws, in the true acceptation of that word; for they regulate the right acts of free agents, and by their sanctions administer reward and punishment; and so far is this word *laws* from having a just application to our faculties of seeing, hearing, moving, and all our other faculties, that, when we speak of their laws of action, we mean to signify that they operate in a necessary way.

Unquestionably this is perfectly true. But, in the first place, Smith has not seen, that this subordination of all our faculties is not peculiar to the moral motive, but may equally belong to every motive and impulse. If we propose, as the supreme end of conduct, the sympathy of others, we shall regulate ac



cordingly all our appetites, instincts, and faculties, and make them subordinate to this end. We shall do the same if we propose, as our end, self-interest, literary reputation, or any other end. It is not, then, the special character of the moral faculty, that it subjects to its rule, as supreme, the action of our other faculties; every other faculty may do this, and in an equal degree, whenever it is made the ruling motive of conduct. The special characteristic of the moral motive—and this is the second point which Smith has overlooked—is that, among all possible motives for action, it alone can be obligatory, and for this reason—that, though other motives may present different ends to be pursued, the moral motive alone presents, as an end, that which ought to be done, which is the true end of human life, and which is seen by us to be legitimate and sacred in itself. This is what distinguishes the moral motive from all others. Smith may prove, to be sure, that, in taking as a rule for conduct the inspirations of the instinct of sympathy, we obey a principle by which we may intelligently control the action of all our natural faculties; but the same thing might be proved of every other principle of conduct; and it by no means follows that this principle and the moral principle are identical. Smith does not prove exactly, what it was necessary he should prove to establish this identity, that this instinct is obligatory, and that the end to which it impels us is legitimate and sacred in itself. If he had proved this, the authority of the instinct of sympathy would have been no longer doubtful;

but this cannot be proved of any faculty except the moral one, for it is true of this motive alone.

Smith believes that he recognizes the moral motive in the instinct of sympathy, for this additional reason, that it renders us impartial. If we should hear, he says, that the empire of China was swallowed up, we should be less affected than by the loss of a finger. How can the partiality of these judgments be remedied? By sympathy. When we place ourselves in the situation of an impartial spectator, each event assumes its relative value, and we learn to estimate it, not by the rule of self-love, but by that of justice. It would be easy to demonstrate, that sympathy, acting by itself, would be without power to prevent this preponderance of our selfishness. But even if I admit this, the reasoning of Smith would still be a paralogism. Interest, well understood, produces some of the effects of the moral motive. Does it follow from this that it is the moral motive? The point to be proved is not that the instinct of sympathy acts *like* the moral motive, but that it *is* the moral motive. Now, how can the moral motive be recognized? By its authority. Among all possible motives, the moral motive alone appears to us as one that *ought* to govern our conduct. It is when recognized by this sign, that we are able to judge of its tendencies; and it is because these tendencies are those of the moral motive, that they seem to us legitimate. But, first, to say that certain tendencies are legitimate, and, then, because a motive appears to have these tenden-

cies, to conclude that it is the moral motive, is a pure paralogism.

Thus, as you see, gentlemen, we seek in vain for any right, possessed by the instinct of sympathy, of controlling our conduct; there is none to be found; and this is equally true of all other instincts. In refuting the system of Smith, I refute, therefore, every other moral system, which seeks in instinct for the regulating principle of volition; and this is my apology for such a lengthened discussion.

If the motive of sympathy has no authority, it is plain that it cannot explain our moral ideas, for each of them implies a motive of obligation. Smith's system, indeed, may employ, in a certain sense, the words which represent these ideas; but it can do so only by altering the meaning which they have in common acceptance. Your attention has already been directed to this change of signification, in relation to the words *merit* and *demerit*; and I now will proceed to show a similar misuse of the words *duty* and *right*.

Smith gives two definitions of *duty* — a fact which itself indicates that he felt an embarrassment in attempting to explain it. We are governed by *duty*, he says, when we obey the rules of conduct which emanate from sympathy, and by *sentiment* when we yield directly to the instinct of sympathy. But what are these rules? They are generalizations of particular judgments of instinctive sympathy: the authority of the rules, then, is derived from that of those judgments; and the motive which compels us to respect the one, is the same with that which

leads us to yield to the other. If it is a duty, then, to obey the laws, it is because it is a duty to obey the instinct, on which supposition, the distinction of Smith is without foundation. But it cannot be a duty to obey an instinct; for neither the judgments of the instinct, nor the desire of sympathy impelling us to yield to it, are obligatory; it cannot, then, be a duty to obey these rules; and duty, as Smith understands it, is not duty as we understand it; for, in our idea, it has the character of obligation, which in his it has not; so that, in using the word with such a signification, Smith actually suppresses the idea which it has always represented in human intelligence.

Smith has the art of connecting his errors with a truth, and of thus rendering them specious. Thus, in the present instance, he founds his definition of duty upon a true distinction, recognized by every one, between acting from sentiment and acting from duty. The distinction is in perfect harmony with the true nature of man, which acts sometimes dutifully, sometimes instinctively. But when we convert instinct into duty, we commit an absurdity; for we thus destroy the distinction between these two moving springs of action; and, whether we obey instinct or the rules emanating from it, the motive remains the same, and the character of the volition is unchanged.

Smith inconsistently gives, however, another definition to the word *duty*. There is but one virtue, says he, whose omission causes positive injury; this virtue is justice; it is the only one, then, which others

have a *right* to compel us to regard; and, therefore, it is the only one which it is a *duty* to practise, in the true acceptation of that word; such is the true meaning of the words *right* and *duty*. Doubtless, gentlemen, it is a duty to respect justice; and other men have a right to exact from us a respect for it, and even to constrain us to observe its dictates. But upon what are such a right and duty founded, in the system of sympathy? Follow closely this reasoning of Smith. Why is justice a duty? Because others have the right to compel us to observe it. Whence comes their right? From the fact that injustice would do them a positive wrong. My only *duty*, then, is not to injure others; my only *right* is to prevent their injuring me. I violate *duty* whenever I do evil to a fellow-being; he violates my *right* whenever he does an evil to me; I have fulfilled my whole *duty* when I avoid causing others pain; they have respected entirely my *right*, when they have caused me none. I ask, now, who would admit such propositions? Who would allow that they coincide with the true ideas of duty and right? But for the moment I will adopt these definitions, and then ask, whence, in the system of Smith, comes the obligation not to injure others, and why is it the only obligation? The emotions of the impartial spectator make me aware that he sympathizes with justice, indeed, but that he sympathizes with other virtues also; the desire of the sympathy of my fellow-beings will impel me to the practice of this virtue, but it will impel me equally to the practice of other

virtues. In proportion as the antipathy resulting in injustice is stronger, justice may find in the desire of sympathy a more efficient aid; but this difference is one of degree merely. If instinct can enforce obligation to a certain degree, it can in all degrees; and, on the other hand, if it cannot enforce obligation to this degree, it cannot in any; so that neither the rule of moral appreciation, nor the motive recognized by this system, are sufficient to explain the difference between justice and all other virtues. The system, therefore, must be abandoned, and, at the expense of being inconsistent, some other explanation must be found. How does Smith attempt to explain this difference? By two considerations: first, that injustice inflicts pain; secondly, that we have a right to repel it by force. But, abstractly considered, it is not true that the specific characteristic of injustice is that it causes injury; and it is no more true that from this characteristic is derived the right of repelling it by force; for, on the one hand, justice often authorizes, and even commands, the infliction of pain; and, on the other, so far from injustice being recognized by the fact that it is something which we have a right to repel with force, it is precisely because it is recognized as injustice that we have this right of forcibly repelling it. Not only, therefore, is the system of sympathy incompetent to prove that justice is a duty, but all Smith's efforts to determine in which the duty consists, lead only to a mutilation of the idea; so perverted does even the justest mind become by a false system, and so impossible is it found, even at

the cost of most palpable inconsistencies, to return again into the way of truth, when once led by system into error.

Nothing would be easier than to prove that what I have now said of *duty*, as explained by this system, applies with equal force to every other moral idea; but this would lead me into useless repetition; and I hasten, therefore, to test Smith's system by the third question, of which I have a right to ask a solution, and inquire what end it assigns for human conduct in the present life.

According to Smith, the supreme and final end of every human being is to contribute, with all his power, to the production of perfect harmony of sentiment among men. Such is the definitive result which all virtuous conduct tends to produce; such is the end to be sought in all our deliberations, purposes, and acts.

Unquestionably, gentlemen, a complete harmony of sentiments, and a perfect coöperation of will among all members of the human family, is one of the effects which a universal practice of the moral law would produce: every virtuous action has this tendency; every vicious act an opposite one. Yet more; I admit that, among the instincts of our nature, those which are called *sympathetic*, tend more directly, at least in appearance, (on which point I will hereafter explain my meaning,) to produce this result, than the so called *personal* instincts. But having made these concessions, we have still to inquire whether this universal harmony of sentiment and will is the true and legitimate end of the individual, which he should

set before him as the true object of pursuit, and to which all thoughts and acts of life should incessantly be directed ; for this is the point which every ethical system is bound to decide. This is a result, says Smith, which sympathy tends to produce. Well, let it be granted ; and what then ? The point which an ethical system is bound to determine is the *legitimate* end of human action : an ethical system ought, therefore, not only to assign an end to conduct, but to prove that this end is the legitimate one. This is what Smith, however, neglects to do. Of two courses of reasoning open to him, and which, though not strictly logical, would yet have given some appearance of foundation to his system, Smith has adopted neither : he has not attempted to prove the legitimacy of this universal harmony as a result, and thence inferred the legitimacy of sympathy as a motive ; nor has he attempted to show the legitimacy of sympathy as a motive, and thence concluded that this universal harmony is a legitimate result. We have already seen that he has not established the authority of sympathy as a motive ; and now I will proceed to show that he has been equally unsuccessful in proving that this universal harmony is the legitimate end for human conduct.

In what way does Smith attempt to prove that this harmony is man's true end in this world ? First, he shows that it is beautiful. The spectacle of a number of men animated with similar sentiments has, he says, the character of beauty. The effect of such a sight is like that produced by the contemplation of a complicated piece of mechanism, whose wheels, not-



withstanding their number and diversity, work together to one grand result. What is the human race but an exceedingly complicated machine; and what can be more eminently beautiful than the harmony and perfect concurrence of so many hearts and wills? I am far from denying the magnificent effect of such a result; but I cannot but say, in reply to Smith, that this consideration of beauty is not to the purpose, and proves nothing; for, supposing that the conduct of a man whose end is self-interest, should, through long years, and under varied circumstances, be steadily directed to his end in every separate act, the conditions of beauty here mentioned would be fulfilled. But would it thence follow that this conduct was good? By no means; and for this reason, that beauty is a different thing from morality. Undoubtedly, whatever is moral is at the same time beautiful; and without doubt, if we may trust our weak reason, in God these two attributes coincide, and are but a twofold aspect of the same essence; but here, on earth, beauty is not goodness; there are beautiful things without number, which have, in our view, no moral character. To establish the morality of conduct, then, it is not enough that we should prove it to be beautiful, although it might be a sufficient proof of its beauty, to show that it is moral.

Secondly, Smith proves that a universal accordance among men would be useful; and asserts that men would be perfectly happy if this harmony could be produced. I have no wish to contradict this; although, certainly, this would appear to me to be only one element of happiness, and not complete happiness.

But let this, too, be granted. Is utility, then, morality? If so, then self-love is a virtue; and it will be all in vain for Smith to prove the disinterestedness of sympathy. I have said, and I believe, that whatever is good is, for that reason, useful, and nothing can be so productive of utility as goodness. But from this it by no means follows, that the ideas of utility and of good are the same, and that the conception of the first is the acquisition of the latter. Between the utility and the legitimacy of an end there is the widest difference; and if Smith could produce a thousand proofs of the utility of this harmony, he would have done nothing to demonstrate its legitimacy.

Thus, then, gentlemen, Smith proves satisfactorily that a universal harmony of feeling among human beings is the final end of sympathy, and that this end is beautiful and useful; but he does not prove that it is man's true end; and for this reason, that he cannot prove it. His system assigns, indeed, a rule, a motive, and an end for human conduct, but they, one and all, emanate from instinct; and as the instinct is devoid of moral character, the rule can have no obligation, the motive no authority, the end no legitimacy. It is a rule to be followed, a motive to be obeyed, an end to be pursued, at our own option; in a word, it is morality deprived of its essential element of obligation. If a mind, under the direction of this system, then, does right, it must be attributed to the general coincidence between the impulses of sympathy and the requisitions of the moral law. But this coincidence is still greater between the dictates of the moral law and the counsels of interest well

understood ; for interest includes all instincts, while sympathy recognizes but a few. I have before said, and I repeat, that instinctive tendencies, self-interest, and the moral law, impel man equally to the pursuit of his true end ; but they differ in the degree in which they enable him to comprehend what it is, and in the authority of the motives which they present for its pursuit ; and *morality* depends upon the manner in which we pursue, and the view with which we regard our end. Hence the coincidences and differences which we observe among the various systems of ethics. God has not intrusted us to the single guidance of the law of duty ; he has not committed exclusively to this austere motive the accomplishment of an end, whose consequences will extend to the human race and the whole creation ; our nature would have been too weak to be governed by this sole motive ; and therefore has he, with admirable wisdom, provided numberless secondary motives, all powerful and attractive, which tend to the same direction, and become the auxiliaries of the moral law. The agreement of these motives with the moral law has deceived many philosophers ; they have overlooked the fact that these motives are all devoid of the character of obligation, and, consequently, that neither of them can be the moral law they seek. The failure of their attempts to explain our moral ideas, by means of a supposed law that is really not a law, should have undeceived them ; but once lost on a false track, the mind no more returns. It follows out its principle, reconciling its errors with common sense by unconscious sophistry. Such is the spectacle which Smith,

notwithstanding his clear intellect, presents; and this is one consideration that has led me to give so detailed an exposition of his views.

When reason, combining into the one general end of personal good the separate ends, to which our several passions impel us, rises to the idea that this personal good is the end of our nature, and that this end is but one element of a universal order, that every rational and free being is summoned to advance, then, and then only, is an end which ought to be pursued, a law which ought to be respected, a motive which ought to be obeyed, revealed. And here is the source of those various moral ideas, which neither instinct nor interest can account for, because interest and instinct do not give them birth. Traced back to their true principle, these ideas may be explained easily, without sophistry, and in a natural and common sense; but referred to self-love or to instinct, they remain inexplicable; and the combined resources of the most ingenious mind can account for them only by mutilating and deforming their real nature.

## LECTURE XIX.

## THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM.—SYSTEM OF THE MORAL SENSE.

GENTLEMEN,

As the system of Smith is, without comparison, the most remarkable of those which seek in instinct for the explanation of moral ideas, I have taken it as the common type of these systems; and by exhibiting and refuting it in detail, I have exhibited and refuted the fundamental principle of all instinctive systems. You are now in possession, therefore, of the explanation, and can understand the common error of these systems. But, gentlemen, there are shades of difference among the systems of instinct, similar to those among the selfish systems already described; and it is well that these differences should be pointed out. *Sentiment* or *instinct*, according to all of these systems, is the source from which emanate our moral judgments and volitions; but while some limit themselves by adopting one only of our primitive tendencies, such as benevolence or sympathy, as the principle of the first and the motive of the second, others introduce into the operation of the sensibility, in its discharge of these functions, a new instinct,

which they take the liberty of creating, and which they entitle, in view of its offices, the *moral sentiment* or *sense*. This, gentlemen, is the only important difference which distinguishes the instinctive systems into two classes. To the first class belongs the system of Smith, which I have at such length discussed; and I am now to give you some idea of systems composing the second class—presenting, as they do, under various forms, the famous doctrine of the moral sense I shall not attempt to refute them, because you will readily see that the radical defect of these systems and of Smith's is the same; and I shall confine myself, therefore, to a rapid description of them. Such, gentlemen, will be the subject of the present lecture; but, first, I ought to answer a question which probably has occurred to your minds.

How has it happened, you may ask, that all these moral systems, which we have been considering, were of English origin? The explanation of the fact is this very simple one, that moral philosophy, properly so called, has been infinitely more cultivated in England, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, than in any other part of Europe. In France, for example, the Cartesian era produced only one eminent moralist, Malebranche; and Malebranche belonged neither to the class of selfish philosophers, nor to that of the sentimental philosophers. Cartesianism was followed, in France, in the middle of the eighteenth century, by a new philosophy; but this was the system of materialism in metaphysics, and of selfishness in morals;—and, called to choose between Helvetius and Hobbes, I could not but prefer

Hobbes. Much the same might be said of the philosophy of Germany, which has always been more metaphysical than moral, and has never exhibited any forms of the selfish or instinctive systems, which have obtained such a European celebrity as those of Hobbes, of Smith, and of Hume. Of the various systems of moral philosophy which have appeared beyond the Rhine, the only ones which have attracted much attention have belonged to the class of rational systems, to be considered hereafter — with the single exception of that of Jacobi, concerning which I shall make a few remarks in the present lecture. I will add, that German systems, in general, present a twofold difficulty to the French philosopher; first, that the language is one not easily acquired; and, secondly, that the German mind itself is not characterized by either method or clearness. But, in truth, the country to which these various forms of ethical systems belong, is a matter of no consequence; the human mind recognizes, every where in philosophy, the same truths and the same errors, and no nation is privileged with a knowledge of what is hidden from all others. The only difference between different people is, that, in some, the ideas which we meet with in all are expressed with peculiar clearness. I feel that I ought to give this explanation, gentlemen, because the lecture of to-day will be once again occupied with a consideration of English systems of philosophy. You must not accuse me of *Anglomani*a; for I am not answerable for the fact that the system of the moral sense should have taken its origin, and have found its ablest advocates, beyond the Channel

The philosopher who first professed this system, and gave it a definite form, was Shaftesbury. A few words will suffice to enable you to comprehend this system, which embraces all the fundamental principles of the doctrine of the moral sense.

Shaftesbury recognized two distinct classes of desires—benevolent or social, and personal desires. Desires of the first class impel us to love the happiness of others for its own sake, without any reference to its influence upon us; and their predominance in a character constitutes *goodness*. Our minds co-operate in the production and development of our desires, and, while some are naturally agreeable to us, others are displeasing. Consequently, we approve some, and disapprove others. If the dispositions of the mind are thus pleasing or repugnant to the mind itself, it must be because it possesses, independent of these dispositions, by which external objects are agreeable or disagreeable, a yet more inward disposition, fulfilling in regard to them the same functions, which they fulfil in regard to the outer world. Shaftesbury calls this disposition a *sense*, and the sense itself he names the *moral* or *reflex sense*. He it was, then, who introduced into philosophy the expression which has since become so famous. The desires of our nature, which are agreeable to this sense, and which it approves, are, for that reason, morally good; those, on the other hand, which are repugnant to it, and which it disapproves, are morally bad. Virtue consists in yielding to the former, and in resisting the latter. There is a coincidence, though not an identity, between goodness and virtue; goodness is the natural



predominance in the character and conduct of the benevolent dispositions; virtue is the predominance of the same dispositions, voluntarily produced by the reflex sense; which implies the doctrine, afterwards taught by Hutcheson, that the only morally good desires are those of benevolence. In what consists, according to Shaftesbury, the superiority of virtue over selfishness? In the fact, that the exercise of the benevolent affections gives to the reflex sense a pleasure, which that of the personal affections does not; there is more happiness in yielding to the former than to the latter. To say that virtue is superior to selfishness, is to say that it renders us happier.

You see, gentlemen, that, in this system, the principle which distinguishes good from evil, is an instinct, but a special and peculiar instinct, having an appropriate function, and wholly distinct from the benevolent affections. This instinct is what is called, by common sense, *conscience*, and, by philosophers, the *moral faculty*. Such is the principle of moral judgments. As to the motive of virtuous acts, Shaftesbury says nothing positively, and I will not compel him to overstep his own declarations; but still it is quite evidently his opinion that when we act well we yield altogether to the force of our benevolent affections, and to the influence which the moral sense exerts as an impulse. Considering our benevolent and personal affections as equal forces, it is the office of the moral instinct to give a preponderance to the influence of those which it approves; in this its whole supremacy consists — a supremacy of fact, and not of right; and, according to this view, it is the true motive

of virtuous resolves. If Shaftesbury did not himself thus carry out his thought, it must at least be said that his system leads to this conclusion.

Without professedly adopting the theory of the moral sentiment, no one contributed more to its development than Butler, another English philosopher, who wrote early in the eighteenth century, and whose works contain the germs of several fundamental ideas afterward taught by Hutcheson and Hume. Butler begins, as Shaftesbury did, with a division of our instinctive tendencies into the personal and the benevolent; but he is to be distinguished by this, that he was the first, perhaps, who distinctly recognized that one of these classes of affections is equally disinterested with the other; that the object of the first, as of the second, is an external one; and that the former seek the means of securing happiness no more than the latter. Selfishness, according to Butler, consists not in the development of the personal instincts, but in their being made predominant and supreme by reflection and our own consent. He makes a distinction, as Rousseau did at a later period, between selfishness and love of self. What is the true desire and end of self-love? asks Butler. Is it not our greatest pleasure and happiness? But nothing is so fatal to happiness as selfishness; and if, in conduct, we seek chiefly the satisfaction of our personal tendencies, far from securing our greatest possible pleasure, we shall attain only moderate pleasure, because we deprive ourselves of the gratifications accompanying the exercise of the benevolent affections, which constitute the largest element of happiness.

Selfishness is love of self perverted; and, so far from their being identical, they are opposed to each other.

Independently of these two classes of reflex dispositions, and the instinctive affections, both personal and benevolent, which they imply and presuppose, Butler recognizes a superior principle in our nature, whose function it is to form a moral estimate of our different dispositions, and to distinguish among them the good from the evil. This principle he calls, like most other persons, *conscience*, and regards its perceptions as immediate; but he does not exactly define his idea of its nature, and leaves it doubtful whether he considered it a sense, or a rational faculty. Thus far, his ideas have been adopted by the philosophers who, after him, have taught the doctrine of a moral sense in a systematic form.

Butler, gentlemen, was a preacher, and Shaftesbury a man of the world, while Hutcheson was a metaphysician by profession. It is not remarkable, therefore, that the doctrine, which the two former merely indicated, should have received from the latter a full development under a precise and philosophic form. Shaftesbury and Butler suggested the idea, Hutcheson formed the system, of the moral sense.

Hutcheson was an Irishman, and a contemporary of Butler's. His system may be found exhibited in several different works; but I shall mention only the first and last of these, because they will show us the earliest and the latest forms which it assumed. The first is entitled "An Inquiry into our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue;" the last, "A System of Moral

Philosophy." It was not published till after the author's death.

The first point which Hutcheson endeavors to establish is, that we desire the happiness of others directly and for its own sake, as we do our own; so that benevolence can no more be explained by selfishness, than selfishness can by benevolence. To prove this, he reviews the various explanations which have been given of benevolence, and shows that they have successively misstated and falsified the facts. We desire the good of others, he says, not because this desire is agreeable to ourselves, nor because it is morally approved by us; not because, by benefiting others, we secure our own good, nor because God will reward us; and neither is it because the prospect of another's happiness is pleasing, and the sight of his sufferings painful. But we desire it because we have a primitive affection, which seeks the good of others as its final end. Benevolence is a simple and original impulse, and cannot be resolved into any other.

We have, therefore, two distinct classes of affections, of which the first impels us to seek our own good, and the second the good of our fellow-beings.

But these are not the only affections in our nature. There is a third, which is distinct from both: it is the moral affection. The idea of moral good is different from the idea of our own good, and from that of another's good; it cannot be explained by them; it is primitive and simple.

Hutcheson proves this second proposition as he did the first, and shows successively, that, by moral good, we do not mean that which gives us pleasure

by gratifying our benevolence ; nor that which is good in its effects on others ; nor that which is useful to ourselves ; nor that which is pleasing to a spectator ; nor that which is conformable to the will of God, or to order, truth, or law ; nor, in a word, any other idea except the exact one which the name expresses, and which is as simple, as primitive, and as inexplicable, by any other, as are the ideas of taste or smell.

From this view of the originality and simplicity of the idea of moral good, Hutcheson concludes that the quality represented by it must be perceived by some sense, because all other simple qualities are perceived by particular senses ; and that the sense must be a special and peculiar one, because the quality perceived is distinct from all others.

Two facts confirm Hutcheson in this opinion. The first is, that the perception of this quality is accompanied by a pleasure, which is a peculiarity of all sensible perceptions ; the second is, that moral good appears to us as an end and a motive for action, whereas the understanding cannot discover our ends, nor exercise an influence over the will.

I wish particularly, gentlemen, to call your attention to this latter point, as the opinion is one held in common by all the philosophers of the instinctive school without exception, and as they are led by it to seek in the sensibility, and not in reason, the principle of disinterestedness. On some other occasion, I will explain their views of the foundation of this principle, and of the motives in which it originates. To-day, I limit myself to a simple statement of the

fact, that they find this disinterested principle in the sensibility.

Moral goodness, then, according to Hutcheson, is perceived by a sense, and this perception is accompanied by a pleasure, while the perception of moral evil is accompanied by pain. But this pleasure is the consequence of the quality perceived, and presupposes it; we cannot, therefore, resolve moral goodness into this pleasure, nor thus account for our approval of it; for this would be to resolve the cause into the effect, and to explain the principle by the consequence.

Hutcheson calls this sense the *moral sense*, and to him it is chiefly owing, that this name, invented first by Shaftesbury, has become so popular. As the qualities which it is fitted to perceive are to be found only in the dispositions of our minds, and the actions thence resulting, this sense must be an internal, not an external one. And it is not the only sense of this kind admitted by our philosopher: he recognizes several others, and, in the first part of his work, demonstrates, by a similar course of reasoning, the existence of a sense of beauty, whose function it is to perceive the original and simple quality of beauty. This peculiarity of being internal is the only difference to be perceived between this class of senses and the external senses. Although Hutcheson declares that they are not of the same low and gross nature with these external senses, yet he subjects them to the same laws, and clothes them with the same attributes. Thus the moral sense is a faculty of the sensibility; it is affected directly by the moral quality of acts,

as the taste is by flavors; it is accompanied also by agreeable and disagreeable sensations, and by desire or repugnance—though Hutcheson does endeavor to disguise this latter fact under the names of *approbation* or *disapprobation*; and, finally, the moral sense, like all the other senses, is capable of being improved.

Hutcheson ascribes, however, to the moral sense, the most important offices. It is destined, as he thinks, to govern all the faculties of our nature. Hutcheson would have done much to establish his system, if he had shown the origin of this authority of the moral sense; but, unfortunately, his whole proof reduces itself to saying that we have a direct consciousness of it. Now, it is true that we are conscious that each sense is a supreme judge in all matters relative to the peculiar quality which it is fitted to perceive, and that, in so far, it does govern our other faculties; but this would be placing the moral quality in the same rank with odors, flavors, beauty, and the moral sense would have a sovereignty no more extensive than the senses of beauty, smell, and taste. But this is not what consciousness declares to be the fact. Consciousness testifies, that moral good is an end superior to all other ends, and to which all other ends should be subordinate. This, which Hutcheson should have attempted to explain, he contents himself with simply affirming; and the reason why the moral end should be pursued, in preference to all others, remains undiscovered.

Having thus proved, as he thinks, the reality of the moral sense, Hutcheson proceeds to determine what are the dispositions of our souls in which this sense

discovers moral goodness, and which, consequently, it approves; and he explicitly excludes from this number all which have for their end our own well-being. According to his idea, our acts are wholly wanting in the character of virtue, if we have any reference, in what we do, to our own good. They may be innocent, perhaps, but they cannot be virtuous. From this it would seem to result, that the benevolent dispositions and actions only are the objects of moral approbation — and such was actually the opinion of Hutcheson — at the same time that he associates with these other dispositions, such as the love of truth, and the desire of perfection, which he describes but vaguely, and the recognition of which does not prevent him from saying that universal benevolence constitutes moral excellence, and that the morality of acts is exactly proportioned to the degree in which they possess this quality.

The function of reason, according to such a system as this, is to contrive and employ the necessary means for the attainment of the different ends, which our desires and our senses make known on the one hand, and impel us to seek on the other. Excluded from the privilege, attributed exclusively to the sensibility, of determining the proper ends for conduct, and of directly influencing the will, it is only a humble servant of instinct. Its only office is to discover the course proper for the executive power to pursue, in securing the ends which instinct reveals; and, as you may see, it is an office of quite secondary importance.

Thus, then, there are, in our nature, two kinds of instincts, personal and benevolent; and, in addition,



a moral sense, which perceives immediately, in dispositions and acts, their moral good or evil, recognizing good only in those dispositions which have for their end the happiness of fellow-beings, and in acts proceeding from these dispositions: such, in a few words, is the moral system of Hutcheson. In the moral sense alone resides the principle of moral appreciation. As to the motive of virtuous volitions, Hutcheson is no more precise than Shaftesbury; but, as he unhesitatingly declares that the moral sense is a purely perceptive faculty, and as he recognizes that, like all the other senses, it exercises an influence over the will, we cannot doubt that he considered the moral sense to be the moral motive. A virtuous volition, therefore, is derived, according to Hutcheson, from the action of the peculiar dispositions approved by the moral sense, combined with the action of this sense itself; and it is this latter element which communicates to the act of will a moral character.

After Hutcheson, Hume, gentlemen, is the last teacher, among the English, of this doctrine of the moral sense, of whose works I shall speak; and I am not led to mention them from the fact that he is so celebrated as a metaphysician; for the moral system of Hume would have well deserved to be considered, as the most ingenious of all which have professed the doctrine of the moral sentiment, even if its author had not been the founder of modern skepticism, and one of the most original thinkers of modern times. It is in his work entitled "An Inquiry into the Principles of Morals," that he has explained his views. His course of reasoning is as follows:—

What we have first of all to determine, he says, is the quality represented by the expression *moral good*—the quality which renders the dispositions, acts, and characters, in which it is found, proper objects of moral approbation. Our only mode of doing this is to consult experience, he continues; and then, passing in review the various acts and dispositions which common sense pronounces morally good, and which men agree in approving, and seeking the common quality possessed by all, he finds, as he thinks, that it is utility. But utility of what kind? Utility to the agent, or to one man in preference of another? No; but general utility, or a tendency to produce a greater or less amount of good, whatever may be the number and quality of the persons benefited by its production.

To determine with exactness the truth of this principle, Hume examines, in a variety of ways, the dictates of experience. There are degrees in moral approbation; some dispositions and acts are more, others less, approved. Now, is moral approbation proportioned to their utility? Hume proves that it is, and shows that approbation increases or lessens with the perceived utility of acts and dispositions, and that there is always a parallelism between them. Thus may be explained, he says, the approbation so generally accorded to the benevolent dispositions. As these affections tend to the happiness of others, that is to say, to the happiness of many, and sometimes of all, while personal affections tend to the happiness of one only, that is to say, of the agent—the first are more useful than the second,

and, therefore, we approve them more. This ingenious theory has the merit of not only explaining the rank which the benevolent affections occupy in the moral scale, but of leaving room also for the personal affections. As you may see, Hume does not condemn all of these latter dispositions; his system allows him to approve them; for they are useful to one person, the agent. They become unworthy of approbation only when we sacrifice to them the benevolent affections. And why are they unworthy in this case? Because then, by preferring our own good to that of others, we prefer what is least useful, while it is our duty to prefer what is most useful. It is for this reason that we disapprove the exclusive pursuit of personal good; but, in itself, we approve it, as may be clearly seen from the estimation in which we hold many qualities, on the ground that they are well calculated to secure individual happiness — prudence, skill, economy, for instance. In so far as these are useful, they are morally good; but even that which is useful may become an object of disapprobation, when it is preferred to something yet more useful.

If utility is the true object of approbation, its opposite must be the object of disapprobation. And, from the testimony of experience, Hume verifies this second proposition. He proves, that whatever we disapprove is seen to be either directly or indirectly noxious; and that our disapprobation is always proportioned to the amount of evil which the act or disposition disapproved tends to produce, or the amount of good which it tends to prevent.

An analysis of the qualities which compose and constitute what we call the personal merit of a man furnishes him with another confirmation of his theory as to the object of moral approbation. This analysis leads him to the conclusion that every element of the moral merit of men may be resolved into some useful or agreeable quality.

Hume explains very ingeniously the reason why moral acts meet with sympathy and support from others, while acts having a personal reference do not. What makes, he asks, an act moral? The fact that it is in its tendency useful. What, on the other hand, is the characteristic of acts of a personal nature? Utility to the agent. Now, what is for the good of one may not be for the good of another; indeed, it often may be a source of ill; it is apparent, therefore, that men will disagree when they are contemplating any act in view of its private utility, because this utility is relative. This is not the case, however, with any thing which is useful in itself; a tendency to multiply good is a quality which all men can equally perceive; and when the question has reference, not to the effects on particular individuals, but to the general effects of acts, all men will agree in judgment. Now, this is precisely the point of view in which utility is regarded in our moral volitions; and this is the very distinction between them and selfish volitions. It is nowise astonishing, therefore, that others sympathize with the former, and give us their approval and aid, while they are indifferent or even opposed to the latter. It is natural that they should do so.

From these few examples, gentlemen, you can com-

prehend Hume's method, and the course of reasoning by which he attempts to prove experimentally his doctrine, that in dispositions and acts, in character and conduct, it is utility, and utility alone, that we call good, and that utility, therefore, is the special object of moral approbation.

But this is only a statement of a fact, and the reason for our approval of what is useful and our disapproval of the opposite remains to be explained; it remains to be accounted for why we call the one good and the other bad. This is the moral problem. We have learned that a particular quality is the object of moral approbation; we are now to inquire why it is the object?

Reason, says Hume, may, indeed, determine, and does determine, what is useful or injurious to men; but the fact that we approve the one and disapprove the other must be owing to some primitive sentiment which makes us prefer the useful to the injurious, just as another sentiment makes us like what is sweet and dislike what is bitter. There is an instinct in our nature, therefore, which is agreeably affected by the prospect of utility, and disagreeably affected by that of the opposite. This instinct is not self-love, for self-love makes us prize only what is useful to ourselves, and not that which is useful in itself; while it is that which is useful in itself, and independently of our own interest, which is the object of moral approbation. This instinct is a peculiar one, therefore, and quite distinct from the selfish instinct, to which, indeed, it is frequently opposed. It is this instinct or sense which men call *conscience*, or the

*moral faculty*. Hume names it *humanity*; because it is the good of men as such, and independently of our own, which is its appropriate object.

You will observe, gentlemen, that, while considering utility the object of moral approbation, Hume still does not profess the doctrine of selfishness, and that there is a wide distinction between his system and that of interest well understood, to which it has sometimes been considered to be assimilated. Moral good is absolute utility, not private utility; and moral approbation is doubly disinterested, both because it is instinctive and because it proceeds from a different instinct than self-love.

Like all other advocates of the doctrine of the moral sense, Hume allows some obscurity to envelop the motive of moral volitions; and he by no means clearly distinguishes humanity as the principle of qualification from humanity as the motive of virtuous volition. No one has denied more decidedly the competency of reason to assign any end for man, or to exert any influence over the will. We are determined, therefore, in conduct, when we do right, by the attractive influence of anticipated utility, and by the sway of those dispositions which impel us to seek our own good and the good of others—dispositions by which the action of the moral sense is always seconded. As to what is commonly called *moral obligation*, Hume thinks but little of it, and considers it only a conception of reason. The real thing represented by the name, he thinks, is the obvious and just view, that happiness can be more surely obtained by following the impulses of the moral sense than by obeying the dic-

tates of self-interest. The idea of obligation could not, as you see, be more completely disfigured; it is a necessity, indeed, of the instinctive system, that it should be, and notwithstanding all his power of thought, Hume, like all other philosophers of the same school, has been guilty of this error.

I should expose myself, perhaps, to your reproach, if, in this rapid notice of the various philosophers who have taught the doctrine of the moral sentiment, I should entirely pass by two, whose names have obtained celebrity, and with whom the idea of this system is always associated. I allude to Rousseau and Jacobi. A few words will suffice for a description of their moral opinions, and will show that I have good reason for assigning them only a secondary place in this lecture.

The confession of faith of the *Vicaire Savoyard* is not only an admirable work in point of style, but, yet more, for the profoundness and truth of its ideas, deserves justly to be considered a philosophic production of the highest order. Unfortunately, however, the moral portion of this book, although perhaps the most beautiful in expression, is also incomparably the most obscure, and Rousseau's other writings furnish no clew by which we can interpret the indefiniteness of his ideas, as exhibited in this confession of faith.

Rousseau declares, in various ways, that the knowledge of good and evil is communicated by reason; but that it is by the influence of an inward affection, which he calls *conscience*, that we are impelled to seek the one and avoid the other. The moral desire,

he says, sleeps in us in childhood, because the idea of moral good is not then conceived; and for this reason, man is incapable of morality and of liberty before reason is developed. There is perfect consistency so far, and nothing could be clearer than this doctrine. But when he proceeds to describe the discovery of good by reason on the one side, and the sovereign power of conscience on the other, he loses sight of this distinction between their functions, and assigns to each principle the double duty both of making us acquainted with the good, and of impelling us to its observance. On the one hand, reason is presented as the faculty which frees the human will from the blind impulses of instinct, and gives it liberty by subjecting it to the sway of the obligatory laws of order. On the other hand, conscience, or sentiment, is pointed out as the infallible instinct, which it is only necessary for us to listen to to distinguish between good and evil, and whose decisions far surpass the uncertain and contradictory speculations of intellect. There are admirable passages, in which Rousseau adopts wholly the view of rational morality, and others, equally admirable, where he supports the principle of instinctive morality. These passages cannot, I think, be reconciled; and it seems to me, therefore, that those who class Rousseau in the sentimental school, have attributed to his ideas more precision than they really possess. All that can be said of him is, that, with the exception of a few passages in his earlier writings, he is the declared opponent of the morality of self-interest. No one has more triumphantly established the existence of innate benevolent



affections, and the reality of virtuous volitions, after reason has once conceived the idea of order. We can say decisively, therefore, what theory Rousseau did not admit in morals; but it is impossible, on the other hand, as it seems to me, to determine with precision what theory he did actually adopt.

As to Jacobi, gentlemen, to the many other points of resemblance which may be traced between him and Rousseau, as writers, must be added the indecisiveness and obscurity with which he expressed his ideas upon the principles of morality. But this indecision originated from a different source. Rousseau was a metaphysician only by accident, and evidently was unconscious of the contradiction with which he might justly have been charged as to the great moral questions. The case was quite different with Jacobi, of whom it may be said that it was because he had so deeply meditated upon this problem, and other problems which it involves, and so fully comprehended all their difficulties, that he refused to express his thought with precision. He seems to me to have preferred obscurity of expression to error. Jacobi, however, was decided on one point — that he was unwilling to consider the idea of moral good as a result of the investigations of intellect: this idea he considered immediate and simple; but whether this idea is to be referred, as the Scottish school have thought, to an intuition of reason, or, as the philosophers of the sentimental school believe, to an instinct of the sensibility, — an instinct, which is either an affection, like sympathy, or rather a sense, as Hutcheson supposes, — is a point upon which Jacobi is undeter-

mined. He seems earlier in life to have inclined to the second hypothesis, and in his later years to the first. It is plain, however, that he never decidedly expressed his opinion upon the subject, and that, while a view of some facts of our nature seemed to lead him to espouse one side of the question, a view of other facts restrained him. It is as difficult to classify Jacobi, as a moralist, as it is Rousseau; and you see, therefore, my reason for not selecting the system of either as illustrations of the sentimental theory.

Let me say a word further as to a doctrine which deserves notice from its singularity. It is that of Mackintosh, as it is found exhibited in his recent work on the "Progress of Ethical Philosophy."

Mackintosh is a professed advocate of the morality of sentiment. He admits, without hesitation, all the fundamental maxims of this system; he believes in the reality of disinterested volitions, and denies that reason is capable either of assigning any end for conduct, or of exerting any influence over the will; in his view — to express all in a few words — moral conscience is a sensible principle. But he is distinguished by this, that, in his opinion, this principle is not primitive; it is created and developed, as he thinks, gradually; or, to use his expression, it is a *secondary* formation. You will easily understand his meaning.

Self-love, as you know, or the general desire which has for its end the satisfaction of our natural tendencies, is not primitive; it presupposes these tendencies, or the pleasure resulting from their gratification, since this pleasure is its end. Self-love is, then, a principle of secondary formation. Mackintosh thinks that it

is the same with conscience. As in the phenomenon of self-love, he says, the desire, which was primitively directed to certain external objects, is transferred to the pleasure resulting from the possession of these objects, and thus what was the end becomes the means; so, in the phenomenon of conscience, the agreeable or painful sentiment naturally attending certain emotions, is transferred, by association of ideas, to the volitions and acts which they produce; and thus, in the end, these volitions and acts become the immediate objects of our love or repugnance. By the association of ideas, then, a number of secondary desires and aversions are combined together in our minds, whose appropriate and peculiar objects are our volitions; and the aggregate of these is a kind of inward sense, which we call *conscience*, and which, without any consideration of the outward results of a volition, as if by an infallible instinct, approves or blames it for itself, as well as the disposition impelling us to form this volition, and the act in which it results. The sense is developed, in proportion as minds are enriched by their associations with a greater or less number of these primitive desires and repugnances; and here Mackintosh finds the explanation of the infinitely varied development so observable in the consciences of men. The different qualities recognized by common sense in the moral faculties, seem to him to be easily explained by this hypothesis; they are all derived, according to him, from this circumstance, that conscience is the only passion which has for its immediate object voluntary acts. It results from this view, in the first place, that it can

be gratified without the use of any external means, because, to obey it, it is only necessary that we will to do so; secondly, that it is independent, for its object is internal, and no outward cause can prevent its satisfaction; thirdly, that it exerts supreme control over the character and conduct, because it is intermediate between all our other passions and their instrument of gratification, the will, while no other passion can be interposed between it and its object; fourthly, that to violate it is to be guilty of introducing disorder into our being, because, occupying the position which has been described, the control of all our volitions evidently appertains to it; fifthly, that its right and authority to command is universal, and also, since it can be gratified by a simple act of will, that nothing can more nearly resemble the relation of a commandment to obedience; and, sixthly and lastly, that it is immutable, for, as it employs no means to accomplish its end, it can never be altered by the substitution of the means for the end, and, as its object is the action, it can never be diverted from this, its appropriate end, into becoming a means to some ulterior end. Such are the tests by which Mackintosh is led to the conclusion that conscience, as he describes it, is the true conscience, and that it possesses all the qualities which common sense attributes to it. Its power over the will is derived from the influence peculiar to the primitive dispositions to which it gives control, from the pleasure naturally accompanying the development of their dispositions, and from the pleasure produced by the gratification of this secondary disposition; for a

pleasure attends the satisfaction of the secondary desires, as well as of the primitive desires. Such, in a few words, is the system of Mackintosh; and, as you can see at a glance, in thus making conscience a derived sense, it is open to all the objections to which the systems making it a primitive sense are exposed.

I have given you, gentlemen, this rapid sketch of the various systems, that you may be made familiar with this remarkable form of the instinctive system, called the doctrine of the moral sense. In my next lecture, I shall discuss, in a more general manner, the essential elements of the system of instinct, and then pass to a consideration of rational systems of ethics. With an exposition of these I shall close this review, which may seem to you already a prolonged one, but the advantages of which you will recognize and admit, when we, in our turn, attempt to explain the true principle of moral estimates, and the true motive of moral volitions.

## LECTURE XX.

## THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM CONCLUDED.

GENTLEMEN,

THUS far I have limited myself to a consideration of the instinctive system in itself; and the only way in which I have attempted to refute it has been to require an explanation of those moral ideas for whose origin every system of ethics must account. My mode of reasoning with Smith has been as follows:—Moral ideas exist in the human mind: your system attempts to account for them: it does not succeed in giving this explanation; therefore is it false; and your description does not correspond with the real facts of human nature.

In the present lecture, I will first review, in a few words, the leading steps of the argument by which the system has been already refuted, and then proceed to another mode of refutation, which is, perhaps, more intelligible and more useful. This mode is, to compare the instinctive system with actual moral phenomena, and thus show what truths or errors it includes, under any form which it may assume. Our discussion of this large class of moral systems will then be finished.

The instinctive system is the result of two different prejudices—the one against the system of selfishness, the other against that of reason. Instinctive philosophers have all manifested these two prejudices; but, while the first may be seen equally in all, the second has been prominently developed only in a few. Of this number are Hume and Hutcheson; in whose works the twofold conviction, that there are disinterested volitions in the human soul, and yet that reason is not the principle of these volitions, is always apparent.

The instinctive philosophers, if you will permit me, gentlemen, still to use this expression, say, in their opposition to the selfish system, that to place the motive of human volitions in self-love is to assert that all volitions are interested, and to resolve all kinds of good into private good; or, in other words, it is to suppose that we have no idea of any other good. Now, say the instinctive philosophers, observation contradicts these two propositions: there are in the soul disinterested volitions—for we do not act always in view of personal well-being; and, since private good, therefore, is not our only object, we must be conscious of some other good. The selfish system is wrong, therefore, both in pretending to explain all human volition by self-love, and in resolving all ideas of good into that of our own private good.

This is the opinion which all authors, who under any form have taught the instinctive system, have expressed in opposition to the system of selfishness. Against that of reason they bring a twofold objection. Reason, according to Hume and Hutcheson, is com-

petent to show us things as they are; but it cannot make us acquainted with their character as being good or evil. For goodness, say they, is essentially a relative quality: if any thing seems good to a being, it is because there is a particular relation between it and the nature of this being; if it seems evil, it is because there is a different relation between it and the same nature. This relation, in the first case, is one of harmony; in the second, it is one of discord. Now, how shall we know whether, between our nature and some particular thing, the first or the second relation exists, or neither the one nor the other? Our nature can alone determine; and it does so by experiencing, at sight of this thing, either pleasure and desire, or displeasure and repugnance, or, finally, neither the one sentiment nor the other. If we were purely intelligent and rational, all objects would remain equally indifferent to us. Why do things appear good or evil? Only because some are agreeable and some disagreeable to our nature; or, in other words, because we have desires which they disappoint or gratify. Undoubtedly, the selfish system is deceived in supposing that all our desires are personal, and in resolving them into a love of self; but it is a greater error still to admit, for the purpose of avoiding the selfish view, that there are kinds of good which cannot be known through sensibility. Reason is incapable of deciding what is good or what is bad for man; therefore moral distinctions cannot emanate from it, but must inevitably emanate from instinct. Such is the first objection brought by the instinctive philosophers against the system of reason.



The second is as follows:—That which seems to us neither good nor evil must be indifferent to us : we cannot, therefore, will to do it ; we can only will to do what seems to us good, and to refrain from doing what seems to us evil. Now, what is the faculty which perceives good and evil ? Sensibility, and not reason. No conception of reason can make a thing seem to us good or evil ; therefore no such conception can act upon the will ; and, as the desires of sensibility can alone discern good and evil, each motive of action must emanate from them. The desires of sensibility can alone act upon our will, therefore, and the ideas of reason are incompetent of such influence. What is the function of reason ? When once a good is revealed by an instinct, or craved by a passion, reason can discover the fit means for its attainment, can make us acquainted with its necessary consequences, and sometimes, by presenting one side of the object rather than another to our attention, can excite or moderate our desire ; this is the whole office of reason. Without sensibility man would remain in a state of perfect indifference, and no motive for action would exist. Reason, therefore, can no more be the motive for volition than the principle of moral distinctions. Such is the second objection against the system of reason.

You see, gentlemen, how, influenced by these two prejudices, the instinctive philosophers are led to seek in our natural desires both the source of our ideas of moral good and evil, and the motive of virtuous volitions ; and hence, too, you see why they are obliged to oppose both the selfish system — which

resolves the idea of moral good into that of personal good, and refers to the love of self every act of will — and the rational system — which finds in reason the source of moral ideas and the motive of moral volitions.

But now let us observe the consequences which ensue, when we seek in natural desire the idea of moral good, and the motive which impels us to its pursuit. To every natural desire and tendency corresponds some object fitted to gratify it, towards which we are impelled. This object is for us a good, because whatever is agreeable to our nature is good. Now, if this is true of all our desires, — and it cannot be denied of any, — it follows that there must be as many kinds of good as there are distinct desires. To our personal desires correspond certain kinds of good; to our benevolent desires other kinds of good; and, as our desires, both of a personal and benevolent nature, are numerous, there must necessarily be many of these kinds of good; for all are adapted to some desire of our nature, and we are impelled to seek them all by some instinct with which we are endowed. There is, therefore, a perfect equality of nature between these different kinds of good, and a perfect equality of authority between our different desires.

Imagine now some instinctive philosopher — Smith, Hume, Hutcheson, for instance — seeking among these various kinds of good, which have all the same character, the moral good, that is to say, the supreme good, to which all others should be sacrificed; and, among other various motives, all having equal authority, the moral motive, the sovereign motive, to which

all others should yield, and which may impose duties and obligations; — and conceive of his embarrassment. He is to find, among these diverse kinds of good, one which may rightfully be placed before all others, and be called emphatically the true good; he is to find, among these desires, one which has some title of sovereignty over all others, and which may be recognized as obligatory. Here is the rock upon which the instinctive system is ever in danger of being wrecked; and, to avoid it, the advocates of the system have followed two different courses — some following Smith, and others Hume.

Now, how has Smith attempted to escape this difficulty? He has simply selected, from these various kinds of good, one, which he declares to be the moral good, and the true good; and, among the different desires, he has chosen one, which he calls the moral motive — the motive that ought to control all other desires.

But by what sign does he recognize, in this particular good, the true good, and, in the motive that impels us to seek it, the moral motive? When we examine Smith's system thoroughly, we find that, in the last analysis, his only answer to the question is, that this good, and consequently this motive, coincide with those which common sense calls *good* and *duty*. Put aside the specious arguments by which Smith seeks to justify his preference of this good, and you will find that he actually trusts to this coincidence alone, and that this is the only test by which he determines that the instinct of sympathy is the moral good.

As you will recollect, I have denied this coincidence, and have shown that Smith himself allows that it is not entire. But suppose it to be admitted: what then? What is common sense? It is universal human intelligence — the intelligence that acts in you, in me, in all men. If common sense, then, affirms that the particular good to which the instinct of sympathy impels us is the true good, it must be because human intelligence perceives, in this particular good, some quality, which makes it superior to all other kinds of good, or, in the instinct of sympathy, some mark of authority entitling it to be obeyed in preference to any other instinct. But if the human mind, as it exists in men at large, can recognize these signs, surely, in a distinguished philosopher like Smith, it cannot fail to perceive them. Instead, therefore, of referring us to common sense, it would have been the easier way to point out at once these marks of superiority in the instinct of sympathy. If Smith has neglected to do this, it is because it was beyond his power. And his reason, therefore, for considering the good of sympathy the true good, is a pure paralogism. Instead of answering the question, this is but postponing it, and common sense, no more than Smith, can justify the preference of this good.

Hume and Hutcheson endeavor to avoid this difficulty in a very different way. Their mode of recognizing, among the various kinds of good, towards which our instincts impel us, the true good, is this: they invent a special instinct which they suppose to be agreeably affected by particular kinds of good,

and by particular instincts, and disagreeably affected by other kinds of good and by other instincts. We have various instincts, to which correspond various kinds of good; these would be of equal authority and value, if there was not a peculiar instinct, fitted to judge of these and pronounce some good, because agreeable to it, and others bad, because disagreeable; and, as this instinct is the moral sense, it follows that whatever pleases it is morally good, and whatever displeases it is morally bad. Such is the solution which Hume and Hutcheson have given.

As this new and peculiar instinct is a pure invention of the philosophers who assert its existence, nothing can be easier, of course, than to prove that its judgments coincide with those of the true principle of moral distinctions; and if Hutcheson has failed in doing this, Hume, with greater skill, has perfectly succeeded. This theory, therefore, is not liable to the first objection which was brought against that of Smith; but it cannot escape the second. This moral sense, which Hume and Hutcheson have introduced into our nature, is still an instinct; and, being an instinct, the good that it impels us to seek, is only one of the kinds of good which our nature craves, and can have no preference over others; and, on the other hand, as this moral sense is a mere instinct, it must be equal, and no more than equal, to our other instincts; it can, therefore, have no authority over them, and cannot rightfully secure the supremacy of the desires which please it, nor oppose the sway of those which displease it. The only thing this moral sense can do, is to lend some support

to those desires which it finds agreeable; or, in other words, we may be impelled towards certain kinds of good, not only by the instincts peculiarly related to them, but by the moral instinct also, with which these are in harmony. But of what consequence is this? The adding thus a new impulse to those already acting, is not to give them authority; for authority is something very different from force. But even this superiority of force does not necessarily follow from thus multiplying the number of impulses; for, oftentimes, when two instincts impel us toward some object, while a single instinct impels us toward another, the latter prevails. It follows, therefore, that this hypothesis of a moral sense is quite as inadequate as that of Smith's, and does not, and cannot, account for the preference accorded to a particular kind of good, nor explain why a particular instinct of our nature should be obeyed: it does not avoid, therefore, the difficulty which is fatal to every form of the instinctive system.

Such are the two great classes of the instinctive systems; and, as you see, the facts of our moral nature cannot be explained by the hypothesis of either one or the other. On the one hand, there is no natural instinct whose impulses exactly coincide with the judgments of the moral faculty; and thus the instinctive system can establish such a coincidence only by an arbitrary invention of a moral sense, opposed though this is to fact. And, on the other hand, even after the invention of this peculiar instinct, the system still fails to explain the true nature of our moral notions; for it cannot account for the authority



THE SENTIMENTAL SYSTEM CONCLUDED. 211

which the moral motive possesses, nor for the legitimacy attached to moral good; and thus is it compelled either to deny or to mutilate the ideas of law, obligation, duty, right, and all others associated with them.

Thus, in a few words, have I described, gentlemen, the fundamental principles of the instinctive system, and stated the arguments by which it may be refuted, when it is considered merely in itself, and is tested by its competency to account for the ideas whose origin and formation every moral system is bound to explain.

But now, in order that we may form a more exact estimate of the instinctive system, let us leave this negative view, and, comparing it with the facts which it pretends to explain, show in what respects it truly represents, and in what it disfigures, the reality. This is the only way, as I have often said, by which we can discover the foundation of this system in human nature, and so separate the elements of truth and error which it includes. It would be useless, in instituting this comparison, to present again to your consideration the facts of man's moral nature: I have already so often described them that it would be wearisome to repeat them now: you have before you reality on the one side, and the picture of reality presented by the instinctive system on the other; and you will have no difficulty in comprehending, therefore, the scope of the observations which I am now to suggest.

You will remember, that, of the three modes of volition which observation makes us acquainted with

the selfish system suppresses two. It misconceives, first, the fact that reason rises to the conception of a good superior to our own ; and, secondly, the fact that our natural desires seek particular objects as their final end, without any regard to the satisfaction and pleasure which the acquisition of them is fitted to produce. The psychological error of the instinctive system is less gross ; for, without denying the selfish mode of volition, it asserts the reality of the instinctive mode, and misconceives only the nature of the rational mode. For the very reason that it sees only the selfish mode of volition, has the selfish system perfectly described it, and brought out into clear light its importance. And the philosophers of the sentimental school have rendered a like service in relation to the instinctive mode of volition : not only have they succeeded admirably in distinguishing it from the selfish mode of volition, but they have exhibited, in all their extent and importance, the functions of the primary and secondary desires, in the development of our nature, and thus have greatly advanced and improved the branch of psychological science which treats of this obscure and delicate portion of our constitution. For this the philosophers of the instinctive school deserve high esteem ; and their success has, perhaps, been owing to the very mistake into which they fell. If they had recognized the rational mode of volition, as they did the instinctive mode, they would have studied the latter less profoundly ; for they would not then have sought in it the explanation of the moral phenomena, whose origin they knew to be elsewhere



The selfish system, by suppressing, as it did, two modes of volition, was compelled to account for all the facts and ideas of our moral nature by the single mode which it retained; and in this it undertook a monstrous enterprise, which could issue only in total failure. The course which the instinctive philosophers, on the contrary, have, by their suppression of the rational mode of volition, been obliged to take, is far less repugnant to the moral sense of humanity, and conducts to consequences far less likely to be abused. When we tell men that they are incapable of disinterestedness, our assertion shocks their feelings, because it is directly contradicted by the testimony of conscience. But when a system admits the reality of disinterestedness, and confines itself to a simple expression of belief that the principle of this disinterestedness is in the sensibility, and not in reason, the human mind perceives nothing in the opinion to give it pain; for, though the fact of disinterestedness is most evident and undeniable, in the consciousness of every one, its source and origin are hidden, and can be discovered only by philosophical investigation. The instinctive system, asserting the fact of disinterestedness, coincides with the common sense of all mankind; but, misconceiving the nature of the rational mode of volition, it explains this disinterestedness by instinct, and denies the explanation which the rational system offers. I repeat, there is nothing in this to shock the common sense; and I add, that although actually quite as inadequate as the selfish system, to give a complete explanation of our moral ideas, this does not at first appear

Many facts of our nature lead the mind easily to this solution of the moral problem, and many others seem to confirm it, unless they are analyzed with care. In a word, the sentimental system is founded upon views, which, though erroneous, still include such truths as might well mislead even candid minds. And it becomes my duty, now, to disengage these blended truths and errors. I will do so in a few words, by limiting myself to a consideration of the most important points.

In the first place, then, the instinctive philosophers all admit the fact of disinterested volitions, and all explain it by our natural desires; in other words, they consider our instinctive volitions the type of disinterested volition. The foundation at once and the fallacy of this theory may be easily discerned. If, by disinterestedness is meant simply the absence of a selfish motive, unquestionably disinterestedness may be found in our instinctive volitions; for, in yielding to our passion, we have regard only to the particular object toward which we are impelled; and not, as in the case of selfish volition, to the greatest satisfaction of our nature. There is an absence of selfishness, then, in our purpose; and on this ground it may be called disinterested. But, gentlemen, is this what is really meant by disinterestedness? Far, very far from it; for this is purely negative in character, and there is another kind of disinterestedness which is positive, whose type exists only in the moral volitions. In instinctive volitions, disinterestedness is nothing more than the absence of an interested motive; in moral volitions, disinterestedness is the sac-

rifice of such a motive. In instinctive volitions the motive is personal, although the agent is unconscious of its true nature, while in selfish volitions he is conscious of its being personal; in moral volitions, on the contrary, the motive is impersonal, and the agent knows that it is so. This, then, is true disinterestedness. Though free from selfishness, instinctive volition does not include the direct opposite of selfishness; this is to be found only in moral volition; here alone is to be seen a sacrifice of self; here alone is manifested that wonderful phenomenon of a being interested in a good which belongs not to himself, and which he pursues even with a loss of his own good. Devotedness is impossible in instinctive volition; but in moral volition there is always devotedness, even when absolute good coincides with personal good; for the act is performed with reference wholly to the former. The instinctive system is right, therefore, in saying that instinctive volitions are not interested; but it is wrong in supposing that it finds here the true kind of disinterestedness. The notion of true disinterestedness remains unexplained, therefore, by the instinctive system; and thus you can distinguish what is true from what is false, in its first fundamental dogma.

The same blending of truth and error may be observed in its other fundamental dogma, that reason is incapable of discovering a good, this being the peculiar prerogative of instinct. Undoubtedly it is not reason, but instinct, which reveals to me what my nature desires, and what is agreeable to it; and, if the word *good* has no further meaning than this, the

instinctive philosophers are correct in their opinion. Reason first appears in the sphere of instinct, exactly as it does in that of selfishness, empirically; for the reasoning of self-love is wholly empirical. Its operation is as follows: it applies itself to the different objects declared to be good by instinct, and disengaging the quality which they have in common, and which constitutes their goodness, — that is to say, their fitness to gratify a want of our nature, and to be agreeable to it, — concentrates in this quality the idea of good, previously dissipated by instinct among various objects. In doing this, reason does not create; it only separates and disengages the idea of good. Instinct, then, furnishes not only all the elements of this good, but also the very idea itself; in other words, good, as conceived by self-love, is that which nature desires; and it is instinct which teaches me, both that my nature has desires, and that certain objects will gratify these desires. Thus far, then, the instinctive system is right in saying that reason does not discover good; and it would be entirely right if this were all. But reason does not stop, when once the idea of that which is pleasing to my nature, and of that which it desires, is thus formed; it goes further, and conceives that every thing has an end; that man has an end; and, since the end of all things is absolute good, that the end of man, as one of its elements, is also absolutely good. Here reason ceases to be empirical, and creates: this idea is not a generalization of what instinct has communicated; for neither the universal conception that every thing has an end, nor the conception that the ideas of this end and of good are

equivalent, nor the application of these two conceptions to man, are deduced from instinct. Such conceptions are universal and absolute; they transcend such knowledge as instinct communicates, and can emanate only from a faculty capable of universal ideas, that is, pure intuitive reason. These conceptions are incontestable facts in our nature; and they give birth to an idea of good, absolute like themselves, from which, in turn, emanates an idea of our own good, perfectly distinct from that which arises, and which only can arise, from instinct. This, gentlemen, is what the instinctive philosophers have overlooked. And one thing further they have not seen, which is, that reason assents to the definition of good given by instinct, because, and only because, it is coincident with the true definition, conceived *à priori*. When once the idea that man has an end, and that this is his true good, is conceived, it becomes evident to reason, that this is precisely what his nature desires, and it admits, therefore, that this end desired by nature is equivalent to his true good; only in this view are they truly equivalent; and it is because reason admits them to be so, and only when it admits this, that it avails itself of instinct to determine our natural end; for though reason alone can reveal to us that we have an end, and that this end is our good, it is still instinct which makes us acquainted with the elements of this end, that is to say, with the different particular ends of which it is made up. And here it is that the instinctive philosophers have chiefly erred. They have seen, and seen correctly, that, unless our nature revealed itself by the desires,

reason would be unable to conceive of our end, and, consequently, of our good. But they have not seen, on the other hand, that reason could not have read this revelation in our desires unless it had previously known that we have an end; that this end is our good; and that our desires make this end known; three ideas, which the mere observation of our desires would never have suggested, and which, consequently, reason must have deduced from itself. So far, then, is it from being true, that reason is incapable of discovering any good, that it may with truth be said, on the contrary, that the idea of good emanates from it alone. Reason communicates the idea of absolute good, deduces from this the ideas of our own good, and of the good of every being, and, yet more, suggests the method by which we may determine in what the good of any particular being consists; thus much it does *à priori*, without the intervention of instinct. When this is done, then, and then only, does reason become empirical, and, applying to man this method, demand from our natural desires a revelation of the particular elements of the end, which is our good; this is what reason does, *à posteriori*, with the assistance of instinct. Suppress these conceptions of intuitive reason, and limit yourselves to an empirical application of reason to instinct, and you may discover, indeed, what nature desires, but nothing more; for this is all that instinct reveals. Far from thus learning, that what our nature desires is our true good, or that it is a good at all, it would not even occur to you to ask whether it was or not; for such a question would presuppose an idea of good,

which is not in your mind. The idea of good, in the systems of instinct and of self-love, is a paralogism; for it is not contained in the elements of human nature which these systems recognize.

You will now easily perceive how much there is of truth and of error in the opinion of the instinctive philosophers that all good is relative. In the first place, it is false in respect to absolute good; for that which is relative to the nature of God, who is the necessary and absolute Being, is not relative. In the second place, it is false in respect to moral good; for, whatever may be the nature of a free and intelligent being, it is still a good that he should accomplish his destiny. The proposition can be true, then, only in reference to the various kinds of good appropriate to different beings; and, even in this application, it is but half true; for the notion of these particular kinds of good is not wholly relative. The idea of good included in it is absolute; and, if the nature of every being was altered, it would still be true that the accomplishment of its end is a good. The part of the notion which is relative, and which alone is so, is the peculiar nature of this end and good: substitute a man's nature for that of a bee, and the good of the bee would become that of the man. Particular kinds of good, then, are relative; but still there enters into every such good an element, which is not relative, and which communicates to it its character of good, namely, the fact that it is the end of some being, and consequently a fraction of absolute good, or of universal order. If I was not unwilling to use scholastic expressions, I should say

that each particular kind of good is relative in its substance, and absolute in its form; but perhaps such an expression would add no clearness to an idea that is perfectly simple in itself. Hume's assertion that all good is relative, is partly true, therefore, and partly false; and such must always be the character of the fundamental maxims of a philosophy which, in its attempt to explain the phenomena of human nature, overlooks some of its component elements.

We see the same blending of truth and error in the third fundamental maxim of the instinctive philosophers, that reason cannot influence the will, but that this power is the peculiar prerogative of our instincts and desires. Unquestionably, until reason conceives the idea of absolute good—inasmuch as that only is then good which we desire—desire alone can influence the will. In other words, before the discovery of absolute good, we can act only with reference to the particular kinds of good, toward which we are impelled by instinct, or else with a view to our greatest interest, that is to say, the most complete gratification of our passions. In the first of these cases, assuredly, we obey some one of our primitive affections; and, in the second, we are governed by a desire of secondary formation, that is, the love of self. Before the discovery of absolute good, therefore, the instinctive system has good reason for saying that desire alone influences the will; and, denying, as it does, that this discovery is ever made, it is perfectly consistent in asserting that reason never acts upon the will. But, if this fact, thus denied, is established, and the conception of absolute good is



admitted, then the truth of the other fact, also denied, that reason acts upon the will, must likewise be granted; for as soon as the idea of absolute good is comprehended, a new motive appears, namely, obligation. It is seen that this good is legitimate in itself, and ought to be done; and at once a third kind of influence is exerted over the will, equally distinct from the action of the primitive affections, and from that of the secondary affection called *self-love*. We may deny, as the instinctive philosophers have done, this third mode of influence; but, if we do so, we must either abandon such words as *duty*, *right*, *obligation*, or declare that they express nothing more than the impulses of instinct, and the dictates of self-interest. We have tested the systems of selfishness and of instinct by their competency to account for these ideas, and have proved that all their attempts to explain them lead to results which contradict the common sense of men. Thus, to prove that our wills are not governed by an idea, the instinctive philosophers are compelled to deny that we are influenced by the idea of obligation; to prove this, they must deny the fact of obligation; to support this denial of the fact, they are forced to deny the common meaning of the words *right*, *duty*, *law*; and this amounts to a contradiction of the universal language of men, and of that intelligence which this language represents. Such are the consequences of admitting the maxim, that reason cannot act upon the will. It is true, then, within the circle of facts which the instinctive and selfish systems recognize, that no influence over the will emanates from reason;

but this circle does not include all the facts of human nature; for in human nature we find the ideas of absolute good and of obligation; and, when this third mode of volition is once admitted, it is seen to be true that reason does act upon the will, through the universal laws which it promulgates. Such, gentlemen, are the truths and errors, blended together, in the third fundamental maxim of the instinctive system; and, as you can distinctly see, the truth is deduced from real facts which are admitted, and the error from the oversight of other facts which are equally real.

It would be very easy to point out other mistakes in the instinctive system; but such detail is unnecessary, for they are all connected, more or less closely, with the three already described.

If, now, we examine these three fundamental errors more closely, and inquire in what way the instinctive philosophers have fallen into them, we shall see that, in truth, they form but one grand error, and that this has been owing to a misconception of the function of reason in producing the moral phenomena of human nature.

This very misconception, however, arises from a yet more fundamental error, which it is well you should carefully observe, as you may learn from it once again the important lesson, that a true solution of the moral problem, as of every philosophical problem, can be drawn only from exact psychological science.

This fundamental error, gentlemen, is the very one which Locke committed, and which Condillac repeated, in supposing that experience is the only

source of our primary ideas, and that the sole office of reason is to form conclusions by deduction and by induction; or, in other words, to carry on processes of reasoning.

Reasoning, as every one knows, is necessarily unproductive of new truth; for it can only proceed from the whole to the parts, or from the parts to the whole, and can find, in the conclusion, only that which is contained in the principle. If reason, then, and reasoning, are identical, it is absurd to ask from reason an explanation of the original ideas of the mind, for they did not emanate from it; and, as the idea of good is incontestably one of these, it is absurd to seek in reason for its origin and source. We must have recourse, therefore, to that faculty of our nature from which our primary ideas are derived; and this, according to the hypothesis of Locke, and of all the empirical philosophers, is *observation*.

But, gentlemen, observation is limited to the internal facts of which we are conscious, and to the external facts which we perceive. Seek now, within this circle, the idea of good, and you will be satisfied at once, that the only one to be found is that which the instinctive philosophers have adopted. Consciousness declares that we have desires, and that we are pained when these are unsatisfied, and pleased when they receive gratification; externally we perceive appropriate objects for these desires, and means fitted for their acquisition. This is all that observation furnishes towards the solution of the problem; and we are necessarily led, therefore, to the idea that good is

what our nature desires, and that this is the only reasonable signification of the word.

We have seen already, indeed, that the true idea of good is an *à priori* conception — or, to speak more accurately, the result of many *à priori* conceptions — of intuitive reason, and not a suggestion of the empirical faculty or the understanding. The true idea of good, therefore, is an enigma to all who have not comprehended this superior source of ideas. Obligated, therefore, to give some interpretation to the word, they seek an explanation from the understanding, whose only answer, as I have already said, is that given by the instinctive and the selfish systems.

Here, then, is the true source of all the errors of the instinctive philosophy, or rather, we might say, the origin of this philosophy itself. Here you see the explanation of the assertion, that it is impossible to suppose that reason can discover or create any ideas in moral science ; and of the other assertion, so often repeated, that reason is an essentially secondary faculty, limited to the discovery of means of acquiring a good already conceived. In reason, the instinctive philosophers, in common with all empirical philosophers, have recognized nothing but a reasoning faculty, and have considered observation, therefore, as the exclusive source of primitive ideas. Review the writings of all the instinctive philosophers who have expressed any metaphysical opinions, and you will see that they have all been imbued with this doctrine. Obligated to account for these ideas of intuitive reason, they have been driven to various

expedients: Hutcheson invents a new and peculiar sense; Hume, unable to explain them by experience, mutilates or denies them; and, lastly, Jacobi can bring himself to deny that sensibility reveals to us our ideas of good, only when, by the profound analysis of Kant's philosophy, he has been made to discern the reality of intuitive reason, and the competency of this faculty to communicate original ideas. In referring, therefore, to this source, the error of the instinctive philosophy, I rest not merely on the intimate connection between the sentimental solution of the moral problem and the empirical solution of the origin of our ideas; but I am supported in my assertion by the expressed opinions of the instinctive philosophers themselves, who are empirical in their metaphysics and morality alike, and empirical morally because so metaphysically.

What I have now said applies not only to the instinctive system of ethics, but equally, and with yet more theoretical and historical exactness, to the system of selfishness. The selfish morality, indeed, is rigorously and necessarily derived from the empirical philosophy. It is distinguished from the instinctive system, by frankly and entirely accepting all the consequences of this philosophy. Empiricism, by suppressing the *à priori* conceptions of reason, suppresses the true idea of good; and, consequently, its only idea of good is, that it is the satisfaction of our natural desires. The selfish system admits this consequence without hesitation, and defines morality to be the pursuit of our greatest happiness, or of the greatest satisfaction of our desires. The instinctive

system, however, is not so bold nor so ignorant of the facts in our nature, which contradict this conclusion. It sees at once that such a definition of morality excludes all disinterestedness, and reduces volition to a simple calculation of personal interest. From such a consequence it revolts; for it cannot overlook the plain distinction between moral volitions and selfish volitions. There is a good quite independent of, and different from, our own, that we have regard to in action. This is the fact which the selfish philosophers pass by unnoticed, but which the philosophers of instinct cannot overlook. To explain this fact, and yet to maintain the ground of moral empiricism, that our only idea of good is of an end which nature desires, is the problem, admitting of no solution, that the instinctive philosophers have attempted to solve. We have seen in what way they have made this attempt, and how, notwithstanding the ingenuity of their theories, they have failed, one and all. They have been unable to escape the fatal difficulty, implied in the very terms of their problem, which, correctly stated, is as follows:—Good being only what our nature desires, how shall we find a good which is impersonal? The difference between the selfish and instinctive systems, therefore, is only this, that the former admits, while the latter denies and seeks to avoid, the consequences of that empirical philosophy, of which they are both the legitimate fruits.

Thus, gentlemen, have I showed you the principal source of the instinctive system of ethics. But, independently of this primary cause, many others

conspire to lead generous minds to adopt this solution of the moral problem, and to conceal from them its radical defects. With a description of some of these, I will close the lecture.

The first and chief is, unquestionably, the coincidence, already pointed out and explained, between the ends which instinct, self-love, and virtue, respectively impel us to seek. Permit me once again to repeat, that reason does not lead man in one direction, self-love in another, and instinct in a third; but, on the contrary, self-love, when enlightened, counsels us to pursue the very course to which instinctive desire impels, and reason, as the moral faculty, prescribes what self-love thus advises. This fundamental agreement between the three moving powers of our nature, has always been a source of illusion in ethical science, and, at all eras, has disguised from the philosophers of the selfish and instinctive schools the fallacy of their theories. What do we seek in moral science? asks the selfish philosopher. The true law of human conduct. How shall we recognize this law? By the fact that it is competent to explain the various volitions which determine that conduct. This is exactly what is done by interest well understood. Interest well understood, therefore, is the required rule and law, says the philosopher of self-love. On the other hand, the instinctive philosophers reason thus:—Among the various ends of human conduct, if one can be pointed out, towards which we are not impelled by a desire, or, again, a single desire shown, whose object is not an end of human conduct, then may it be granted that instinct is incompetent to explain human

volitions, and that recourse must be had to some other principle. Is the good of others mentioned? Sympathy impels us to seek it. Order? Sensibility admires its beauty. Devotion? Virtue? The generous heart rejoices in their contemplation. Such are the arguments of the philosophers of self-love and of instinct; and it is not difficult to believe that they may have seemed conclusive to their advocates. And yet, gentlemen, the answer to be given is most simple; and, as I have repeated the mention of this coincidence, I will also repeat, that this coincidence, already explained and justified, does not prove what these philosophers pretend. The moral problem is much more complex than they suppose, and their illusion has arisen from having contemplated it under only one of its faces. A solution of this problem, to be true, must account not only for the ends toward which conduct is directed, but also for the motive by which we are impelled to pursue them, and the reasons by which we are led to recognize them as good. For instance, it is a fact that the good of our fellow-beings is not an indifferent thing, and that we do often will to produce it. Hence it appears, that the good of others must be reckoned among the real ends of human conduct, and that every system must be false which leaves the pursuit of this end unexplained. But does it follow from this, that a moral system is complete in this respect, either because it shows that a natural instinct impels us blindly to seek the good of others, or that it is our interest to advance the happiness of our fellow-beings, as, by this means, we secure our own? By no means. For, in the



first place, we are really governed by three motives, in thus promoting the well-being of other men: sympathy impels, self-love advises, duty commands us, to pursue this course; and, secondly, the good of others appears to us under three different aspects—as an object desired by instinct, as a condition of personal gratification, and, lastly, as an element of absolute good. If it is true, that man is thus led to respect the happiness of his fellow-beings by these three motives, and to regard this end as good for these three reasons, it is evident, that a system which explains this pursuit of another's welfare by one only of these three motives, or recognizes it as good for one only of these three reasons, must be incomplete, and cannot give the true solution of the moral problem. It is evident, moreover, that this incompetency of the system will betray itself; for it cannot account for the facts which it has overlooked, nor for the ideas corresponding to these facts, in universal common sense and the language of all mankind. This, gentlemen, is what the philosophers of self-love and of instinct have not seen; and therefore have they employed an argument, from the coincidence of these ends and motives, which proves nothing. A moral system is bound to account for and explain not only the real end of human volitions, but the nature also of these volitions; that is, the motives and ideas by which they are determined.

The selfish and instinctive philosophers have overlooked also the fact, that this coincidence presupposes, in part, the moral mode of volition, and the *à priori* ideas by which it is produced; for this coincidence

is subsequent to the introduction of these ideas, and results from them. If these ideas were suppressed, or if reason had never conceived them, the range of instinct and self-love would be too narrow for any to pretend that they included the moral motive. And now, to give some examples—Who does not see, that the condition for a love of order, in the sensibility, is a conception, more or less distinct, of order by intuitive reason? Who does not perceive, that the delicious pleasure, which accompanies devotedness and virtue, presupposes virtue and devotedness, which themselves presuppose the conception of an impersonal good? Who, in a word, does not comprehend, that, as Providence has implanted in the sensibility desires fitted to make certain ends, which only reason can conceive, agreeable to us, these ends themselves must first be conceived, before the desires can awake? and that it is absurd, therefore, from the actual development of these desires, to infer that the intervention of reason, in making known these ends, and inducing us to pursue them, is useless? It would be difficult, perhaps, to ascertain with precision what instinct or self-interest would be, or to what courses of conduct these two motives would lead, without the co-operation of the rational and moral motive; but it is perfectly plain, that neither instinct nor self-interest would present to a man, deficient in this faculty, the same ends which, with his present constitution, he is led now to pursue.

Another cause, gentlemen, which has conspired with the fundamental harmony, now described, to mislead the philosophers of instinct, is the form under

which they have stated the moral problem — a form none the less bad because common, and which naturally leads to a defective method of examination.

There are two ways in which moral inquiries may be undertaken and pursued. The first is that which I find fault with most moralists for having adopted. These philosophers have made it their aim to discover the origin of our ideas of good and evil, of right and duty, of approbation and disapprobation, and in a word, of all our moral ideas. This is the form under which they have presented the moral problem. But the form under which I presented it was, you will recollect, quite different. The object of my investigations has been, in the first place, to learn what and how many are the real motives of human volition; and this point determined, next to ascertain which among these motives is the source of moral ideas. We may, indeed, by proceeding in either way, arrive at the desired result; but it is easy to see that the chances of error are more numerous in the former mode than in the latter. When we seek to ascertain the real and distinct motives of human volition, our inquiries are directed to matters of fact; we endeavor to penetrate into human consciousness, to observe the considerations by which conduct is determined in the diverse and multiplied circumstances of life, and thus to detect, by varied observations, the different distinct motives which influence our acts. Such an examination can hardly fail of being impartial, and the chances are many that it will conduct us to a true result; for, on the one hand, our object is to discover the various modes

in which the human will may be determined,—and there can be no motive for giving a mutilated and imperfect solution of such a problem, and, on the other, as all the distinct motives of volition must necessarily act upon the will within a short space of time, it is evident that persevering observation cannot fail promptly to discover them. And, now, supposing that these motives are ascertained, what remains to be done? We have only to determine which of these motives is the source of moral ideas, that is to say, which accounts for and explains the true meaning of such words as in all human languages express these ideas. And having before us a complete list, and in the mind a precise notion of these motives, it is not easy to see how we can be mistaken as to the one that alone can explain them; or, in other words, as to the true moral motive.

The chances are much in favor, therefore, of arriving at truth, when we adopt this mode; and only one source of error is apparent, namely, incomplete observation of the phenomena of human nature.

Can as much be said in favor of the other mode? I think not. It sets out from the fact that moral ideas exist in human intelligence, and words, expressive of these ideas, in human language, and passes at once, without intermediate steps, to an examination of the origin of those ideas. And, now, do you see what the consequences may be of such a mode of proceeding? I will tell you. Man's nature is complex, and yet its elements are in perfect harmony with each other, by reason of the coincidence already described; so that many of its phenomena, although

distinct, are parallel. Thus instinct, duty, self-love, are parallel, although widely different; and yet more, they often conspire, although each in this union remains unchanged. It is very possible, therefore, that the moralist, observing that the mode of volition which we call the *instinctive*, or the mode which we call *selfish*, impels us to the performance of such acts, as the common sense of humanity calls *morally good*, should be struck with this coincidence, and, stopping here, should think that he has discovered the solution of the moral problem. And do you not see how natural it is that he should then attempt to verify his conjecture; and that, with a mind preoccupied by his discovery, he should succeed in satisfying himself of its truth, since this fact of coincidence so constantly reappears? And do you not readily comprehend that he may limit his observation to this fact of coincidence, cease to investigate further, and conclude immediately that the words *good* and *evil* represent only interest, well or ill understood, as Hobbes has taught; or utility and its opposite, as Hume maintains; or the sympathy and antipathy of the impartial spectator, according to Smith's supposition; and, consequently, that either instinct or self-love is the true principle of moral volitions, and the true source of the moral ideas? Such, gentlemen, are the evil results of the method now described. I have been anxious that you should thus see how much the solution of any question depends upon the method in which it is investigated; and it is undeniable, that their method has contributed greatly to the errors of the instinctive philosophers, as has clearly appeared from the description already

given of the manner in which Hume and Smith have attempted to demonstrate their respective systems.

To these causes of delusion another must be added, which is the last I shall mention. I mean the spontaneousness of our moral conceptions, and the form under which they first enter, and most frequently continue to abide in the mind.

There is a great difference between truths communicated by intuitive reason, and those obtained by deduction in this respect. The process through which the latter are acquired being voluntary, and by successive steps, we have a distinct consciousness, that cannot be misunderstood, of their rational origin. But intuitive truths, on the contrary, are rather a revelation than an acquisition. Being, as they are, the conditions of all other conceptions of truth, and absolutely indispensable to a comprehension of the external world, it was necessary that they should be originally given, and that their discovery should not be left to the accidental exercise of our liberty. The knowledge of them has been made independent, therefore, of the exercise of will, and of the activity of understanding. They appear in all men, in the stupid and intelligent alike; they arise without the intervention of attention or of will; and when once conceived, memory is not burdened with preserving these results, for they reappear whenever needed, with equal spontaneity and ease, so that, without effort of our own, and almost without a consciousness of their presence, we enjoy their influence, as we breathe the vital air, ignorant and unthinking whence and how

they came. No one remembers the period at which these intuitive truths were first acquired; and philosophers, when they observe them among the elements of our knowledge, can only admit them as necessary. Not at once, however, is their universality observed; for they do not naturally reveal themselves under this aspect. We do not begin with an abstract conception of them, and then proceed to their special application; but, on the contrary, they are always first perceived in some particular instance, and enveloped in a particular judgment; and, indeed, in the majority of minds, they are never distinguished separately, and the universal truth implied in these judgments is never disengaged. To the multitude of men, therefore, these intuitive truths remain always confused, and, as we might say, unknown, though supposed, included, and implied, in every act of judgment.

What I have now said, gentlemen, of intuitive truths in general, is true of our fundamental moral conceptions in particular; and this is a cause that has chiefly contributed to mislead the instinctive philosophers. The apparent spontaneity of our judgments upon actions has seemed to them a certain proof that they emanate from instinct rather than reason. The obscurity, in the minds of most men, of the ideas of good and evil implied in these judgments, has confirmed them in this conviction; for, according to their notions, a rational judgment is merely an application to particular cases of a preconceived general truth, and in these moral judgments, both the truth and its application are unseen. In the third place, the impossibility of assigning a date

to the first appearance of these moral judgments has seemed to them an incontestable sign that they originate in instinct; for instinct is coeval with our birth, while reason, on the contrary, is developed gradually, by processes which may be traced. Finally, gentlemen, the facts, that no human being is wholly wanting in moral convictions; that moral judgments frequently precede reflection; and, lastly, that memory and experience do not operate to produce them, as the hypothesis of their rational origin would seem to imply, — have all concurred to deceive the instinctive philosophers. When, at a later period in our course, I shall have described in detail the formation of our fundamental moral ideas, you will more easily comprehend these analogies, while you will perceive, at the same time, the radical differences which strict analysis detects. Here I close my criticism of the systems of instinct, and in the next lecture shall commence an examination of the rational systems of ethics.



## LECTURE XXI.

THE RATIONAL SYSTEM.—PRICE.

GENTLEMEN,

HAVING now examined the solutions of the moral problem which are given by the selfish and sentimental schools, we come at last to systems which seek the rule of human conduct where truly it is to be found — in the conceptions of reason. In saying this, I say enough to assure you that the systems now to be discussed approach much more nearly to the true solution of the problem than those thus far examined. Before entering, however, upon the exposition and detailed criticism of their principles, it may be well that I should recall to your minds the terms of the question to be solved, the solutions proposed by the systems already discussed, and the distinguishing characteristic of the solution given by those which I have classed under the general name of rational systems.

The consciousness that they are free and intelligent inspires all men with the conviction that there is a rule of conduct by which they should be bound; or, in other words, that life has an end, which they can discern by intellect, and to which they are bound to direct their energies, in the exercise of freedom.

What is this rule? This is the question which it is the object of ethical science to answer. Each instant we recognize such a rule, impose it upon others, and are conscious that we ought to be influenced by it ourselves. Continually do we say, This is good, that is bad, this should be done, that should be avoided — all of which judgments imply that we have faith in some rule of conduct which we can conceive of and are bound to pursue. For we not only counsel others to do what is right, and judge, in our own case, that such conduct is proper, but we say to others, This is right, therefore it *ought* to be done, and we feel that such language is equally applicable to ourselves. The convictions, that an act is good and that it ought to be done, are identical. We feel ourselves bound to pursue the course of conduct, whatever it may be, in which we recognize this character of goodness.

It would seem, gentlemen, since we are each instant passing moral judgments, that nothing could be more definite or clear to comprehension than these ideas of good and evil. In judging, with so much confidence, of the conduct of our fellow-men, and of our own acts, it is implied that we cannot be ignorant of the essential nature of good and evil. And yet it is evident that the ideas represented by these words, *good* and *evil*, are precisely those which the numerous systems already spoken of and yet to be discussed, are striving to ascertain. This apparent contradiction must not surprise you. It is equally apparent in relation to all fundamental ideas of the human mind. Our most familiar judgments imply notions which

philosophy is still seeking to discover, and which she cannot flatter herself she has thus far precisely determined. What is more common than to hear the opinions expressed, This is beautiful, that is ugly; and who doubts that these words indicate clear ideas in the minds of all men as to the qualities which they represent? And yet how numerous are the systems which attempt to describe the true nature of these qualities! Again, we constantly say, This is true, false, probable; and, nevertheless, so long as philosophers exist, will they dispute upon the nature of truth and of certainty. We do not hesitate to say, This is; and yet, who knows the nature of being? On the other hand, we say, That is not, without knowing what is meant by nothing. Examine the systems of philosophers as to the nature of being, and they will give you, in answer, various opinions, by none of which will you be convinced.

Thus you see that these judgments of common sense, as to good and evil, truth and error, beauty and ugliness, being and its opposite, all simple judgments,—without which we could not take even the first step in our reasonings; without which, indeed, it might be said we could not act at all, nor consequently live,—imply the existence, in the minds of all men, of certain ideas; while, notwithstanding, philosophers still seek to ascertain these ideas, still differ among themselves concerning them, and give utterance to a variety of opinions and systems, in their attempts to describe and explain them.

And yet, gentlemen, this contradiction is only one in appearance. You find its explanation in the fact

that all these primitive and fundamental ideas are given by intuitive reason ; confused conceptions do not prevent some apprehension of their nature in the minds of any ; while yet a clear conception cannot be obtained, except by means of an analysis, that becomes difficult from the fact that intuitive reason is so intimate and familiar. Thus what philosophers are seeking is not that which all men possess as human beings. But they seek the precise moral idea, concealed beneath this name of *good*. Now, this precise idea is not present to the minds of men when they declare that *this is good* or *that is bad*. Undoubtedly, they recognize, in the acts upon which they pass these judgments, the presence or absence of a certain quality. But there is a wide difference between a recognition of the presence or absence of a quality, and a precise description of this quality ; and this is exactly the distinction between common sense and philosophy. The general notion of men, as to good and evil, is such, that, if a false definition is given of these two qualities, they easily perceive that it is false, but not such as to enable them to substitute in its place the true definition. From what has now been said, we can understand how, on the one side, common sense is the rock upon which the most elaborate systems of philosophy have been wrecked, and the judge, whose sanction even the proudest have been forced to seek ; while, on the other, common sense has never supplied, and can never supply, the absence of philosophy. I have, in another place, unfolded at full length all these ideas, in comparing together common sense and

philosophy, and do not intend, therefore, to dwell longer on this point here. The only important thing is, that you should distinctly comprehend the extent of that knowledge which all men possess in moral science, and then form a conception of the knowledge yet to be acquired. What we have now to seek is precisely what all the philosophers have been in search of whose systems we have examined. We have to seek, as they have sought, the *precise idea* represented in the judgments of common sense by the words *good* and *evil*, and by the expressions, *This ought to be done, that ought to be avoided*. This is the great problem of moral science; for true rules of human conduct can be derived only from a precise, clear, and true idea of the good which is our end. This great problem, then, must we now approach, and devote our best efforts to its precise solution.

We have already remarked that every act of the human will includes three elements—the volition itself, its end, and the motive by which we are impelled to pursue it. Of these three elements, it is evident that only one remains in all cases the same; that is, the act of volition. The other two, the end and the motive, continually vary, and the different modes of volition, therefore, must be resolved into a variation in these two elements.

If this is true, gentlemen, it is evident that it is by a study of human volitions, and of their different modes, that we must seek to find an explanation of the essential nature of good, and of the sentiment of obligation. What is meant by the word *good*? An *end*. What is meant by the word *obligation*?

The motive by which we are impelled to attain it. There is, then, a mode of volition, especially characterized by this, that it seeks the end implied by the word *good*, and is governed by the motive implied by the word *obligation*. We can obtain a clear view of the precise idea expressed by each of these words only through a strict analysis of this peculiar mode of volition; while the mode itself can be discovered only after an examination and classification of all possible modes of volition.

In studying the facts of man's moral nature, we have recognized, that all modes of volition, however numerous, may still be referred to three classes; or, what amounts to the same thing, that the will can be really determined only by three motives, and can seek only three really distinct ends.

This being true, gentlemen, two consequences follow; first, that the mode of volition, whose end is good, and whose motive is obligation, is necessarily one of these three modes; and, secondly, that, when philosophers have sought to determine the end of volition represented by the word *good*, and the motive of volition represented by the word *obligation*, they have found it impossible to invent, in their solution of these questions, more than three distinct systems. If there are actually but three distinct ends, and three distinct motives, of human volition, it is impossible to imagine that any system should seek a solution elsewhere. *À priori*, then, human nature, and a complete description of the phenomena of will, being given, philosophy can propose only three distinct solutions of the moral problem—the selfish, the

instinctive, and the rational solutions. To arrive at a true solution of the problem, therefore, it is only necessary to examine these three solutions, and see which is adequate to explain the facts of man's moral nature.

This is precisely the task in which we are now engaged, and which we have in part already finished. Of the three possible solutions of the problem, I have already examined the two first, and proved that they do not answer it aright. Allow me to call your attention, for a moment, to the precise characteristics of these two solutions, and to the reasons which have compelled me to reject them, before passing to a consideration of the third and last.

The selfish system declares, that, when we use the expression "This is good," the word *good* is only intended to designate the greatest satisfaction, or the greatest happiness, of our nature; and, consequently, it sees, in what is called *obligation*, only the motive which impels us to seek this greatest happiness; or, in other words, that desire of secondary formation, which is but the aggregate of all our primitive desires, and is denominated *self-love*. Such is the selfish solution of the moral problem.

In what way have I refuted this solution? Let us see. In the first place, I have shown that, between the moral judgments actually passed by common sense, and those which it ought to pass—if by the word *good* was meant the greatest happiness of our nature—there is no coincidence; or, if there is such a coincidence, that it can be recognized only by that highest Intelligence, who foresaw and adapted

the means of happiness. And as, in fact, multitudes of individuals, entirely incapable of such an estimate, to pass these judgments, it follows, that, even if this coincidence was made perfectly evident, the explanation would still be inadequate. In the second place, I have shown that if, by the word *good*, in our moral judgments, we understood our highest personal good, we should be conscious that this was our meaning, and that we had previously considered the relation of these things to our greatest happiness. Now, so far from being conscious of this, we are conscious of directly the contrary. There is even less coincidence observable, therefore, between the internal facts, than between the external facts. Such was my first mode of refuting the system of selfishness. The second was as follows:—I maintained, even if the motive of the selfish mode of volition is admitted to be the desire of our own private good, that this motive is still not an obligatory one, because that which we desire is not seen to be that which ought to be done. Thus, then, by comparing the selfish solution of the moral problem with the judgments of common sense, I have shown, on the one hand, that there is no coincidence between the idea of *good*, as explained by the selfish system, and the idea of *good* as we find it in the moral judgment of common sense; and, on the other hand, that the *good* recognized in our moral judgments is accompanied by a sense of obligation, while the selfish motive is not. Such, then, is the selfish solution of the moral problem, and such are the reasons which have led me to reject it.



In what, now, does the instinctive solution of the moral problem consist? The philosophers of instinct pretend, that this word *good* designates simply the peculiar object of a natural affection, and that the motive implied by the word *obligation* is merely this desire itself. The only difference among the philosophers of instinct is, that some of them have considered this affection as one which always exists, and is always recognized, in our nature; while others, acknowledging that the tendency of no commonly recognized affection coincides with the idea of good, have invented a new affection, commonly overlooked, but proved to possess real existence by the very fact that such an end as good is pursued. I have refuted this second solution of the moral problem exactly as I did the selfish solution. In the first place, I have shown that no natural affection is or can be accompanied by the sense of obligation, and that no affection can rightfully exercise supreme control over other affections; and, therefore, that the instinctive solution of the moral problem is inadmissible. In the second place, I have shown, even supposing it to be true that the combined ends of all our natural affections are coincident with the end represented by the word *good* in moral judgments, that still the particular object of any one of our affections cannot be thus coincident; and that Smith himself has granted this to be true in the case of sympathy, which certainly could best stand such a test; and thus, that the solution of the instinctive philosophers, who make moral good the object of a peculiar affection, even if it saves their system from the second objection, is still exposed to

the first, which alone is sufficient to disprove it. For, however elevated may be the object of this new affection which they have invented, we still can be impelled to its pursuit only by the affection itself. This affection is equal, and only equal, to our other affections; it can in no way, therefore, be more obligatory than they. Thus have I refuted the instinctive solution of the moral problem.

Having now recalled to your minds the point from which we set out, and the way we have traversed, we come next in order to a consideration of the third possible solution of the moral problem; that is to say, the rational one. In a few words, I will explain to you in what this consists. The common characteristic of all possible rational systems is, that they consider the idea of *good*, as it is found in the moral judgments of common sense, an *à priori* conception of reason. Whatever, therefore, may be the idea which, according to these systems, is expressed by the word *good*, they all agree in recognizing that it is communicated neither by instinct nor by experience, but that it emanates from intuitive reason. Another dogma, held in common by all rational systems, is, that to the idea of good, as conceived by reason, is immediately attached the idea of obligation; so that, whenever we conceive of any thing as good, we know at once that it ought to be done.

All rational systems agree, therefore, both in the origin of the idea of good, which they refer to an *à priori* conception of reason, and in the nature of the accompanying motive — a motive purely rational, and represented by the word *obligation*. All consequently

agree in not recognizing the type of moral volition either in the instinctive or in the selfish modes of volition, and consequently in rejecting as false both the selfish and instinctive solutions of the problem, whose object it is to determine the true elements of the moral mode of volition. The rational philosophers, therefore, do not consider the idea of the greatest satisfaction of all our natural affections, nor the idea of a special object of a particular affection, equivalent to the idea of good. But they all assert that this word represents another idea, which only reason is capable of conceiving, and which appears to us as obligatory the moment it is conceived. Thus far the rational philosophers agree, in the solution which they give of the moral problem.

They differ from each other, however, in this, that some consider the idea of good as simple and irreducible, while others do not. In the minds of the former, in other words, the idea of good is not a complex notion, which can be decomposed into the particular notions which it comprehends; nor is it another expression of a still higher idea, into which it may be resolved, and by which it may be explained. According to their opinion, we cannot explain the idea of good; we can merely name it. The idea in itself is clearer than any other into which it can be translated; and attempted explanations, therefore, serve but to obscure it. Philosophers who take this view easily solve the problem of the nature of good. To the question *What is good?* they reply, *It is good*, and seek only to determine the objects in which it may be discerned, the conditions under which it is

conceived, and the phenomena by which this conception is accompanied. As systems of this class entirely coincide as to the nature of good, without attempting to define it, they cannot differ upon secondary points. I shall consider them, therefore, as one, and shall criticise them altogether. Cudworth, Price, and the philosophers of the Scottish school, properly so called, are the writers who have embraced this opinion. The rational systems which adopt the opposite idea, can, on the contrary, be easily distinguished from one another. Admitting that the idea of good is one that can be resolved into another or several other ideas, and, consequently, that it can be defined, the authors of these systems give different definitions, and hence results a great variety of systems. Thus, by *good*, Wollaston means what is *true*, and considers that conduct morally good which is conformable to truth. Malebranche, on the contrary, defines good to be *order*, and makes morality consist in acting in obedience to this order. *Good*, according to Clarke, is acting with a reference to the fitness of things, and according to the nature of things—agreeing in this with the Stoics. Wolf supposes that the idea of good resolves itself into that of *perfection*, and Ferguson into that of *excellence*. When I come to the examination of this class of systems, I will point out to you the different solutions which have been given to the moral problem. as regarded from this point of view. My only object at present is to make you acquainted with my reason for the classification now made of the rational philosophers. This classification is justified by the fact that some

of these philosophers consider the idea of good a simple idea, like those of time and space, and consequently refuse to define it; while others attempt to give a definition of good, and are thus led to invent a great variety of theories.

My design, gentlemen, is to exhibit successively specimens of these two classes of systems. It is by examples that I have endeavored to make you acquainted with the true spirit of the selfish and the instinctive systems of ethics. To this method I shall adhere, and by examples shall introduce you to the knowledge of the rational systems of ethics. Instead of such long developments as I have entered into with regard to the selfish and instinctive systems, I shall be compelled to give but a hasty exposition of the rational systems. For the length to which, in spite of myself, this preliminary part of my course has already extended, begins to alarm me; and, fortunately, the progress which we have already made in our researches, will permit me to be more rapid than I should wish, under other circumstances, to be myself, or than you, perhaps, may desire. In a few words I can explain my meaning.

Let me remind you that the end which we have proposed to ourselves in this preliminary examination, is twofold; first, to examine the different systems which, in any way, have misconceived or mutilated the true principle of morality, that is to say, the law of obligation; and, secondly, by a criticism of these systems, to disengage, in a distinct and precise manner, the law from which all ethics spring. What now, gentlemen, is the essence of the rational system?

It is, that it refers to intuitive reason, the origin of our idea of good. But on what foundation does the rational system rest, in forming this conclusion? Necessarily, upon the characteristics of good, as they are found to exist in moral judgments, and upon the nature of the only ideas which instinct and understanding can give. All rational systems deny, then, necessarily, that instinct or understanding are capable of revealing our true good. All reject, therefore, the instinctive and the selfish ideas of good, as not equivalent to our true idea. Thus much the rational system necessarily denies; and now, on the other hand, what does it, by an equal necessity, admit? It admits that good, as it is found existing in moral judgments, is obligatory and impersonal; in other words, that it has the authority of a law; and that it is good, not only in reference to the individual, but in itself. For such are the characteristics which we are forced to ascribe to the idea, as revealed by intuitive reason. But, gentlemen, our opinions upon these points are already entirely made up; for we have considered and determined them at length, in our criticisms of the selfish and instinctive systems. Now, if, on the one hand, these points are all settled in our minds, and if, on the other, all rational doctrines are unanimous in relation to them, it is useless for us to examine, in detail, the parts of these systems in which they are contained; especially as we shall be obliged to return to the consideration of these truths, and to establish them scientifically, when we attempt to lay down for ourselves the foundations of an ethical system. There is only one other way, therefore, — and upon this

point the rational systems differ, — in which false representations may be given of the real foundations of morality ; and this point is the only one, moreover, which we have not as yet determined for ourselves. It is the nature of good. What is good ? What idea is really represented by this word, in moral judgments ? Is it a simple, undefinable idea ? Or is it an idea that can be defined and resolved into some other ? If so, what is this other idea ? Such is the point in discussion between rational philosophers ; and this is the only question which it is now important for us to determine. Upon this point, indeed, we have approached nearly to a decision. For we have already removed a multitude of errors, and disengaged many of the fundamental truths of ethics. This problem alone remains, and this must now be solved. For how can we determine the true rules of human conduct, if we are ignorant of the essential nature of good ; that is to say, of the supreme idea from which these rules must be derived. Thus, as you see, our work is much simplified ; and, because thus simplified, it will be necessary to examine the rational systems upon one point only. We can easily, then, be more rapid in this part of our historical view.

With these preliminary observations, gentlemen, we will proceed to the discussion of the rational systems, and commence with those included in the first category ; that is to say, with those which consider the idea of good as simple and irreducible.

The system which I have selected, to give you a true and complete idea of these systems, is that of Price, an English philosopher, who lived in the eighteenth

century, and whose writings are anterior by many years to the first work of Reid, the founder of the Scottish school. This preference of the moral system of Price over those of the Scottish school which take the same view, does not arise simply from the fact of its priority, but yet more and chiefly from the intrinsic excellence of Price's exposition, which, for extent and clearness of view, is superior to those of either Reid or Stewart.

Price is not the first, who, in England, adopted and taught this form of the rational system. At an earlier day, Cudworth had maintained the same opinion in opposition to the system of Hobbes. Cudworth's ideas may be expressed in a few words. He taught that our ideas of good and of evil are not communicated by either sense or experience; that is to say, that we do not acquire them from instinct, nor by deducing from instinct the notion of our greatest good. According to this writer, reason instantly conceives the ideas of good and of evil, from a contemplation of human actions, as absolutely as it conceives the idea of cause from that of events, or the idea of space from that of bodies. But, as when we behold an event, and conceive that it has a cause, we do not deduce the idea of cause from that of the event, although this latter is the occasion of the former, so, according to Cudworth, the ideas of good and of evil do not originate from the sight of actions; but actions are rather the occasions when these ideas awake, which are always latent within us, and which, once conceived, become universal. Whence come these ideas which we find within us? From the



divine mind, which is their natural and eternal home, and from which human reason is an emanation. You recognize in this system the doctrine which Plato so admirably unfolded. According to this system, universal and absolute ideas of good and evil, of beauty and deformity, of truth and error, exist from all eternity. Emanating from the supreme reason, our minds preserve a confused remembrance of these ideas; they sleep in us until external occasion awakens them; the current of external phenomena soon calls them forth, when instantly they become associated with all objects around us, and communicate to them a meaning and a character which they have not in themselves. This doctrine of ideas, if not in its form the most strict and rigorous, is at least ingenious; for it not only recognizes the presence of these ideas, but explains their origin and cause. In reproducing this system, Cudworth accomplished the end that he had chiefly in view, and proved that our moral ideas had not that merely relative and indefinite character which the system of Hobbes supposed. Actions are not good, in our view, on account of their relation to the sensual desires of our sensitive nature, transient and accidental as these necessarily are. The idea of good exists independently of every act, and of every individual being. It is eternal and immutable as the Deity in whom it resides. Our reason does not create this idea, but conceives it, and judges actions by this immutable test. With the idea of good is directly associated the idea of obligation; so that we have duties and a law; and these duties and this law are as immutable as good itself. Cudworth

declares this idea of good to be simple and indefinable, and thus belongs to the class of rational philosophers whose systems we are now engaged in considering. I limit myself to these few remarks upon the system of Cudworth. They will suffice to show you that the theory of Price was not without precedent in his own country.

What Hobbes was to Cudworth, Hutcheson was to Price. It was an apprehension of the consequences which might be drawn from the doctrine of the Irish philosophers, that determined him to write; and it was with a desire of preventing these consequences that he brought forward his system.

What was the theory of Hutcheson? It may be described under three heads. He taught, first, that our ideas of good and evil are simple and original; secondly, that, being simple and original, they must necessarily be derived from a sense; thirdly, that, as each sense is an arbitrary principle of our constitution, good and evil are relative to our constitution, and have no more objective reality than sweet or bitter; that is, they would change their nature if we were changed ourselves. This is what Hutcheson has either explicitly asserted, or by implication allowed. His system, strictly interpreted, would lead to the conclusion, that the words *good* and *evil* did not designate the real qualities of actions, but simply the sensations which they caused in us. Now, if this is true, there can be no morality; and it is true, if either the instinctive system or the selfish system can be established; for the selfish system, equally with the instinctive, asserts that an action is

good, only because it is fitted to produce in us a certain pleasure. Price saw, distinctly, both the identity, under this point of view, of these two systems, and the dangerous nature of the consequences in which both issue. His aim was, to maintain the objective reality and the immutability of good and evil.

Price, gentlemen, proceeds like a master. With clear and penetrating view, he grasps at once the essential difficulty, and comes directly to the question, which must be clearly stated before it can be solved. This question is no other than that of the origin of our ideas. For what is really the point in discussion? We have two faculties, the intelligent and the sensitive faculties. The first of these sees things as they are; the second perceives only the effects which they produce upon us. Ideas communicated by the former, denote realities which are independent of ourselves, and which would exist if we were otherwise constituted, and even if we ceased to be. The ideas communicated by the latter, on the other hand, denote only inward facts and sensations, which would not exist without us, and would change if we were changed. The question as to the objective reality and immutability of good and evil, reduces itself, then, to this—Are our ideas of good and evil of the first or second kind now mentioned? Or, which amounts to the same thing, are they derived from our intelligent or from our sensitive faculty? Hutcheson says that they are derived from the sensibility, and, consequently, that they are of the second kind. But why does he assert this? Because he admits the doctrine

of Locke, as to the origin of our ideas. What is this doctrine? It is, that all our primitive and original ideas are derived from sensation and reflection; or, in other words, that they are all communicated by experience. If we admit that this doctrine is true, Hutcheson has good ground for his opinion; for understanding, that is to say, observation, applied to actions, would not discover either good or evil. Good and evil are not visible qualities of actions, as form and extension are of bodies. These words, therefore, can only represent the sensations of pain or pleasure, which actions produce in us. Now, it is a fact, that actions do produce in us such sensations. This, then, is exactly what the ideas of good and evil represent. These ideas are derived, therefore, not from the intellect, but from the sensibility; and as they are special and peculiar ideas, they must be derived from a particular sense; so that, if the doctrine of Locke, as to the origin of our simple ideas, is true, Hutcheson's argument is good, and his system is established. The question to be determined, then, in order to decide whether he is right, is, simply, whether the opinion of Locke as to the origin of our ideas is well founded. This is the very point which Price first takes up; and he answers it by proving that the system of Locke is false, and that it is a mistake to suppose that all our simple and primitive ideas are derived solely from experience.

His demonstration is as complete as it is simple. He takes up certain ideas, and shows that they cannot be accounted for nor explained, either by the operations of the sensibility, nor of the intellect, in so far

as it is an empirical faculty. Sensibility cannot explain them, because they represent no sensation. The intellect, in so far as it is an empirical faculty, cannot explain them either, because, in the first place, these ideas represent nothing which can be observed, either within or without us; and because, secondly, they represent that which transcends the bounds of all observation, and of all generalization; in other words, these ideas are absolute. A consideration, which proves decisively that these ideas do not originate from experience, is, that experience presupposes them; so that we cannot form any judgment at all, or come to the understanding of any thing whatever, without these ideas. If these ideas exist, and if they are not derived from sensibility nor observation, what is the consequence? They must either be denied or recognized. To deny them is impossible, although Hume has dared to attempt it. They must, then, be admitted, either as the pure forms of our own minds, — and then we fall, as Kant at a later period fell, into universal skepticism, — or, as conceptions of real, although invisible facts. Now, evidently, says Price, this latter hypothesis is the only one that can be admitted, because it is the only one which is conformed to the universal faith of humanity, and to the consciousness of every man. When we conceive the ideas of time, space, cause, and so forth, we believe firmly that these ideas represent external realities, although these realities are simply intelligible, and not visible.

If such is the true nature of our ideas, they must necessarily be referred to some faculty which perceives in things what is really there, that is to say,

to the intellect, and to a particular exercise of this faculty, distinct from that which is designated by the word *observation*. The intellect appears under two forms, then, as empirical intellect or understanding, which sees in things such qualities as can be observed, and à priori intellect, or intuitive reason, which, beyond the visible, conceives of an invisible, that transcends all observation and all experience. The doctrine of Locke, therefore, is too narrow. It cannot explain all our ideas. It is true that there are only two sources of primary ideas — the sensibility and intellect. But Locke has recognized in the intellect only the power of observation, while, in addition to this, it includes intuitive reason, the fruitful source of all these primary ideas, by which we are enabled to comprehend the outward world, and of all the fundamental ideas of human faith. I have much abridged, and have expressed in my own way, this beautiful demonstration of Price, which, since his time, we have seen professed under different forms, both in Scotland and in Germany. But Price really saw all that I have now ascribed to him; and nothing has been added to the views which he suggests.

From this determination, Price returns to the ideas of good and evil, and resumes the consideration of Hutcheson's reasoning as to their origin. The ideas of good and evil are simple and primitive, says Hutcheson; and Price agrees with him. If they are simple and primitive, continues Hutcheson, they must emanate from a faculty capable of giving us such ideas. Now, continues Hutcheson, we perceive good and evil in actions, as we perceive extension and form

in bodies. This is true, says Price. These ideas, then, can only be ideas of sensation, says Hutcheson; and they must necessarily, therefore, be attributed to a peculiar sense, which is agreeably affected by some actions, and disagreeably by others. Here Price stops Hutcheson. Your conclusion is not a just one, he says, for, besides observation and sensibility, there is a third source of immediate and primary ideas — intuitive reason. It is true that observation cannot give us the ideas of good and evil, as you have proved; but there are two other faculties, sensibility and intuitive reason; and possibly the ideas of good and evil are derived from the last. Now, the question is, are they really thus derived, or do they come from sensibility? Price answers this question in favor of intuitive reason. In a few words, his argument is as follows:

He first accounts for and explains the opposite opinion. It originates in the fact that good and evil, when perceived in actions, do affect us agreeably or disagreeably. This latter fact has been alone regarded, while the first, although necessarily implied in it, has been overlooked. What, continues Price, is the peculiar mark which distinguishes ideas derived from sensibility from those derived from intellect? It is this: We feel that the former represents only our own sensations, while we know that the latter represent realities independent of ourselves. Now, when the voice of humanity declares, that ingratitude is a vice, and gratitude a virtue, what is meant by these words — *vice* and *virtue*? Do they mean only that these two courses of conduct produce in us cer-

tain sensations? Or do we not rather intend that they are in themselves virtuous and vicious? Evidently, the consciousness of every man repels the first opinion, and admits the second. But, it may be asked, do not men believe that sweetness and bitterness reside in bodies? Yes, answers Price, although upon reflection they discover that this is an illusion, because the idea of body is found to be incompatible with that of these qualities. On the contrary, when we reflect, not only do we find that the ideas of good and of evil and the ideas of actions are compatible with each other, but we see that it is absurd to suppose that good and evil are only impressions in our own minds, and not the qualities of actions. If we admit the idea that they are only impressions in ourselves, we must be led to consequences of which each is more repugnant than the other. If this were true, it would be impossible that we should ever be deceived in moral judgments, because the impressions in which good and evil consist must always be what we at the moment feel; so that, when two opposite judgments are passed upon the same action, by different individuals, or by the same individual at different times, both must be entitled to equal weight. Again, if it were true, actions would be indifferent in themselves; for intellect sees only things as they are, and it cannot see good or evil: all actions, all conduct, therefore, would be equally indifferent to God, who is pure intellect. Finally, if it were true, nothing could be obligatory, for no one can be obliged to do what is merely agreeable, and to abstain from doing what is merely disagreeable. Thus all considerations com-





bine to show the falseness of the hypothesis that the ideas of good and evil express only our sensations. All prove that they answer to real qualities in actions. The consequences of Hutcheson's doctrine, then, are overturned, and what Price has demonstrated to be possible is now proved to be true: these ideas arise not from sensation, but from intuitive reason; they are *à priori* conceptions of reason.

Such, gentlemen, is Price's demonstration of the rational origin of moral ideas. This demonstration is not only beautiful, it is invulnerable; and from it may be deduced at once the necessary conclusion, that good and evil are immutable. X

All real qualities of things, says Price, are derived from their nature. Now, the nature of things is immutable. God may destroy what exists, but he cannot make it to be what it is not. No will, and no power, therefore, can alter the nature of things; and this is equally true of their real qualities. Good and evil, then, being real qualities, are as immutable as the nature of the actions from which they are derived; so that no power nor will—not even those of God—can make good actions other than good. What they are, they are as eternally as a triangle or a circle is what it is. Every true moral judgment, therefore, expresses an absolute, immutable, eternal truth.

Having thus demonstrated that these ideas of good and of evil are not subjective, that they are immutable, and that their origin is rational, he proceeds to describe the mode in which they are conceived or perceived by reason. For it is not enough to show

that the idea of good is given only by reason; it must also be shown how it is given. Upon this point, Price is much less explicit than upon the former. Indeed, it might be said that he does not touch upon it at all; but his opinion, nevertheless, may be so clearly inferred from his other ideas, that it is impossible to misunderstand its nature.

According to his doctrine, the conception of good and of evil arises whenever we behold the acts of free and intelligent beings. Good and evil, therefore, are only the qualities of such actions. These qualities, indeed, are invisible to observation, but they are intelligible to reason. As, when I see an event, I form the conception that it transpires in time, although time is invisible, so, when I see certain actions, I conceive that they are good and bad. Price distinctly denies that this character of being good or bad is owing to the agreement or disagreement of actions with an external fact, such as order, the will of God, or the nature of things. Neither does he think that this character is owing to the agreement or disagreement of actions with an absolute idea of good and evil—the typical idea which Plato and Cudworth supposed to exist in our minds. His opinion rather seems to be that the moral character of actions is instantly recognized. And this character is seen to be always identically the same, however numerous or various may be the acts in which we observe it; it is still the same quality which makes them good. But we do not, except after having often observed it, disengage the idea of this quality in such a way as to be able to apply it to the future as a formula, and

so judge of actions by their agreement or disagreement with this type. In every particular instance, the character of the action is instantly recognized by reason, as soon as the circumstances of its agent and its object are accurately known. For, by action, Price does not understand simply the physical act, but also the motive which produces it, the end to which it leads, the nature and situation of the person who performs it, and of the person whom it affects, and, in a word, all its attendant circumstances; so that, if these circumstances are changed, while the act physically remains the same, the action itself is changed. The mind, then, according to Price, does not proceed from the idea of good to the idea of the principal virtues, and from the idea of these to that of the different cases in which they are observed; but it follows just the opposite course. The quality of goodness is first recognized in particular acts; and then, the actions being more nearly observed, it is perceived that they may be readily classed under a few heads, such as justice, truth, benevolence, gratitude. Hence the idea of the different virtues, and of the different branches of duty. The mind perceives, to be sure, that all these virtues are virtues, by reason of the presence of this same quality of goodness; but they are, nevertheless, different, and cannot be resolved into each other. It is true, and evidently true, for instance, that it is right to be just, honest, kind; but these several truths cannot be deduced from each other, nor from any higher truth. They still remain so many primary, distinct truths. They all imply, indeed, that the character of goodness

may be recognized in these particular actions; but, as this recognition is, in each case, a simple fact, to be explained by nothing simpler than itself, and, consequently, by no one reason common to them all, we can ascend no higher, and must pause here. These separate truths, says Price, are portions of that eternal and immutable truth, which is a mode of God's own being. In God, the eternal and immutable idea of good, and the eternal distinction of good and evil, abide with these separate truths forever. Such is the manner in which Price understands our rational conception of good, and in which he explains our moral judgments.

As to the idea of good, Price asserts that it is simple; which amounts to saying that good in itself, or the quality by which all good actions are constituted good, seems to him to be a quality *sui generis*, original, and incapable of being decomposed, — like whiteness, for instance, — and, consequently, quite as indefinable as this. From this you may see, that the opinion of Price is veiled by no obscurity, and that he evidently belongs to the first category of rational philosophers. You will easily comprehend, gentlemen, that such an opinion, however firmly believed, is not of a kind to be established by direct proofs. How could you prove that whiteness is a simple quality, and, consequently, that it is indefinable? Whiteness is a fact, and we can only affirm it. Price thinks it is the same with our idea of good; he limits himself, therefore, to the assertion, that the quality represented by this word is simple, and summons those who pretend to define it to describe its elements. But,

although his direct proofs are reduced to this mere assertion, he produces an abundance of indirect proofs to support his opinion. He demands the reason why, if good is definable, this definition is not to be found in every mind, and why philosophers who have sought it have been led to such different modes of expression. He reviews these different modes, and attempts, on the one hand, to show the illusion by which it has been supposed that they were definitions; and, on the other, to prove that they are not definitions. Some, he thinks, express only circumstances or effects inseparable from good; others mistake a particular instance of good for good itself. Instances of the first kind may be seen in such formulas as these:—Good is that which ought to be done; good is perfection; good is excellence; to act well is to act according to the nature of things, or conformably to the fitness of things, or conformably to the will of God, to the laws of reason, to order, and so forth. He includes, in the second category, all those systems which have elevated one virtue—such as veracity, benevolence, social feeling—into a type of virtue, and have given the definition of this particular virtue as a definition of virtue itself. He then demonstrates that these pretended definitions are all inadequate; shows that they none of them define good itself, but some other thing, while they all presuppose the very idea of good which they attempt to explain. He shows, further, that they do not tend to make the idea of good clearer, because, as they presuppose this idea, it is necessary that it should be conceived before they themselves can be comprehended. And, finally, he shows that,

as *criteria* to determine what is good, they are all useless, because the judgment of good is formed instantly; and that they are all inexact and dangerous, because less comprehensive than the idea of good itself. He dwells at length upon the definitions of the second class, and proves in detail that it is impossible to derive all virtues from a single one; and that each virtue may be deduced from every other with equal propriety; that benevolence can as well be deduced from veracity, for example, as veracity from benevolence.

To all such definitions Price opposes at once the testimony of consciousness, which gives, he thinks, clear evidence, in the first place, that we ourselves are not governed by any of these definitions in our judgment of actions; secondly, that moral judgments are passed by children, who make no inquiries as to the truth of these formulas, and who, indeed, are incapable of such processes of reasoning, as the moral appreciation of actions by these formulas would imply; and, finally, that they are passed by people at large, in whom, as is easily seen, a like ignorance and incapacity of reasoning exist.

Whence originate, says Price, these various definitions, and the systems which suggest them? From two different sources—the desire of explaining moral judgments, and the love of simplicity. It gratifies our taste for order to refer all virtues to a single one, of which they are but varieties, and to prove, by their partaking of this supreme virtue, that they all are virtues. But, if this theory was in harmony with truth, there would always be some first act imme-

diately recognized as good, without our being able to assign any other reason for it than that it is perceived to be so. Thus, on the one hand, the reason which proves it to be the supreme virtue, and therefore the true foundation of moral conduct, would remain unknown; and, on the other, though we should have a definition of the act immediately conceived to be good, still the idea of good conceived in this act would be indefinable. These various systems therefore, fail of the double end at which they aim; they do not succeed, either in defining good, or in showing the foundation of morality.

Such, gentlemen, in a very abridged form, are the reasons by which Price supports the opinion that good is not susceptible of definition. In regard to these arguments, one reflection must have occurred to you, which is, that, from many of the reasonings, and from the theory of the author, as to the manner in which good is perceived, it would seem to result, that reasoning is of no use in morality, since each action is judged of instantly and by itself. This consequence of his ideas has not escaped the attention of Price, and I should be doing him injustice, not to inform you of the way in which he attempts to avoid it.

Two causes produce the difficulties which we meet with in our moral judgments, and explain the intervention of reasoning and of discussion upon the morality of acts. The first is the conflict that frequently arises between different duties; the second, the need of determining the attendant circumstances of actions, before deciding upon their character. Although in

both cases our judgment is the effect of the immediate conception of reason, still the nature of the question to be decided gives rise to discussions and all possible varieties of opinion; and as upon the exactness with which all the circumstances are determined, depends the justice of our moral estimates, various errors may easily be committed.

I have wished, gentlemen, to give you a clear idea of the manner in which Price supports his opinion as to the nature of good, and the fundamental question of its being definable. Upon other parts of his system I shall be more rapid.

Price shows that the intuition, by which the moral quality of acts is revealed, is followed by facts presupposing it, some of which are separate intuitions of reason, while others are facts of a mixed nature, at once rational and sensible.

To this latter class belongs the judgment which declares good actions to be beautiful and pleasing, and bad actions ugly and detestable. Is the agreeable emotion that good actions occasion in us a subjective fact only, that is to say, does it depend entirely upon the nature of our sensibility, or does it partake in any way of the objectivity of our moral ideas? Such is the question which Price suggests, and which he extends, successively, to many other of our natural affections. I can only indicate his conclusion, which is wholly original, and well worthy of a more thorough examination than I can now enter into. According to Price, among the pleasures experienced by our sensitive nature, there are some which are inexplicable, and which can be accounted for only by saying that



we are so constituted as necessarily to be thus affected; but there are others which seem to have their cause in the eternal nature of things, and which consequently appear to be produced, not as a result of the arbitrary constitution of our nature, but as a necessary consequence of the nature of the objects producing them. Such is the pleasure which the sight of virtue or of moral good occasions; and such, too, are the pleasures derived from the ideas of happiness, of order, and the like. In all such cases, the sensible effect appears to us essential to the nature of the object that produces it. Thus these objects produce, at first, a pleasure which is purely intellectual, and, as such, perfectly independent of our natural constitution. But this pleasure would be too cold to attract us powerfully towards its exciting cause; and God has willed, therefore, that it should be accompanied by another, which is more energetic, and has placed in us special instincts, which attract us to good, to order, and the like, and by reason of which all things affect us sensibly with greater energy. Good produces in us, therefore, two kinds of pleasure; one, purely intellectual, produced by the essence of good itself; the other, sensible and more energetic, derived from the arbitrary constitution of our nature. This theory is, I repeat, an ingenious one; and Price deduces from it an explanation of the happiness of God, which is equally so. Not having time to examine this theory in itself and in its consequences, I can only point it out to your attention. Another phenomenon of the same kind is that occasioned by the practice of good and of evil, that is to say, the pain of doing ill, and the

pleasure of doing well. But I cannot dwell on this point, and pass, therefore, at once to the *à priori* conceptions, which accompany, in our minds, the moral conception, properly so called, or the intuitive idea of good.

*duty* The first is that of duty or obligation. This is so closely connected with that of good, says Price, that one cannot arise without the other; or rather it may be said that they are two different forms of one and the same conception. To ask why we are obliged to do what is good, is absurd, for it is to ask why good is good, or why we ought to do what we ought to do. This being the case, it follows, that all the qualities of good are communicated to the obligation to do it; and as one is immutable and independent of the person perceiving it, that the other must be so too. Obligation partakes, therefore, of the objective reality of good; and if no power nor will can change what is good, neither can any will or power create, suppress, nor alter duty. It follows yet further, that duty cannot be resolved into the idea of the will or power of God, because it is not to the idea of will or power that the idea of obligation is attached, but to the idea of good; so that, before we can feel ourselves obliged to do what God wills, we must conceive that the will of God is identical with good. Such is the strength of the tie which unites the ideas of good and of obligation, that, being unable to conceive of a perfect perception of good in God, we are unable to think of him as subject to moral obligation, like ourselves. This view does not at all interfere with the idea of the omnipotence of God, as it is only saying that the

power of God is not competent to change his own law, in which good is essential, and of which it is a mode. Another remark of Price is, that, if the idea of obligation is inherent in that of good, then is there no other law than good, and nothing can be a law except by its partaking of good. For, as the idea of law implies that of obligation, and that of obligation implies that of good, it follows that the first implies the third. Thus all the qualities attributed to law — its objectivity, its superiority to the individual, its immutability, and the like, — are all precisely the characteristics of good. Such is Price's view of the nature of obligation, and of the origin of the idea.

A second conception connected with the idea of good is, that its performance renders the agent worthy of happiness, and the practice of evil worthy of suffering; or, in other words, that virtue has merit and vice demerit. This conception is as immediate as the former one, for the idea of merit is no less essentially implied in that of virtue, than the idea of obligation is in that of good. This conception, says Price, is perfectly distinct from the fact that virtue is a source of pleasure; for it is one thing to learn by experience that virtue is accompanied by happiness, and another to conceive of it as a necessary truth, that virtue deserves happiness. Neither does this conception result from the view that virtue is useful to society; for even if this consideration inclines us to wish well to the virtuous man, we still are distinctly conscious that we are impelled to wish it, by an anterior consideration more direct and simple, which

is, that he is virtuous, and that virtue in itself is worthy of happiness.

Such is the description which Price has given of moral facts. The remainder of his work is principally devoted to two subjects: first, to a description of the actions in which we discover moral goodness; and secondly, to an examination of the difference between absolute virtue and practical virtue, and to an analysis of the faculties which render a being capable of virtue. I have not time to exhibit Price's doctrine upon these two secondary questions. It is sufficient to say that it offers nothing which is new, or which goes beyond the most simple conceptions of common sense. Consistently with his principle, that we conceive immediately of the good of every action, he denies that there is any one duty from which all others can be deduced, or, what amounts to the same thing, any one virtue, into which all others may be resolved, and limits himself to a simple enumeration of virtues. As to the second question, Price, like every body else, determines that liberty and intelligence are the necessary conditions for the performance of moral actions; and he makes a distinction, as other writers have done, between absolute virtue, which consists in doing, voluntarily and intelligently, acts which are conformable to the moral law, and practical virtue, which consists in doing what we believe to be conformable to good, even when it is not. There is nothing here, as you may readily see, which has not been recognized and announced by all moral philosophers.

You will pardon me, gentlemen, that I have been

led, notwithstanding my promise of being rapid, into so detailed a description of the system of Price; for this writer gives so clear and orderly an exposition of all that is most essential in the rational system, that I have thought it better to avail myself of this opportunity to exhibit it to you as a whole. Once having thus set before you the type of all rational systems, it will be only necessary to point out the particulars in which other forms of the rational system differ from it; and these differences, as I have already said, are principally in relation to the nature of good, and to the possibility of defining it. X V

Before testing, however, by this fundamental question, other forms of the rational system, I will, in my next lecture, enter into a strict and thorough examination of the doctrine of Price.

## LECTURE XXII.

## THE RATIONAL SYSTEM.—CRITICISM OF PRICE.

GENTLEMEN,

THE object of my last lecture was to make you acquainted with the principal points of the moral system of Price. This system may be divided into two portions; the one negative, the other positive. The negative portion first demonstrates that the qualities of *good* are such as make the supposition impossible that they are derived from instinct, or from understanding, and then proves that the idea is communicated by intuitive reason. This negative portion I adopt unreservedly. The positive portion comprehends two branches; first, Price's opinion as to the nature of good, and the manner in which it is conceived; secondly, the description of the rational and sensitive phenomena which accompany this conception. I adopt, also, with some modifications, this latter portion of Price's positive system; but, as to the nature of good, and the manner in which it is revealed, my views are entirely different from his. And I propose, in this lecture, to describe the nature of this difference. It was precisely because I thus disagree with Price upon a question of such importance, that

I thought it my duty, in the preceding lecture, to make you fully acquainted with his system and arguments. One other reason also influenced me — that the opinion of Price upon this fundamental point has had great weight in his own country, where the doctrines of the Scottish school have made it popular. For the system of Price is, in fact, the system of Reid and of Dugald Stewart. Undoubtedly, these latter philosophers have enlarged the field upon which their predecessor entered, by introducing into their moral researches an examination of the laws and operations of self-love and of instinct. But, as to the moral problem, properly so called, they have regarded it from the same point of view, and have arrived, by the same road, at the same conclusions. A short description of the manner in which Stewart has answered this problem may suffice to establish this point. Allow me, for a moment, to dwell upon this; I will then pass to the critical examination, which I announced as the subject of the present lecture.

Stewart, in his "Outlines," of which I have published a translation, and also in his posthumous work upon the "Active and Moral Faculties of Man," which is to be translated, divides the fundamental problem of morality into two distinct questions, of which the first relates to the nature of good, and the second to the faculty which reveals it. These questions he successively examines.

His conclusions upon the first point are as follows: he affirms that the perception of actions is the occasion, when the idea of good arises within us; that this idea represents a particular quality of actions,

and the idea of evil the opposite quality ; that these qualities exist in actions, independently of ourselves, as primary qualities do in bodies, and that they do not arise from the simple relation of actions to us, as the secondary qualities of bodies do. As to the nature of these qualities, he declares, that, like our ideas of them, they are perfectly original, simple, irreducible, and, consequently, indefinable. And, following the examples of Price and of Reid, whom he quotes, he shows that we can define the words *good* and *evil* only by a use of synonymous phrases, or by substituting, for the ideas represented, some circumstance which accompanies their perception. Such are Stewart's opinions as to the nature of good.

In regard to the faculty by which good in acts is perceived, he says it must be sought in the incontestable facts as to the nature of good already established. And, after a review of the different opinions successively professed upon this point in England, he lays down the following conclusions:—First, that, as good is a simple and real quality in actions, the idea can be referred only to a faculty which communicates original ideas, and which is capable of seeing in things their inherent qualities ; secondly, that this idea cannot be referred to a sense similar in kind to taste and smell, because such senses do not reveal to us what things are in themselves, but simply the effects which they produce upon us ; thirdly, that neither can it be referred to reason, if by reason is understood only the faculty which perceives the relations of things, and deduces consequences from ideas already obtained, because the idea of good



is an original and primary idea, and not an idea of relation or consequence; fourthly, that, if by *sense* is meant a faculty analogous to that which perceives extension in bodies, and if by *reason* is understood intuitive reason, which gives us simple and original ideas of space, time, cause, the idea of good may be referred either to a sense or to reason; fifthly, that, as to a choice between these two sources of the idea, he inclines to adopt reason, though declaring, at the same time, that the question is of little importance, if it is once admitted that the words *good* and *evil* represent simple and real qualities of actions.

Such, gentlemen, is the doctrine of Stewart; and no commentary is needed to show that it is perfectly identical with that of Price. I pass at once, therefore, to the examination of this system, which was proposed as the subject of the present lecture.

There is but one way to determine its truth and value, and that is to compare it with the facts which it pretends to represent. Let me recall these facts, then, to your minds, in as few words as possible.

Observation attests, and reason conceives, that every human action must have a motive and an end. In seeking to determine what are the distinct ends of human action, we find that they may be reduced to three; first, the peculiar object of some one natural desire; secondly, the complete satisfaction of our whole nature, or the pleasure which accompanies this satisfaction; thirdly, that which is good in itself. We find also that all the distinct motives of human action may be reduced to three, which correspond to these three ends; first, some natural instinct; secondly, the

desire of secondary formation, which we call self-love, or the desire of happiness; thirdly, obligation. From these arise three distinct forms of volition, if we pass by those mixed forms which result from the possible combinations of these three ends and motives.

*Good* This being premised, gentlemen, we apply the name of *good* to four ~~three~~ classes of things:—First, the objects of the different instincts of our nature—such as food, riches, power, glory, esteem, friendship—each of which we call good. Good, in this first acceptation, signifies whatever is fitted to satisfy some desire; so that there are as many varieties of good as there are desires. Secondly, the greatest satisfaction of our nature; which is, in other words, either its greatest good or its greatest happiness, according as we consider its satisfaction in itself, or the consequence of this, which is pleasure. Here, the word *good* represents no longer the object of a desire and its satisfaction, but the greatest satisfaction of all our desires. Different persons may understand this good in their own way, but each has the idea of such a good. Thirdly, good in itself. By *good*, in this last acceptation, we mean not that which is good in reference to ourselves, but that which is good independently of ourselves and of every human being; good in itself, and absolutely. There can be but one such good as this, although there may be as many kinds of good of the second class as there are beings, and as many of the first as there are desires in individuals. Fourthly, the conformity of the voluntary action of a free and intelligent being to

absolute good. The word *good*, in this last acceptance, represents that quality of the conduct of intelligent and free individuals, which makes it conformable to absolute good. This is virtue, morality, moral good.

Thus you see, gentlemen, that the word *good* is used in our language in four different senses — and even five, if we make a distinction between the satisfaction of our desires and the accompanying pleasure. We might even say six, if we make another distinction between the true objects of our desires and the means proper to procure them, that is to say, things which are *useful*. But we will pass by these subdivisions, and employ the word in these four acceptations only. As these meanings are so different, you may well suppose that the things which they represent have not the same qualities, nor our ideas of them the same origin. Observe, therefore, the difference between them in fact.

1. Our instincts alone determine what is good and bad for us according to the first acceptance. Thus, if food, glory, power, are good for us, it is because our nature seeks these different ends. If we were otherwise constituted, these would not be good. They are a relative good, therefore; and because relative, only experience can make them known. This idea of good is empirical.

2. Reason learns from experience, that sometimes our nature is satisfied, and sometimes not; that sometimes it is more satisfied, and sometimes less. It learns also from experience to know what constitutes our greatest satisfaction, which evidently would vary

if our nature were changed. The idea of our highest natural good is therefore empirical, and this good, too, is relative.

3. Good in itself is not relative, because it is absolute. And, as observation cannot attain to the absolute, this idea of good in itself cannot possibly be derived from experience. Whatever object it represents, therefore, this idea is an *à priori* conception of reason.

4. Good in itself being once conceived, it is absolutely true that every action conformable to it is good. The idea of moral good is included, then, in this absolute conception. It is derived, therefore, from reason, and is absolute; and the good which it represents is equally so.

You will remark, gentlemen, that, of these four kinds of good, three are definite, of which we have a precise idea. These are instinctive good, personal good, and moral good. One alone is not so, namely, absolute good; and of this we now seek a definition. The two first are ends of action, but not, as we have proved, obligatory. Desire alone impels us to seek them. The third is also an end of action, and is the only one which is or can be obligatory. The fourth is the quality which determines conduct to the pursuit of this third and last-mentioned end.

Such are the facts, gentlemen — at least as they appear to me. Ethical systems become false by misconceiving or mutilating these facts. The system that mutilates them the most is the selfish system; for it entirely overlooks the distinctions now pointed out, and combines the various facts just described

into a voluntary and determined pursuit of personal good. The instinctive system is less at variance with the truth. It recognizes two ends and two motives — the end and motive of instinct, and the end and motive of self-love; — but, in all else, it misconceives the reality. The system of Price, gentlemen, comes much nearer to the truth. It recognizes three motives and three ends; but it gives a false description of the third, and alters its nature by overlooking the distinction between absolute good and moral good. It confounds these two facts, which, though united, are distinct, and forms of them a single fact, that retains the qualities of neither the one nor the other exclusively, and thus, by blending it, mutilates both. Here, as it seems to me, is the radical defect of the system of Price. Let me now describe, in a manner yet more distinct, the essential characteristics of his opinion and of my own, and the precise point in which they differ. We shall then be able to judge whether I make a distinction where none is to be found, or whether he overlooks one that actually exists.

According to Price, Cudworth, and Stewart, the idea of good is only an idea of a quality in actions recognized by intuitive reason; so that, beyond actions, there is nothing that is good, and, if there were no actions, good would cease to be. It can only exist in God as an idea, and this must be an idea of a possible quality of actions. Such is the opinion of these philosophers.

In my opinion, this is true only of moral good. I grant that the idea of moral good is the idea of a

certain quality in actions—a quality which really exists in them, and which my reason discovers. If there were no actions, this quality, and consequently moral good, would have no existence. The idea alone would exist, and this would be the idea of a possible quality of possible actions. But, in my opinion, moral good, or this particular quality, is not an intrinsic attribute of certain actions, as a round form is of certain bodies. It is, on the contrary, a relation existing between actions and an end, absolutely good in itself, to which these actions may or may not be directed, and by relation to which they are good when they tend towards it, and bad when they do not. This end is good in itself; it is the only absolute good, and whatever else is good derives this character merely from being related to it. This end is the reality which the word *good* represents; the idea of it is perfectly equivalent to the idea of good, and, in fact, these two ideas are identical. This reality exists independently of actions, for it is the legitimate end of every free action. Without it, actions would neither be good nor bad, since they are good and bad only by their relation to this end. So far, therefore, is it from being true, that the idea of good represents only a quality of actions, that goodness in actions should be rather said to be only derived—a goodness consisting in their conformity to that which is really represented by the idea of good, or, in other words, to that which alone is good in itself, and truly good. A distinction, therefore, must be made between absolute good and moral good. Absolute good is an end of action, as the satisfaction of our

nature is, or as the different objects sought by instinct are; but it is distinguished from every other end by this, that it is *good*, and consequently something to which we *ought* to aspire; while moral good or virtue is the quality which characterizes conduct and actions when they seek this end.

Cudworth, Price, and Stewart confound these two kinds of good. They see in good only a quality of actions, which is at once the source of their character of goodness, and the end to which they ought to be directed. Thus have I presented to your view the opinion of these philosophers and my own. You can readily detect the difference between them.

But I shall fail in giving you a perfect comprehension of this difference, unless I make you perceive that, according as we adopt one or the other of these opinions as to the nature of good, shall we be led, on the one hand, to different views of the manner in which it is conceived in itself and in actions; and, on the other, to different conclusions as to the possibility of defining it. Permit me to enter a little more into detail upon these two points.

In what way, according to my view, is good perceived? The process is as follows: As good and evil, in conduct and actions, depend upon their degree of conformity to absolute good, it is evident, that, in my opinion, they have no such character, unless the idea of this absolute good is conceived. It is on the occasion of actions, to be sure, that this idea of good is conceived, and the conception may be more or less clear in my mind; but, clear or obscure, this idea must still precede any judgment as to particular

actions. Thus, in my system, moral conceptions must necessarily originate in the idea of good in itself. If I have not this idea, I may, indeed, judge actions by the maxims of common sense, or by rules received from education; but I cannot truly judge them for myself. When once the idea of good, however, is conceived, I can at once estimate them by a comparison with absolute good. Every judgment of actions, therefore, is a perception of a relation, which is more or less visible, and, consequently, more or less easily determined. There is but one immediate conception, therefore, namely, that of absolute good; while every conception of moral good or evil, that is to say, every estimate of actions, is mediate; the conception of good in itself being the principle, and that of good in actions the consequence. Such, according to my view, is the necessary process in our minds.

Here Price differs from me. He thinks that when actions are perceived, we recognize at once their good or their evil. When I see a man stealing or giving alms to the poor, he argues, reason at once perceives that one of these actions is bad, and the other good. It discovers these qualities in them directly. Afterward we draw from this experience the general maxims, that to steal is bad, and to assist the needy is good; and later still, is disengaged from these general maxims the idea of good, either because we abstract it from the quality which it represents, as Price seems to think, or because the idea of this quality has a prior existence in our minds, as Cudworth supposes. Thus we begin by perceiving in actions the qualities of moral good and evil; next,



we deduce from these particular judgments general maxims, as tests for actions; and finally, we separate from these the idea of good. Such, in Price's view, is the way in which good is perceived. According to him, the estimate of particular acts is immediate, and the idea of good mediate. We are supposed, in this system, to begin, where, in my apprehension, we end. And this is the necessary consequence of our different views of the nature of good.

Another consequence—I will not say a necessary, but still a natural one—of this diversity is, the different opinion of Price and of myself, as to whether good is definable. You have seen, gentlemen, how the idea of Price, that good is something simple and irreducible, corresponds with his idea that good is only a quality of actions; and that, in my criticism upon this system, and upon all rational systems of the same class, I have been unable to separate their opinions upon these two points.

If my views of good in itself, of moral good, and of the manner in which the last is deduced from the first, are correct, is it not evident that I cannot avoid giving a definition of good? If I neither conceive of what it is, nor in what consists this external end which is absolutely good, which is the good, how can I determine whether actions do or do not tend toward it, and, consequently, whether they are, or are not, morally good? Evidently, this would be impossible; and the first condition of every precise moral judgment must, therefore, be a definition of good in itself. My system does not, then, admit that good is indefinable; and all moralists, who have adopted this sys-

tem, have attempted to give a definition of absolute good, and to determine this idea. And, as we shall hereafter see, these systems are distinguished from each other by the different definitions which they have given. But in Price's opinion, there is no necessity for such a definition. For as good, according to him, is a quality of actions, and a quality immediately perceived, it is no more necessary to define good, in order to judge whether actions are good, than it is necessary to define the nature of whiteness to determine whether objects are white. According to this form of the rational system, therefore, we are not compelled to give a definition of good. It is true, that, if this quality is really inherent in actions, the fact that it could be defined, and was defined, would not affect the system; but suppose that the system is false; suppose that good in actions is only their conformity to something exterior, even good in itself; then can we readily understand why philosophers, who have professed this form of the rational system, have preferred to say that good is simple and indefinable. Their only alternative was, either to define moral goodness, a conformity of acts to absolute good, or to say that it is impossible to form an idea of it. And as this only possible definition was opposed to their whole system, they were forced to exclude it, and had but one course to take, which was, to suppose and declare that moral goodness is a simple and indefinable quality.

You see, then, that, the difference between my opinion and that of Price, that is to say, the difference between the rational systems, which define good, and

those which do not, embraces three points — the nature of good, the perception of good, and the definition of good; and you see also how closely these three points are united, and, therefore, how necessarily a difference upon either one leads to a difference upon the two others. My criticism, therefore, must extend to Price's opinions upon these three points; otherwise it will not be complete. *cl's*

I will attempt two things; first, to explain, on the supposition that my view is correct, how distinguished philosophers have been led to adopt the opinion represented by the system of Price; and secondly, to show in what particulars this opinion is irreconcilable with facts. I will begin with the first-mentioned point.

And first, it is easy to explain, historically, how Price and the Scottish philosophers were led to adopt this opinion. For this end, it will be sufficient to describe the opinions and prejudices under the influence of which they wrote, and the task, which, as philosophers, they undertook. This task was imposed upon thinkers by Locke's theory of the origin of our ideas. As there are in the human mind many fundamental ideas, which represent neither what is observed by the senses or by consciousness, nor any existing relation perceived by these two faculties, all ideas and all truths connected with them were found to be involved in doubt by his theory. It stirred deeply, therefore, all reflecting minds; and it was to determine these ideas, that, during a whole century, English philosophy, and the philosophy of a part of the continent, directed their efforts. Philosophers had this

alternative, either to explain the existence of these ideas according to the theory of Locke, or to deny this theory, and to prove that it did not recognize all the sources of human knowledge. Of these two modes of refutation, it was natural that the former should be first attempted, and the latter afterwards tried; and this was what actually happened. Hence, if I may say so, the philosophers who have undertaken this task are divided into two classes—Hutcheson, belonging to the first, Price and the Scottish philosophers, to the second. How did Hutcheson proceed in this work? As I have already told you, he did not deny the theory of Locke, but merely attempted to show that we have other senses besides those usually recognized, and among these, one which perceives the qualities of moral good and evil in actions. Thus, admitting that good and evil are perceived by a sense, Hutcheson was bound also to admit that they are qualities, and simple qualities; for this was demanded by the theory of Locke. It was agreed, therefore, that good and evil are simple qualities of actions. Hutcheson believed, that, by this theory, he had preserved these ideas; and one point he had, indeed, secured. The only good, of which the idea was compatible with the theory of Locke, was pleasure, or personal good. Hence the system of selfishness. Hutcheson, by the discovery of the moral sense, succeeded, as he thought, in showing that there was another good beside personal good—a good desired for itself, and not as an element of our own good. He thus believed that he had done all that was necessary. But this was by no means enough; and Hutcheson, compelled, by the

impossibility of defining the essential nature of good, to assimilate it more to the secondary than to the primary qualities of matter, did not perceive that his theory made good relative to ourselves, and liable to change if we should change. Human consciousness demanded something more; and it was to this second appeal that Price replied. His object, as I have already shown, was, to establish the objectivity, and, consequently, the immutability, of good and evil. And thus was he led to see that the theory of Locke is false, and that reason is the source of primary ideas. But, as it often happens, his first and principal thought being realized, every thing else seemed of secondary importance; and it was the same with the Scottish philosophers, who were his fellow-laborers, and who sought the same end. Thus he accepted the idea so long prevalent, that good and evil are the qualities of actions, and simple and indefinable qualities. So deeply was the prejudice, that all the fundamental ideas of the human mind are single, rooted by the influence of Locke's theory, that even his opponents were insensibly influenced by it; and Price was unwilling to admit that the ideas of good and evil belonged to an inferior class, and made light of their being ideas of relation. Such were the circumstances by which Price was led to adopt the opinion that I now oppose. You see, then, in relation to him at least, its historical origin.

But this opinion actually arises from causes of a much more general kind, and which, independently of any historical circumstances, might naturally lead

philosophers to adopt it. These I will rapidly describe.

If the discoveries of reflection belonged to those alone who reflected, science, instead of being a source of happiness and perfection to the human race, would benefit only the few who cultivated it, and thus would become, by successive augmentations, a possession which the many could never enjoy. But this is not the case. In proportion as science advances, truths which are brought to light, having undergone long examinations, pass into less enlightened minds, and finally become a common property, shared by all — by shepherds as well as kings, and by the ignorant as well as the learned. Yet more ; by a wise law of Providence, in thus becoming a universal patrimony, they lose their scientific character, and being gradually detached from the arguments by which they were at first supported, are at last established in the common faith as axioms. It is under this simple form that they are transmitted from fathers to children, so that the heritage of truth may be indefinitely increased, without ever becoming too heavy a burden for the common mind. Thus, gentlemen, from age to age is augmented that science enjoyed by all, which we call common sense, and which does not wear a scientific aspect, only because we receive it in our nurses' arms, and breathe it in from the spirit of our times. If we should analyze the truths which, in any nation or time, the common sense possesses, we should find that they are composed of two elements ; first, of a few innate articles of faith, which are in some

11-22-1871

sort the intellectual capital, received at birth as a gift from God to all men ; and secondly, of numberless truths, which, successively acquired by reflection through preceding generations, have gradually become a part of this common stock. We must remark yet further, that these latter ideas, although at first admitted only upon good proofs, become in time confounded with the former, and appear, like them, to be self-evident axioms, for which there neither is nor can be any proof, and which it would be foolish to deny, since the day is long since forgotten, when they were first announced, discussed, and recognized. Thus, gentlemen, are the ideas of common sense multiplied ; and such are the laws by which the world is advanced and improved, and every body in society more or less enlightened. Thus, finally, are explained the differences between different communities ; and thus is the fact accounted for, that the common sense of some nations is richer in ideas than that of others.

If this is the case with all kinds of truths, must it not be equally so with moral truths, on the supposition already made, and which, I do not hesitate to say, is agreeable to facts — that the estimate of actions arises from a recognition of their relation to a certain end, which is good, and which is immediately conceived ? What other class of truths is it so important for a man to determine ? To what other class would reflection be directed at an earlier period, or with more constant attention ? In regard to what other truths, consequently, should we expect discoveries to be so ancient and so numerous, especially when we add the consideration that, on account of their import

ance, Providence has rendered them easy of apprehension? What other class of truths, in fine, can furnish to the common sense more maxims and axioms? If my hypothesis is well founded, gentlemen, the history of the progress of moral ideas is as follows: As civilization advances, the human mind successively discovers that certain actions are conformable to absolute good. In proportion as these discoveries are made, maxims are adopted by common sense, which declare certain actions to be good or bad. Gradually, the reasons on which they rest are forgotten, and these maxims assume the appearance of axioms, which express immediate, primary, and self-evident truths. A proof, that there is such a progress of ideas, is the fact that it is not necessary to trace far back the history of our civilization, to find an era when the judgments of men were unsettled in regard to actions, whose moral character is, in our day, perfectly determined; and yet another proof may be found in the fact, that, when we compare together any two successive eras in the history of civilization, we always find greater or less difference between the popular ideas of morality adopted in them. Now, what inference is to be drawn from the phenomenon now described? We may infer that, in an advanced stage of civilization, — in such an age as our own, for example, — the moral character of most actions will be perfectly determined, and that judgment will be pronounced upon them directly, and without any previous comparison with absolute good. And hence — to make a remark in passing — arises the facility with which the moral taste of a people may be for a time perverted upon a given



point; and hence, too, the shock which all moral truths receive, in eras when truths of another kind, which, equally with them, have become ideas of common sense, are disputed. And now, to illustrate this reasoning, I will ask, Whoever denies that to steal is bad? or inquires why it is so? It seems to us all, as if the moral evil of dishonesty is perceived naturally and immediately, and as if this evil resided in the action itself. Now, as the same facts produce the same effects in a multitude of instances, this illusion assumes, at last, the appearance and authority of truth; and it is increased yet more by the facts that the philosopher finds his own moral judgments produced in the same process which he observes in others. In fact, we begin to philosophize at a period of life when the judgments of common sense have penetrated our minds, and are established there. Our heads are filled with notions already established as to the character of different actions, and our judgments upon them are often immediate. What is more natural, therefore, than that we should mistake this process, which we see going on all around us, and of which we are conscious ourselves, for the true, natural, and primitive mode of moral appreciation? And this mistake is actually made, — we either forget the exceptions, — that is to say, the difficult cases in which we are obliged to return to the true mode of moral judgment, — or else we explain them away; and we overlook the consideration, that, by the same reasoning, we should be obliged to regard also as immediate a multitude of truths, which were certainly once acquired, although they have now become axioms. This illusion

masters us, and we adopt the opinion which Price has expressed in his system. Such is the first, and a very powerful cause of the theory that the idea of good is simple.

A second cause, gentlemen, also resulting from a law of the human mind, is the form in which moral truths are necessarily expressed in the precepts of education and in the laws. Our parents and teachers do not say, This is good and that is bad, for such and such reasons. They say simply, This is good, that is bad; and the chief reason why they do so is, that it would be difficult for them to give the proof, which they omit, having never themselves received it, nor reflected upon it. But a second reason is, the manner in which all laws and moral precepts must be expressed to exert their proper influence, that is to say, to be immediately and clearly comprehended. If laws and precepts should proceed by demonstration, they would say, This is absolute good; such actions, under such circumstances, are conformable to this good; you ought, therefore, to perform them. But this would evidently make the law too long, and the precept embarrassing. It is much more simple to say, You must do this, and you must not do that; or, This is good, that is bad; without explaining why, or without referring, for a sanction of the law, either to the authority of common sense, on which it rests, or to the obscure view of absolute good which exists in every human mind, and secretly confirms the force of whatever is true in morals, while it as secretly impairs the force of what is false. Thus, gentlemen, the natural, and, in some sort, the necessary form in

which all laws and precepts are expressed, seems to place good and evil immediately in actions, and to declare that they are only qualities, and that only from a perception of actions do we receive these ideas. Such is the second cause of illusion which conspires to make us adopt the opinion entertained by these philosophers.

Still more powerful causes may be found in the manner in which the conception of absolute good is naturally formed, and in which actions are morally appreciated.

And, first, gentlemen, although no two things are more distinct than absolute good and moral good, — one being an end independent of actions, and the other a quality of the acts which are conformed to this end, — it must still be said, that, in many cases, the appreciation of this quality is most readily made; so that the conception and judgment are closely united, and included even in one and the same act of the mind. Thus has Providence preserved from misapprehension the acts which form, from their frequent recurrence, the substance of conduct; and, although every precaution has been taken in our natural constitution to guard instinct and self-love from errors as to these actions, still the guaranty of the moral judgment could not be omitted, when so important a result was at stake. Thus we find that the moral character of these acts is entirely fixed among all people, with but few slight differences of opinion; and not an era could be found in which their worth was completely undetermined. This fact has deceived philosophers in a twofold manner. In the first place,

as these facts occur most readily to the mind in the study of ethics, they are naturally selected by preference for illustration; and, as they have been appreciated in the same way among all people, from time immemorial, they seem to offer a proof that moral appreciation is immediate. In the second place, as the phenomenon of moral appreciation has been studied in these very acts, in which it is most readily made, philosophers have met with only what appeared to favor the view of its being immediate, and thus have been confirmed in their opinion.

But, again, gentlemen, actions are the occasions on which we rise to the idea of absolute good, as events are the occasions when we conceive of time and cause. This is the general law of intuitive reason already described. Although capable of conceiving certain ideas immediately, some circumstance must always be the occasion of their being formed; and this circumstance must always be a fact which, to be comprehended or appreciated, implies the very *à priori* idea that reason conceives on the occasion of this event. In looking upon facts which succeed each other, or in touching the different parts of a body, we cannot comprehend the fact of succession without the idea of time; nor that of parts united together, without the idea of space. Therefore is it necessary that reason should interpose, and, by introducing these ideas of time and space, render possible the ideas of succession and of extension. It is the same with the idea of good in relation to the morality of actions. Without this idea, the moral quality of actions could not be conceived. Thus it is on the

occasion of actions, when we feel ourselves called to pass judgment, that reason ascends to the idea of good, by which these judgments become possible. In this case, as in all analogous ones, we are more struck by the particular judgment passed than by the idea then introduced into our minds, which enables us to pass it. Frequently, we even do not notice this idea at all. Thus, when facts are seen to succeed each other, we judge that they are successive by means of the idea of time, which then enters our minds. What strikes us is, the judgment that they are successive; but the idea of time, and the part which it performs in this act of judgment, escape us; and this is the reason why many philosophers have pretended that the idea of time has its origin in the fact of succession, and is but an abstraction of this fact—not remarking what a paralogism it is to derive an idea from a fact, in the very notion of which it is presupposed. Thus, for the same reasons, it has been said of the idea of space, that it is derived, by abstraction, from that of extended bodies; as if, without the idea of space, we could have conceived of extension! It is quite natural that philosophers should have fallen into the same paralogism in relation to the idea of good. As we conceive this idea on the occasion of beholding actions, and in order to form a judgment of actions, the act of judging has been remarked, while only a slight attention has been paid to the psychological phenomenon of the judgment itself, and of the idea which it presupposes. Hence the opinion that the idea of good is a quality of actions, and that it is deduced, by abstraction, from successive

estimates of actions — an opinion akin to those already described, as to the origin of the ideas of time and space.

And do not think, gentlemen, because the appreciation of an action by this idea can only result from a relation conceived between the end, which is good, and the tendency of the action, that it follows that the analogy indicated is not exact, and that this inattention to the idea of good, the principle of the judgment, and to the comparison produced by it, is impossible. Without doubt, whenever an accurate mind wishes to attain a clear idea of the quality of an action, and to find a precise reason for its judgment, the idea, and the comparison between the action and this idea, must be both present to consciousness. But this is not what commonly takes place, even among sensible minds, who seek correctness in their moral judgments, and are unwilling to be governed by the influences of education and of common sense. And this arises from another quality of the intuitive idea, and of the judgments derived from it, which I have already had occasion often to notice. It is the peculiarity of these ideas, which we find already in our minds when we begin to reflect, and for whose appearance we cannot assign a date, that, while confused in our apprehension, they nevertheless give rise to judgments which are positive, though also confused. I will not now reconsider the causes of this fact, which seems to imply a contradiction, for I have already described them. But the fact itself is undeniable. For example, it is certain that, although we have, in general, only a confused idea of the reality represented by the word *good*, and although we should,

for the most part, feel embarrassed in attempting to describe its true nature, we nevertheless, in most instances, say with assurance — and not merely in the name of the maxims of common sense, and of long-established opinion, but with the consciousness of truth — that an action is or is not conformable to good — is or is not morally good. There is no one who has not often experienced this in his deep deliberations upon the conduct proper to be observed in the important events of life. Every one manifests his consciousness, at such times, by the care which he takes to guard his mind from the influence of feeling, interest, and prejudice, that it is not by the light of these motives that he can truly judge of actions. Every one is conscious that there exists in the recesses of his mind a dim idea, and, in the nature of things, a high and impersonal end, the type of absolute good, by their relations to which, it can alone be determined whether acts should or should not be done. Every one has felt, even in cases where this end did not clearly appear, that there would come a time when the conformity or nonconformity of actions to it would be seen as an unquestionable absolute certainty, and be followed by an unhesitating resolve, at once clear and strong. This phenomenon, which is accompanied by painful efforts in complex cases, occurs easily in simple ones; and, if the reasons by which our judgment is determined are obscure in the former, they are hardly remarked at all in the latter; so that, although our moral estimates emanate from a presupposed idea, and are the result of a comparison of actions with that idea,

it is still true that the idea and comparison may remain obscure, even when the judgment is distinct and strong. There is no contradiction, then, in supposing, that it is the same in relation to moral judgments as to all others, which imply a conception of intuitive reason; and that, in these judgments, it is the particular result that strikes our attention, while the universal idea which produces it is hidden or overlooked. We have already described this fact as one cause of the opinion that the goodness of actions is apprehended by a sense; and, for similar reasons, it has led some rational philosophers to accord with the view of Price.

And, were it not for the fact—to which I may, in passing, call your attention—that the objectivity of good is preserved by the one, and destroyed by the other, it would be difficult to perceive any true difference between these two systems; in all other respects they are perfectly identical. Both consider good a quality of actions. Both consider this quality simple and indefinable. Both say that it is immediately perceived or revealed. Both, consequently, confound absolute good and moral good. And both make the idea of particular good acts precede the idea of good in itself. Both obtain this latter idea, therefore, by abstraction and generalization. And both make the use of reasoning, in determining moral qualities, impossible. We need not be surprised, then, that Stewart considers his opinion so nearly assimilated to that of Hutcheson, and that he makes so little account of the differences which distinguish them, and of the question as to the origin of the



idea of good. This conduct of Stewart is easily explained; and, had it not been for the danger which the immutability of moral distinctions was seen to incur from the system of Hutcheson, just then promulgated, it may readily be believed that Price would have preceded Stewart in this strong expression of sympathy for the instinctive system.

I will only point out one further cause, which has given rise to the opinion of Price; it is suggested by the remarks already made in the description of the part performed by instinct in the moral life.

We should never overlook, in our attempts to explain the erroneous systems of moral philosophers, the complexity of human nature, and the multiplicity of the motives which conspire to impel us to good, and to deter us from evil. And, although this frequent review of the same facts may be tedious, you must permit me to make it, from considering that this series of systems is a gallery of portraits of a single original, of whose fidelity we can judge only by a comparison with this original. I repeat, therefore, that, long before we begin to form moral estimates of actions by reason, we are impelled to the good, and deterred from the evil, by the strong impulse of natural instinct, soon seconded by the calculations of interest. Thus, duplicity and injustice are repugnant to us before we conceive that they are immoral. Endowed with the faculty of expressing our thoughts, it cannot be our natural instinct to disguise them. Born with a desire of independence, and with the sense of property, we cannot, without a feeling of aversion, permit ourselves to be robbed; and, whenever we see others

robbed or ill-treated, by means of the sympathy which Smith has so well described, we place ourselves in their situation, and feel indignation with them. Thus, when we first begin to reason on single moral subjects, we already reverence good and abhor evil; and our inward nature recognizes, by a strong and lively sentiment, the qualities in actions which reason afterwards reveals. Two results arise from this fact; first, our moral estimates are more readily made, and thus prevented from rising to distinctness; and, next, they are accompanied by a strong sentiment, with which they are intermingled, and, in some sense, incorporated, and from which it is difficult to distinguish them. And now compare together these two circumstances—on the one hand, the natural obscurity of the idea of good, when first perceived by reason, and, on the other, the primitive estimates which instinct forms of the actions whose character this idea is intended to determine—and you will readily comprehend why men are contented with the glimpse of the moral character of actions derived from the sentiment, which speaks so loudly, without making great efforts to see more distinctly what their whole nature confirms and proclaims. On the other side, gentlemen, do you not see that it is difficult, in this phenomenon, where sentiment and judgment, instinct and reason, are blended together, to distinguish the part performed by the latter? and yet more difficult to perceive the ideas from which it sets out, and the mode in which it proceeds? Do you not see that the prevalent, visible element is sentiment? and that it envelops, as it were, the other? Do you

not see that, in thus mingling with, advancing, and a partening the judgment, it gives it the appearance me to immediate perception? Do you not see how whole? it is that the philosopher who regards this phenomenon will look upon it as altogether a sensible one and, even if he disengages its two elements, that he will still suppose the rational one to be an immediate perception? and, finally, if he does discern and distinguish the presupposed idea, that still he will not discover its true nature, when so many circumstances distract his attention, and prevent him from thoroughly comprehending so complicated a phenomenon? This at once explains why the instinctive system has found so many supporters, and has preceded every where the rational system; and why, among those who have risen to this latter view, so many have stopped at the opinion that good is an immediate perception; and why, finally, among those who have perceived the distinction between moral good and absolute good, the most have misconceived, in a greater or less degree, the real idea.

Such, gentlemen, are some of the causes, which, by their common tendency to make us consider moral appreciation an immediate perception, have conspired to conceal from the view of philosophers its true elements and nature. Although different, and even opposed in nature, the facts now described are far from excluding each other. There enter into our judgment of actions instinctive impulses, prejudices of education, the sentiment of good and evil. All

these are mingled together in proportions infinitely diverse. And, as all these different principles converge to one end, they act together like a single impulse, and in the profound conviction which they produce, are so blended that we do not distinguish them apart. It is only in cases where they diverge, and where their apparent unity dissolves, that we separate them from one another. Each then appears under its own proper form. Instinct acts with the blind energy of an impulse; prejudice speaks with the authority of the axioms received from common sense; moral judgment, in the name of that idea which emanates from reason, the source of all truth and light. Then only does this phenomenon of moral appreciation, pure and separate from all that usually is mingled with it, appear in its own character; and then only have we an opportunity to discover its true nature and real elements. If, then, on the one hand, each element by itself, and all combined, tend to make us believe that the perception of good in actions is immediate, and if, on the other, even when the phenomenon of appreciation is separated from those with which it is usually allied, and acts alone, there yet are in the laws of the human mind reasons why many of its elements should remain half-hidden, and why it should still preserve the appearance of immediate perception—it becomes plain why so many philosophers have thus described it. This is precisely what I have attempted to make clear in the present lecture.

I had hoped, gentlemen, in addition to this ex-

planation, to have entered upon a discussion of the system of Price; but, as I am unwilling to give a partial description of the facts which seem to me to prove its incorrectness, I will postpone the whole discussion till we meet again.

## LECTURE XXIII.

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

GENTLEMEN,

To appreciate at its just value the opinion of Price as to the nature of good, let us consider it in itself, without taking note of those paralogisms by which he has succeeded, at least in appearance, to bring it into harmony with facts. When once we see the consequences to which this doctrine leads, we shall comprehend the secret necessity by which its author was led into these paralogisms. We can then unveil his delusion, and draw from it a final proof, furnished by himself, that the system which made them necessary is an erroneous one.

What is the essential doctrine of this system, and on what is it founded? I have already told you. It consists in pretending that the idea of *good* represents, in the human mind, only a quality of actions — a simple and indefinable quality, immediately perceived or conceived, in each case, by reason. This doctrine includes two distinct propositions; the one fundamental, which affirms that nothing is good in itself except actions; the other secondary, which declares that goodness is a simple quality, and that

it is immediately perceived. In my last lecture, I showed you how these two propositions were connected together, and how, when the first is admitted, the second necessarily and naturally follows. To-day, we are to inquire whether these propositions are true. If they are, they must be, both in themselves and in their consequences, in harmony with facts. Let us compare them, then, with these facts, and let us begin with an examination of the second.

We will admit, then, with Price, gentlemen, that moral goodness is a simple quality of actions, and that it is immediately discovered, either by an intuition of reason, as he supposes, or by a perception of moral sense analogous to perceptions of primary qualities of matter, which is the alternative left open by Stewart. And now let us consider a few of the consequences which result from either of these suppositions.

The first and most prominent consequence is, that the moral appreciation of actions gives room for no exercise of reasoning. For, I ask, where can reasoning find entrance? Not in the question whether an action is good or bad; because this discovery is given by intuition or immediate perception. Not in the question as to the degree in which an action is good, or whether it is more or less good than another; for, on the one hand, we cannot conceive of degrees in a simple quality, and, on the other, if these degrees are conceived to exist as they do in the color or hardness of bodies, they would be as immediately perceived as the quality itself. Now, besides these two questions, I can imagine no others which can arise in our moral appreciations; and as,

according to this hypothesis, both are resolved intuitively, it follows that reasoning is entirely excluded.

But, if reasoning cannot enter into moral judgments, neither can discussion or demonstration find place there. For, I ask you, on what point could a discussion be raised? and how could it be directed to establish any result? Here is an action: suppose that you think it good, while to me it seems bad: how shall either of us convince the other that he is wrong? If this could be done, it would follow that the opinion of each was founded upon reasons, because each would bring forward reasons in its support; but these opinions are founded on immediate perception. All that you could say, therefore, would be, simply, that your reason immediately discovers moral goodness in this action. To this assertion I should reply, that my reason immediately perceives moral evil in it; and here the whole discussion would terminate, just as it would in the case of two men, one of whom thought that an object was white, and the other that it was red. In so far as it is an immediate perception, demonstration and discussion can do nothing to establish it. On the one hand, we can demonstrate to others only that which has been demonstrated to ourselves, and we can offer no reasons for convincing others of an idea which was not itself derived from reason; and, on the other, it is absurd to discuss points which cannot be demonstrated, when the very object of discussion is to arrive at a demonstration.

Yet more, gentlemen; the hypothesis of Price makes it impossible to conceive that there should be



a difference of opinion in morality. As each action has, by its nature, a moral character, which is immutable, and as this character is immediately perceived by reason, it is impossible that reason should see in it an opposite character which has no existence. One man, therefore, can never consider as evil what another thinks good; or else reason would be essentially different in different human beings. It is equally impossible that one should perceive and another not perceive the goodness or evil of actions. For that which is immediately intelligible or perceptible can be conceived or perceived by all men alike. It can never happen, therefore, that a man should consider an action indifferent, which others esteem either good or bad. Thus the hypothesis of Price excludes from morality not only reasoning, demonstration, and discussion, but, yet more, it excludes the possibility of different opinions.

But, if this is true, gentlemen, what is the consequence? It is as follows — that all men are equally capable of appreciating the morality of actions, and consequently equally enlightened in moral judgment; that, in this respect, therefore, there can be no difference between the learned and the ignorant, and the men of different ages; that moral science consequently cannot be developed nor improved with the progress of civilization, but that savages must be equally well informed with ourselves; that the morality of no action can be proved or deduced from that of other actions, and consequently that morality cannot be reduced to a system, or taught; and, finally, that what we call *ethics* cannot be a

science, or, if it is so, that it can be nothing more than a catalogue of actions, discovered by reason to be good or bad. Such, gentlemen, are some of the consequences which flow from this hypothesis. Neither of these propositions can be denied, if it is true that good is a simple quality of actions immediately perceived. They are all either derived directly from this hypothesis, or are strict corollaries of the propositions which we have deduced from it.

You will please to remark, gentlemen, that, in attributing to the opinion of Price and Stewart these various consequences, I only impose on the intuition or immediate perception of good the laws which govern all other immediate intuitions of reason and immediate perceptions of sense. Review, on the one hand, the immediate perceptions of sense, such as extension, impenetrability, solidity, form; and, on the other, the immediate intuitions of reason, such as the idea of place in relation to bodies, of time in relation to events, of cause in relation to whatever begins to be, of substance in relation to attributes, of the permanence of the laws of nature whenever we see any thing happen many times—review, I say, these intuitions and these perceptions, and see whether what I have said of the morality of actions is not true of whatever these perceptions and these intuitions reveal. Do men reason, offer proofs, or dispute about them? Is it necessary to teach them to children? Is there any man who has not these ideas? Are they different in different persons? Are they differently developed in different minds? Have not all persons these notions and convictions alike, under the same

circumstances? Is there a savage in the woods of New Holland, or a peasant on our mountains, who does not believe, equally with the greatest philosopher, in all that these perceptions and intuitions teach? Can any progress, any revolutions of opinion whatever, be discovered in the ideas of the human race upon these notions? We must, then, either say that the intuition or perception of good in actions is not subject to the law which governs all other immediate intuitions of reason and immediate perceptions of sense, or admit, that, in deducing from the opinion of Price these consequences, I have been just to his principle; and that, in adopting the hypothesis that good is a simple quality immediately perceived in actions, we cannot legitimately deny any of these consequences.

Now, gentlemen, is it necessary to do more than announce these consequences, to show that they are entirely opposed to the moral facts, which the observation of human nature presents? Parents do not teach their children that bodies are extended, solid, round, square, white, or red; but they do teach them that some actions are good and others bad, and do seek to explain why they are so. We never see men discussing the questions, whether an effect had a cause, or whether a body is hard or soft; but we do every day see them disputing whether an action is good or bad. Their language is not only, Look and see, but they reason, they argue, they bring proofs, as if the actual existence of this simple quality, so immediately perceived, could be established. We do not find that the men of one era or of one nation

understand better than others time, space, or the simple qualities of bodies; but we do see that a knowledge of the moral qualities of actions is at a different stage of advancement in different ages and countries. Finally, in the same country and age, we do not see individuals differing in their capacity of determining whether objects are round or square, blue or red, solid or liquid, while the universal judgment declares that some individuals are more competent to judge of actions than others, and all men manifest this conviction by consulting some, while they disregard the opinion of others, on the pretext of their want of intelligence upon such subjects.

But let us enter now into a more detailed comparison of certain facts with the hypothesis of Price, and we shall see yet more clearly that it is necessarily and evidently false.

It frequently happens that two duties are opposed to each other. For example, I may be so situated, that, by acting in a certain way, I may render my country a service, while at the same time I endanger my family. Now, how, in such cases, do we determine what is right? Experience at once tell us that it is by reasoning. But how would reasoning avail, according to the opinion of Price? It is impossible to divine. Reason perceives moral goodness in my benefiting my family. It perceives goodness equally in my desire to be useful to my country. A moral quality, and, consequently, a duty, is recognized in both these acts, and is equally simple and irreducible in both. How shall I decide? How determine this conflict? To do so, I need a higher standard by

which to measure them both; whereas, according to the hypothesis, I have no such standard. The one act is good, and so also is the other, and both are equally so; and there is no pretext for supposing that the goodness of the one is superior to that of the other. And even if we should admit degrees in moral goodness, as in whiteness, this difference would still be immediately perceived, and there would be no need for reasoning. But experience testifies that we do reason in these cases; and do, by reasoning, determine which duty is to be preferred. From such instances, it may readily be perceived that moral goodness is not an intrinsic quality of actions, but a relation of actions to something else. For these conflicts between duties are decided, and decided after examination; and we feel distinctly in what this examination consists. It consists in ascending to the principle of all morality, to that end, by their relation to which actions are good, and in determining which of these actions tends most to realize it. Here is the key to the enigma; but we cannot find it in the system of Price.

And neither can we find in this system an explanation of what happens, when, instead of cases in which it has long been determined what conduct is proper, a rare and unaccustomed situation presents itself, to which established rules do not apply; or when a moral opinion, admitted for centuries, as, for instance, the propriety of slavery, is first attacked. For, I ask, why, in the first case, should there be hesitation, and an anxious search for truth; and why, in the second, should these reasonings and discussions

be prolonged, and the human mind left for centuries in doubt, between what it has believed, and what it ought to believe? In my opinion, the answer is simple. In the first case, the situation being unwanted, and, consequently, the conduct which is conformed to absolute good undetermined, we need time to consider it; and in the second, the error of the human race is explained by the consideration that men may be deceived as to the true relation of an action to absolute good. The discovery of this error in the minds of some, and the contest between the old opinion and the new, and the painful toil of deciding the question by a comparison of these opinions with absolute good, are also easily explained. But all these points remain unaccounted for by the hypothesis of Price. Whether a situation is or is not an unaccustomed one, there is always a choice between two courses of conduct, each of which has a moral character; and this character is an inherent quality which reason is as capable of recognizing, as the eye is of perceiving whiteness in bodies. It is not readily seen how the fact that an action is new or common can affect the facility of the perception. Is the eye more perplexed in perceiving whiteness in a body seen for the first time than in one which is familiar? Not at all; and in the same way would the moral character of the most unaccustomed act, in the most novel situation, be as readily perceived, according to the hypothesis of Price, as that of the most ordinary action. And even if it should be admitted that there might be hesitation, it could nowise be granted that reason would be of service in removing our doubts,

for no one reasons as to the simple qualities of bodies, immediately perceived; they either are or they are not; and we either do or do not perceive them. This is all. Reasoning has nothing further to do. Thus the grand science of casuistry, which has occupied moralists in all time, can have no possible meaning, according to this hypothesis, and must be an illusion of the human mind. All that I have now said applies with equal force to revolutions of human opinion as to the moral quality of particular acts. On the one hand, it is not easy to comprehend how, according to the opinion of Price, there can be error in moral judgments; for to this we can find nothing analogous; and, on the other, it is not easy to see how any discussion can take place. All controversy would resolve itself necessarily into two opposing affirmations; the one party saying, This action appears to us good; the other, It appears to us bad; but without either the one or the other being able to bring any proof of their respective assertions; for this the doctrine we are considering does not suppose possible in moral judgments.

You see, gentlemen, how far the consequences of the doctrine of Price extend. You see that they do no less than contradict the fact of the progress of humanity in moral science. I cannot forbear to dwell a moment upon this fact of the progress of the human race, because it is experience on a wide scale, such as cannot be denied, and which has infinitely more authority than private experience. What is the testimony of this experience? It bears witness to a progress in moral science, as much as in the science

of astronomy. Take any people in the savage state, and draw a comparison between their moral ideas and ours. Unquestionably, you will find them less developed. You will find that upon many points, as to which our consciences have no doubt, the conscience of the savage hesitates. And you will find that his judgments upon many other points are in manifest contradiction to ours. Compare the least and most civilized nations of Europe together, or ancient times with modern, and you cannot but remark the same differences, all attesting this progress. Nothing is more evident than that the moral character of different actions does thus become more clearly recognized, and more firmly established, and, therefore, that moral science, like all other science, is progressive. Price himself does not deny this, and Stewart formally acknowledges it. Now, I repeat, according to the hypothesis of Price, this is inexplicable; and quite as inexplicable is also the fact that judges often absolve criminals, or at least lighten the penalties inflicted by the law, from the consideration that their minds are but partially enlightened. For, however this hypothesis may be understood,—whether it is said, with Price, that the discovery of good in actions is an intuition of reason, or whether, with Stewart, we adopt the alternative, that it is an intuition of reason or a perception of moral sense,—I have still shown that all analogies contradict any explanation which it can give of these facts.

I should not stop here, gentlemen, if I thought it worth while to compare with the opinion of Price all the particular facts with which it is incompatible





I might make a long list of these ; but the details into which we have already entered, are sufficient, and much remains yet to be done. I have proved that Price's second proposition, that good is a simple quality of actions, immediately perceived, is in itself untenable. Let us now see whether the first proposition, which is, that nothing is absolutely good except actions, — of which the second proposition is, as I have shown you already, only a corollary, — can better stand the test of an examination.

You will see that this proposition bears the same relation to the nature of good, as that which I have already refuted does to the manner in which it is perceived. It overlooks, as I have told you, the distinction between absolute good and moral good, and maintains that the idea represented by good is only a quality of actions. Is this doctrine as to the nature of good tenable ? Is it true that there is no good which we can recognize except in actions ? Let us see.

And, first, gentlemen, if this is true, it follows that the end of good actions is not distinct from the good actions themselves. Why ought I to do a good action ? Because it is good. But why, according to Price, is it good ? Only because the quality of good is perceived in it. The end of a good act, then, is the act itself. I act in such a way for the purpose of acting in such a way ; or I refrain from acting in another way for the purpose of thus refraining. This is as much as to say, from the fact that the act is good, I may infer that its result is so too ; thus, for instance, because it seems to me that the act

of knowing is good, I may infer that knowledge is a good; and, because it seems to me a good action to advance the happiness of my fellow-beings, I may infer that the happiness of my fellow-beings is a good. But the goodness of the result is only a derived goodness, inferred from that of the act, which alone is immediate. Every good end, therefore, is made so by the goodness of the act, and every bad end by the evil of the act, which produces it. A man's ignorance is an evil only because it is an evil in him that he does not enlighten his mind, or an evil in others not to deliver him from this ignorance. In themselves, ignorance and knowledge are indifferent; so that, to learn whether an end is good or bad, we must see whether the act which tends to produce it is good or bad. If this is true in relation to man, it must be also true of God. He could have had no other end, in creating the world, than to do a good act; and it is because the act by which he created universal order seemed to him good, that universal order was created. This order could have had no other goodness, in his view or in itself, than as a result of this act.

It follows still further from this, that whatever is not an act, or the result of an act, can have no goodness, either immediate or derived. Thus health in itself is no better than sickness, and one can be considered a good, and the other an evil, only in so far as the one is the consequence of a good act, and the other of a bad one, committed by ourselves or our parents. So that sickness, when it results from good acts, becomes good, better than health produced

by indifferent and bad acts. In a word, nothing is good in itself except an action, or by its relation to an action; and whatever is neither an action nor the effect of an action can have no real goodness, and must be valueless, except as related to our happiness or some natural desire.

And, as the appreciation of the result of an action, if derived from the appreciation of the action itself, supposes a knowledge of the action in him who judges, and as the same result may be produced by many different actions, it follows that no result nor end can have any character, nor be judged as either good or bad, so long as we are ignorant of the act by which it was produced. On the contrary, the result and end of actions does nothing to determine their character; for, if it did, the character of the actions would be derived from it; and if thus derived, all goodness or evil cannot be inherent in actions; and there must be something not an action which possesses in itself good or evil, because it communicates these qualities to the actions.

It is not necessary, I suppose, to go further, to show the evident confusion, introduced by Price's system, between two kinds of good altogether different, though closely united — moral good, which is and can be only a quality of actions, and absolute good, which can be recognized in many things besides actions, and which belongs to them independently of actions. These things, good in themselves, I call ends, because they may become the ends of conduct and of action; and I believe them to be good in themselves, only as the elements of a supreme end, which is the true

good, and the reality represented by the word *good*. That there are such ends, gentlemen, that they are good in themselves, and that their goodness is not determined by that of the actions which produce them, but, on the contrary, that the goodness of no action can be determined except by that of these ends, are facts which, evidently, the hypothesis of Price has misconceived; and yet I assert that they can be easily established—that they are strongly attested by the common faith of mankind.

Is it not plainly contrary to the opinions of men, that no end is good in itself, and independent of the actions which produce it? What! is knowledge in itself indifferent, and no better than ignorance? or is it better only because the act of acquiring it is morally good, and that of remaining in ignorance morally bad? What! is this true, too, of the happiness of men, when compared with misery? of sympathy, when compared with enmity? of health, when compared with sickness? and of many other ends, which it would be tedious to mention? Assuredly, nothing can be more contrary to the universal convictions of men than such a doctrine. In the universal opinion, science is considered good in itself, ignorance bad in itself, and the happiness of men in itself better than their misery; and men are far from believing that the goodness or badness of these ends comes from the moral character of the acts of gaining intelligence and of being benevolent on the one hand, or of remaining in ignorance and doing injury on the other. On the contrary, every one believes that it is the goodness or badness of these ends which

renders the acts which tend towards them morally good or bad. To deny this would be to deny the deliberations which we enter into every day and every moment; it would be to deny our most common and familiar moral judgments. How do I proceed, in many cases, to determine whether an action which I am about to do is good or bad? I examine the end sought, and the result which the act is calculated to produce; and it is only by my judgment as to this end or result, that I can decide upon the morality of the action. Do I not daily conceive of ends to be pursued, and say the end is good? and to act for its attainment with a consciousness that my conduct is calculated to accomplish it, is consequently lawful and honorable? Again, when, on the other hand, I see my fellow-men perform acts, do I not, before determining the morality of their conduct, seek to discover what ends they pursue, and suspend my judgment until they are known? And, I ask now, what means the word *end*, if there is no such thing, and if the doctrine of Price is true? What can this word signify, except the object of an action? The end of an action, then, is the thing in view of which it is done; so that, if a thing is only the result of an action, it is simply an effect, and not an end. Now, if all results were indifferent, if they had no character in themselves, and derived their goodness only from that of the acts which produce them, we should never consider before acting, and conduct would be directed only to *effects*, and never to *ends*; the words *end* and *object* would be unmeaning, and would have no place in human speech.

I am aware, gentlemen, that the goodness of actions, or moral good, may and ought to be one of our ends. But this is an ulterior result, which I will explain. What I complain of in Price is, that he has mistaken this final result of moral conceptions for the principle of these conceptions. Before the goodness of an act can be the end proposed in doing it, the act must previously have been recognized as good; and I cannot find fault with Price that he has overlooked so evident a truth as this. But what I do reproach him with is, that he did not see that every good action  
↓ whatever presupposes the goodness of certain ends. Assuredly, if any one virtue seems to be immediately perceived, it is justice. And yet, what is it to be just? It is to refrain from doing wrong to another. But, before we can thus refrain, we must know in what his good consists. There must, therefore, be such a good. Now, in what does it consist? Certainly not in the quality of his conduct; for this constitutes his morality, and not his good. Evidently, then, this good consists in the end to which he is destined. I must know, therefore, the end of my fellow-beings, before I can treat them with justice; and justice in me is only a respect for this end. But every created thing has an end, even trees and plants; and yet I have no scruple in preventing trees from accomplishing their end, and I do it without any consciousness of being unjust. There must, then, be, in the end of a fellow-creature, something that makes it worthy of my respect, and which is not to be found in that of the tree. And, whatever this is, it is something which, being peculiar to the end of man, makes

a regard for it a good act. Whence you see, that the goodness of a just act—of that very act whose moral quality is most immediately perceived—is connected originally with the goodness of an end. This is what Price has failed to see. What has now been said is not inconsistent, however, with the fact, that justice, or, yet more, moral good, which comprehends justice and every other virtue, may finally become an end for conduct.

But I perceive, gentlemen, that I cannot carry out these observations without entering upon the exposition of the true foundations of morality; and that is not the subject of the present lecture. I have said enough to prove, that, independently of moral good, all our deliberations and moral judgments prove that there is another good, which, far from being derived from this, evidently gives it its origin; and thus, that the proposition that good is only a quality of actions, is no less contradicted by facts than the proposition that goodness in actions is a simple quality immediately perceived. Thus, gentlemen, these two propositions must be either both false or both true; for, as I have already said, they are closely connected together, and form only one and the same doctrine, which is that of all the moral systems which consider good indefinable. Indefinable it indeed is, if moral good is the only good; and if indefinable, then is it also true that moral good is the only good. These two propositions are inseparable; so that it is sufficient to show that one is irreconcilable with facts, and consequently false, to show that the other cannot be maintained. The refutation of each, therefore confirms that of the other.

But this twofold refutation is yet more confirmed by the avowal of Price himself, who, notwithstanding his system, and even in his system has recognized all that I have sought, in this lecture, to establish? How has he done this? I will tell you.

You have already often remarked, gentlemen, that the necessity of bringing their systems into harmony with facts, and with the universal consciousness of men, invariably leads philosophers to introduce contradictions into their systems, that they may have the air of explaining every thing. We have seen how the selfish philosophers have done this, in substituting the general good in place of their more narrow principle of private good. We have seen how Smith has done it, by introducing into his theory the fiction of the impartial spectator; and we have been obliged, in forming a correct judgment of these doctrines, to bring them back to their fundamental principles, and to separate from them all that is heterogeneous. Price, gentlemen, has unguardedly fallen into the same error, and used a similar artifice, if we may apply such a name to an *involuntary* paralogism. Among the consequences of his system, which we have described, there are several which could not escape his attention. For instance, he could not avoid seeing, that, according to his theory of immediate perception, all reasoning, all discussion, all demonstration would be as foreign to the appreciation of actions as they are to that of the primary and secondary qualities of matter. And yet he could not disguise to himself the fact that men do reason and discuss upon moral questions. Price, gentlemen, has been bound,



therefore, to seek an explanation of these facts in his system ; and to find it he has been led to inquire, in the first place, to what end all these reasonings and discussions in moral questions are directed. He has been compelled, consequently, to see that they are directed to the accompanying circumstances of actions, which, in proportion as they are changed, alter their character. It would seem, therefore, as if he must have been led to conclude that actions are judged by these circumstances, and, consequently, that the moral good or evil of actions, instead of being an intrinsic quality, is resolved into the relation between actions and circumstances. But the hypothesis, that moral good is a quality of actions, was too deeply rooted in his mind. He considered this as settled and undeniable. Instead, therefore, of deducing from the fact consequences which would have overturned his hypothesis, Price took the more simple course of including these attendant circumstances in his definition of an action, and of considering them integral parts of the actions. He, therefore, has said, By an action, I do not mean an act, separated from its attendant circumstances ; for an act thus considered has no moral character ; but I mean the act, with its motive and its end — the act, with the circumstances of its agent and its object ; for all these are essential elements of the action, and according as the circumstances vary does the action change.

This Price has said, merely in passing, as if it was an obvious and simple thing, which no one could question. And, in fact, gentlemen, it never would

be disputed by common sense; for common sense agrees in recognizing, with Price, that the moral quality of an action depends upon its motive and its end, and upon the circumstances of its agent and its object. This cannot be denied. Daily experience proves that an isolated act has no moral quality, but that it takes its character from its attending circumstances, and changes with their change. Common sense, therefore, raises no objection to this definition of an action. But, gentlemen, there is something that does deny and cry out against this definition, and with good reason. Do you know what it is? It is the system of Price itself—his entire system. Common sense is satisfied, but the system of Price cannot be. This definition of an action is fatal to it. This system alone has reason to complain, therefore because it alone suffers; and Price is reduced to the alternative, therefore, either of giving up his definition, or of rejecting his system.

Let me ask you, gentlemen, to observe, for a moment, in what manner an action would be judged, and in what its goodness would consist, if the definition is true. Undoubtedly, if Price had spoken only of the motive, the contradiction to his system would have been less; for, in whatever way the goodness of an action is perceived, and in whatever its goodness consists, the agent, to be good in what he does, must still act in view of this goodness. It might be said, therefore, that the consideration of the motive regards only the goodness of the agent, and not that of his action. But the end of the action is quite another matter. The end—this is the part of the definition

which is so hostile to the system of Price; for the end of an action is the object to which it tends. The end, therefore, is relative to the act, and not to the agent. And yet more; the end is distinct from the act; they are two separate things. If, then, an action can be judged only by its relation to its end, this end must be perceived before it can be judged; and only from the nature of the end can that of the action be determined; so that an act will be good if it has a certain end, and bad if it has a different one. Its goodness, then, is its relation of conformity to a certain end; its evil, its relation of conformity to some other end. The goodness of actions is not, therefore, the only goodness; there is also a goodness of ends. Yet more; the goodness belongs originally to the end, and not to the action; and the goodness of the action is merely derived. Again, in determining that there are good ends, we obtain a definition of that which is good in itself; and as the goodness of acts is their conformity to good ends, we obtain also a definition of this moral goodness, or of the quality assumed to be indefinable, by which actions are constituted good. But all this is precisely what the system of Price has denied, and what Price, consistently with his system, has endeavored to disprove. Has he not denied the distinction between absolute good and moral good? Has he not affirmed that there is no good except in actions? Has he not said, that goodness in actions is a simple and indefinable quality? Has he not maintained that it does not at all consist in the relation between an act and an end, or an external object? Has he not refused to

admit any of the definitions which have been offered of this end, on the hypothesis that it really exists? Has he not refuted, at length, all these definitions? And, nevertheless, his own definition of an action reestablishes all that he has overthrown. In making it, he denies whatever he has before affirmed, and affirms whatever he has before denied. Price may choose, then, between his definition and his system — between his whole book and a passage in it. Both cannot coëxist; one or the other must be given up.

But this is not all. The definition comprehends in the act, in addition to the end, the circumstances of its agent and its object. And Price develops his thought in saying, if, in regard to a particular being, under certain circumstances, I ought to act in one way, I ought to act in another way under other circumstances, and in regard to another being. This is perfectly intelligible, gentlemen, and I find no difficulty in comprehending it. I may strike a tree because it is a tree, and I am a man; I must not strike my neighbor because he is also a man; but I may strike him if he attacks me, for then his circumstances and mine are changed. This is as much as to say, that, in order to characterize the act, I must have a perception of my nature and of the tree's; of my nature and of my neighbor's; of the relations between myself and these two beings, arising from our respective natures, and of all the facts in regard to them and to myself, which are expressed by the vague word *circumstances*. Is this, then, what this system means by an *immediate perception* of a simple and indefinable quality in an action, or is it not!

If it is not what it means, then let Price withdraw his definition of an action; if it is, then let him reconcile the fact, such as his definition describes it, with the formula in which he expresses his system. What terms shall we make use of, I ask, to designate the perception of solidity in bodies, or the conception of the space which contains them, if we call the complicated process which this definition indicates *an immediate perception*, and the moral character which results from this process, *a simple and indefinable quality* of actions? For either my nature, and the tree's, and my neighbor's, and all my circumstances and theirs, do, in spite of language, make a part of the action, and then the quality, which is constituted by the relations of these things with each other, is not simple, and, consequently, not indefinable; or the action is entirely included in the act of striking the tree or the man, and, then, it has no quality, either simple or complex, definable or indefinable. Accept the second branch of the dilemma, and there is no perception at all, for there is nothing to perceive. Prefer the first, and there is neither an immediate perception, nor any perception of a quality at all; but, first, a conception of many very different things, then a view of the relations between them, and, lastly, an induction from these relations to the action; and such an induction is really made, inasmuch as the appreciation of the action implies all these notions, and, consequently, is derived from them. By either hypothesis the system is overthrown; it is destroyed by the definition; it perishes without the definition; and yet more, this

definition has the singular merit of proving that it is necessary to consider the nature of things and the relations thence derived, in order to appreciate the morality of actions, in the face of a refutation, called out by the system of Clarke, which makes the goodness of actions consist in their conformity to the relations derived from the nature of things.

And now, gentlemen, I ask again, Where shall we look for the true opinion of Price? If it is contained in his definition of an act, it is there only as a germ, and must be unfolded and developed. If it is expressed in his system, we must strike out the definition; for the system and the definition contradict each other, and we know not how to form from both a consistent unity. What must we do in such a case of embarrassment? Let us leave Price to unravel the difficulty as he can, and confine ourselves to drawing from his definition the confession which confirms all that I have attempted, in this lecture, to demonstrate: this confession is, that the two propositions on which are founded the class of systems now under consideration — first, that the idea of good represents nothing but moral good, and secondly, that moral good is a simple and indefinable quality, immediately perceived in actions by reason, or the moral sense, which two propositions are intimately connected, and form a true system — are equally untenable and irreconcilable with facts.

This, gentlemen, is a result at which I have wished to arrive, in pursuit of which I have entered

into this long exposition, and still longer criticism of the system of Price. When examining systems far removed from the truth, we can move quickly; for the error being great, we can soon point it out and refute it; but in proportion as systems approach the truth, the error becomes more subtle and difficult of detection. We have already remarked this difference, in passing from the criticism of the selfish system to that of the instinctive system. In passing from the instinctive system to that of Price, we are made more sensible of it still. Indeed, the system of Price comes so near to the truth, that it wears more of its aspect and distinguishing features than any which we have hitherto met with; and, therefore, has it been much less easy to unveil its disguise, and demonstrate its errors. Still, gentlemen, it is on this account only the more important to determine its nature precisely; for, in so doing, we have taken a new step in the investigation in which we are engaged.

Moral good is distinct from the good of instinct, or of self-love; and intuitive reason can alone reveal it. This is what our criticism of the instinctive and selfish systems has taught us. But, among the systems which admit this third kind of good, we have seen two different opinions prevailing. Some declare moral good to be a simple, indefinable quality, immediately perceived in actions by reason; others consider it as a relation of actions to absolute good, and limit themselves to ascertaining in what absolute good consists. Now, it is impossible that we should advance further, without having first examined and

determined which of these two opinions represent the truth. This is what we have attempted to do in the last two lectures. We have examined the first of these opinions, and have concluded, not only that it is contradicted by facts, but also that these same facts declare the truth of the second. We have made a step in advance then. Of two different ways which the rational systems open before us, we have discovered which is the right one. It only remains that we pursue it. We shall here meet with rational systems of the second category, which, recognizing beyond moral good an absolute good, have sought to discover the essential character of the latter, and thus decide in what the former consists. Recognizing, as these systems do, both the distinct existence of these two kinds of good, and the necessity of defining the one in order that we may determine the other, we have merely to inquire what definition they give; for this is the only point which remains to be settled. We will review their opinions, then, upon this final question. But we will do so without attempting to criticise them; for it is plain that I should then be carried into an examination of the true definition of absolute good, and thus be led into an exposition of my own theory. I shall limit myself, therefore, gentlemen, to a rapid sketch of the principal definitions which have been given of absolute good, merely making a few hasty reflections on these definitions, which having done, I shall drop my character of historian, and, assuming that of the philosopher, shall set before you my ideas upon the fundamental questions of ethics. Only after these have



been presented to your attention, shall we be in the situation to review the systems which have given a definition of absolute good, and be able to judge of their idea in the light of our own. To the criticism of these systems I shall devote one, and only one, lecture more.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In reviewing, after several months, this criticism of Price, I do not find it strictly accurate. To make it so, however, would demand an entire reconstruction of these two lectures; and, therefore, I have preferred to alter nothing. The exposition of my ideas on the fundamental questions of ethics will correct whatever has now been left incomplete

## LECTURE XXIV.

RATIONAL SYSTEMS. — WOLLASTON. — CLARKE AND MONTESQUIEU. — MALEBRANCHE. — WOLF.

GENTLEMEN,

I ANNOUNCED to you that I should devote the lecture of to-day to giving an account of some of the rational systems which have attempted to define good. I now proceed to fulfil my promise. My exposition and criticism of these systems will be rapid. I shall limit myself, on the one hand, to pointing out the idea which each gives, both of good in itself, and of the derived goodness of actions; and, on the other, to an indication of the error of this twofold definition. A thorough criticism of these systems I postpone, as I have already forewarned you, until I shall have explained the fundamental principles of my own system.

The first which occurs to my mind is that of Wollaston, an English philosopher, who lived in the beginning of the eighteenth century, as exhibited in his work on natural religion. In a few words I will describe its essential characteristics.

According to this philosopher, good is truth; and the fundamental law of conduct — the duty from which

all others are derived — is to act conformably to the truth, or, in other words, not to deceive by actions. How does Wollaston proceed to establish this doctrine? As follows: He begins with the assertion that actions, like words, are signs, and that the truth may be expressed or disguised, affirmed or denied, by actions as well as by words. To establish this assertion, he attempts, first, to show how truth may be denied in actions. What is it, he asks, to break a contract? It is simply to affirm by an action, that it is not true that the contract was made. What is it to rob a traveller? It is to deny that the money which is taken belonged to him. Wollaston multiplies examples, taking care always to select bad actions, and tracing always these actions to some negation of one or more true propositions. This being done, and having thus demonstrated that truth may be contradicted by actions, he asks whether an act which denies one or more true propositions can be good. He maintains that it must necessarily be bad. The proofs which he gives are curious, from the fact that each one of them consists in showing absolute good under one of its aspects, and in making it appear that there is a contradiction between falsehood and good thus conceived. The proofs are as follows: first, an action which denies a true proposition, is equivalent to a false proposition. Now, a false proposition is bad; therefore, the action which is equivalent to it cannot be good. Secondly, an action which denies a true proposition denies the nature of things, and, consequently, is contrary to it. Now, is it not evident that an action which is contrary to the nature

of things is bad ? Thirdly, an action which denies a true proposition denies that which actually is. Such an action, therefore, is a revolt against God, the author of being, and against his will. Fourthly, it is, yet more, a revolt against order ; for what is order except the laws of things arising from their nature ? Fifthly, it is also a revolt against reason. To deny a true proposition is to affirm what is absurd ; and what is the affirmation of an absurdity, except a revolt against reason ? Sixthly, such an action is contrary to the nature of man ; for man is a rational being, and the peculiarity of rational natures is to see and love things as they are.

After having thus demonstrated that an action which denies one or more true propositions is bad, Wollaston goes one step further, and proves that a true proposition may be denied by omission as well as by commission ; or, what amounts to the same thing, that the omission is quite as much a sign as the action, and that we may affirm what is false, as well by the former of these signs as by the latter. And he has no difficulty in proving this ; for it is evident, for example, that, in not doing what we promise, we deny that it has been promised, as much as if we did something contrary to that promise. It would not be worth while to follow the author into the details of this proof.

You see, gentlemen, that his efforts are limited to establishing the essential nature of evil. But as evil is contrary to good, if the nature of the one is determined, that of the other follows as a matter of course, and the nature of what is neither good nor bad

equally. What, then, is a good action? It is one whose omission would be bad, or whose opposite would be a bad action. What, in the second place, is an indifferent action? It is one which may be done or omitted, without contradicting the truth. So that from the principle of his system is derived the essence of that which is good, of that which is bad, and of that which is indifferent in conduct; or, in other words, a solution of the fundamental problem of morality.

Wollaston, having thus established his doctrine, attempts to confirm it by showing that it is in harmony with facts. He shows, for example, that it is in harmony with the fact of a progressive development of moral ideas. In fact, if science is progressive, morality must be so too; for, as morality is nothing more than truth expressed in conduct, it presupposes a knowledge of truth; and in proportion as this knowledge, which is science, increases, morality must become more perfect. Hence an explanation of errors in morality, and of the difference recognized by common sense between mistakes and crimes. If we can be deceived in questions of morals, it is because we may be so deceived in science, that things will not be seen as they are. To make a mistake in moral conduct, is to affirm in action a proposition which is false, though believed to be true. The action is bad, but the agent is not culpable, because he does not wilfully deceive. Wollaston shows further, that his doctrine, far from altering the commonly recognized qualities of good, explains them. Thus truth, being immutable, because expressing the very nature of things, good is so too. Thus, there being

an eternal and real distinction between truth and falsehood, the like distinction separates good and evil. Whatever may be said of truth may be said equally of good, and the foundations of morality are as impregnable as those of science.

Such, gentlemen, is, in substance, the system of Wollaston. A few observations will be sufficient to show that it is incorrect; and first, let it be remarked, that, in adopting the principle of Wollaston, in the appreciation of actions, we must come to judgments which do not coincide materially with moral judgments. There is no bad action which does not express, equally with a good one, many true propositions. For example, if I poison any one with arsenic, I assuredly commit a crime; and, nevertheless, this action is conformed to many true propositions, and among others to this, that it is the property of arsenic to poison. The fundamental maxim of Wollaston, therefore, is too comprehensive, and confounds evil with good. In the second place, there are many truths which it is morally indifferent whether we affirm or deny by actions. For instance, two men are cold; one, to warm himself, draws near the fire, and the other to some ice. The action of the former affirms a true proposition, namely, that fire has the property of communicating warmth. This the act of the second, on the other hand, denies. What follows? Simply that his conduct is absurd, but not that it is immoral. The action of the one is reasonable, and that of the other foolish; but this is all. There is nothing moral in the action of the one, nor immoral in that of the other. Absurdity and

immorality are not coincident, and one should not be substituted for the other, in an attempt to explain the fundamental principle of ethics. In the third place, it follows, from the maxim of Wollaston, that, when we meet a traveller in a wood, it is equally a crime to maintain that his purse does not belong to him, as to take it, for in either case we equally deny the same true proposition. This is ridiculous, and shows still more clearly how different absurdity is from immorality. And lastly, I affirm that this hypothesis would destroy all inequality among virtues; for if morality consists in not denying a true proposition, then all good actions are equally good, and no difference can be discovered between them.

But, yet further, this fundamental maxim is not coincident with psychological phenomena. Such a maxim must not only explain the moral judgments of humanity, but consciousness must also testify that we are really governed by this principle in our actions. Now, I ask, when I refrain from robbing a person, is my motive the fear of denying a true proposition? Assuredly not; and it is quite plain that I do not think at all of the various truths which my action affirms or denies. The maxim of Wollaston, therefore, is no less contradicted by consciousness than by the moral judgments of mankind.

I pass, now, gentlemen, to the consideration of a second system, more famous than this of Wollaston — a system which was that of Montesquieu, but which previously had been taught by that friend of Newton, and adversary of Leibnitz, the celebrated Clarke. The principle of this system is, that good actions

are those which are conformable to the nature of things. Clarke thus describes his idea, in a treatise on the existence of God, and the laws of the moral nature. The author sets out from an examination of the essential nature of obligation; but, as obligation is founded upon the idea of good, to discover this foundation and to give a definition of good are the same thing. And Clarke expressed this question under the former of these two modes rather than the latter, only because his efforts were directed against the system of Hobbes, whose works had created, at that time, a great sensation, and were producing disastrous effects on morality. You are aware that this philosopher asserted that selfishness is the foundation of duty; and Clarke, therefore, began, in his efforts to overturn this foundation, by refuting the principle of selfishness under every possible form which it can assume. He shows that we do what is right, and seek good in actions, neither to obey the will of God, nor to secure the recompenses and avoid the sufferings of another life; nor to advance our own private good; nor with a view to social utility; nor in obedience to a primitive contract between men, in the origin of society; nor from regard to laws and the will of legislators. It would be useless to review, at this time, all these pretended foundations for the sentiment of obligation; for we have already considered them. It is sufficient to remark that Clarke rejects them all.

As obligation is founded on none of these maxims, Clarke seeks for its true foundation, and his system is as follows:—God, in creating things, gave to them



all peculiar natures, and, in virtue of these natures, established relations which unite them, and which, taken together, make up the universe. The creation is, then, only a collection of different beings, united together by relations derived from their respective natures. Now, as nature, or the essence of things, is real and immutable, and as the essence of things produces the relations which unite them, these relations are as real and immutable as things themselves, or as their essence. These relations, says Clarke, constitute universal order. Reason conceives these different relations. It conceives that they constitute the laws of things, and hence immediately concludes that they should be respected by every free and rational being. Hence, for every being who is capable of comprehending them, arises an obligation to regulate his conduct conformably to his relations. When conduct or actions are conformed to these relations, they are good; in the opposite case, they are bad. Such is the definition of moral good, as derived from the idea of good in itself—of absolute good. And you readily see that, as this latter is immutable, since the relations of things are derived from their nature, which is immutable, moral good must be so too, because consisting in a conformity of conduct to these relations. Obligation, according to Clarke, is derived immediately from the conception of good, that is to say, of order. And it is derived from this immediately, on account of the agreement between order and reason. It is essential to reason to respect order, as soon as the idea of it is conceived, order being its law. Hence, gentlemen, arise all duties,

and the manner of determining what they are. Whence, asks Clarke, are derived our different duties? and what is our mode of determining them? Suppose that we were ignorant of our own nature and of the nature of God — that God and man, in other words, were both unknown; — could we tell what duties man owes to God, or even that he owes any? We could not. But suppose that the nature of man, on the one hand, and that of God, on the other, are known; then, at once, we perceive the necessary relations which are derived from these two natures. We see immediately that one of these beings owes duties, and that the other is the object to whom he owes them; and we recognize the kind of duties which are owed. In a word, we discover that the rule of our conduct towards God arises from the established relations between his nature and ours.

Again; bring two men together, and inquire what relations exist between two beings of separate though equal and identical natures, and we shall see that, if our duties to our fellow-beings are different from those which we owe to God, it is because the relations between man and man are different from those between man and God; and we shall find that, as the duties of man towards God arise from respect to the latter, so the duties of man towards man arise from a respect for the former. And Clarke, like all other philosophers who define good, hastens to show that this definition of good agrees with the progress of moral ideas, and explains it. Originally, he says, we know neither the nature of beings, nor the relations thence arising. There is, therefore, a science, whose object

it is to determine these relations, and which — as, like all other sciences, it has a beginning and an end — is susceptible of development. Now, as morality presupposes this science, morality must follow its progress, and advance with civilization. Such, in a few words, are the main arguments of Clarke, and the fundamental ideas of his system.

Montesquieu, whom I have classed with Clarke, had precisely the same idea of good. He explains his system in the first words of his work entitled *L'Esprit des Loix*, in saying, “Laws are the necessary relations which are derived from the nature of things.” By laws he means the rule of what is good. And he proves that, by *necessary relations*, he understands, as Clarke does, those which are *necessarily derived* from the nature of things, by saying, in addition, “Before intelligent beings actually existed, they were yet possible; there were, therefore, possible relations between them, and, consequently, possible laws.” Montesquieu goes further, and shows — which is also in fact the view of Clarke — that these relations are not an arbitrary act of God, in this third passage of the same chapter — “God has made laws, because they had certain relations to his wisdom and power;” which amounts to saying that these laws themselves, or, what is the same thing, the nature of different beings, and the relations thence derived, are not dependent even upon the will of God, who created them; and the cause of this is, that, being the works of God, the reason for them exists in him, and the reason of what God has made, cannot be distinguished from his nature, which is necessary and eternal. The

nature of God is, in fact, the only truly absolute, necessary, eternal existence; and to it, in the last analysis, must be referred the immutability and necessity of whatever is necessary and immutable. If absolute good, then, is necessary and immutable, it is because the reality represented by this word is nothing else than the nature of God himself, or a manifestation and necessary effect of this nature. Thus, in the hypothesis of Clarke and Montesquieu, good would seem to be arbitrary, if things and their relations were the effects of the arbitrary will of God, and if we conceived that this will could give to things another nature, from which might result other relations. This is what these two philosophers have thought, and what Montesquieu has expressed in the last sentence quoted. And the defect of the system is already indicated in the difficulty felt by all in admitting that the beings peopling creation are all exactly such as they could not but be, and that God could have created neither more nor less than these, nor any differing from them. But this is not the place to discuss this great difficulty, which, as you will hereafter see, the true idea of good fully satisfies. It is sufficient to have shown you, by these three quotations from Montesquieu, that his doctrine is entirely the same with that of Clarke. I will now submit to your attention some observations in regard to this system, which, as you will remark, are entirely identical with those already made upon the system of Wollaston.

Between judgments based upon this fundamental maxim — “Act conformably to the nature of things” —

and moral judgments, there is the same want of material coincidence as between moral judgments and those which arise from the definition of Wollaston. In the first place, it is evident that every act, which is not wholly absurd, is conformed to many of the existent relations of things; and I adopt for illustration the example, already used, of poisoning by arsenic. Assuredly, this act is conformable to the nature of man, to that of arsenic, and to the relations between the two; this cannot be denied. Clarke's maxim, therefore, gentlemen, like Wollaston's, is too comprehensive. I allow that a good act is never a falsehood, but is always in harmony with truth; I allow, also, that it is conformable to the relations which arise from the nature of things; but the illustration shows that there are only some particular relations to which our conduct ought to correspond, and only certain true propositions, which we are bound to express by our acts. What are these relations and propositions? and why are they to be selected and preferred? These are questions which neither of these systems answers; which fact clearly proves that Clarke and Wollaston have not accurately conceived the idea of good, but other ideas, which, though related, perhaps, to this idea, are yet not identical with it; for, if they had disengaged the true idea, our moral judgments, and our moral judgments only, would have at once proceeded from the definition. But I go further, gentlemen, and say, that, if there are relations between things with which it is wrong to act in conformity, there are also many relations, in regard to which it is a matter of perfect

indifference whether we act in conformity or not. Thus, to use again an illustration already employed, it is acting conformably to the nature of things to refresh ourselves with ice, and warm ourselves with fire. But, as such conduct is only reasonable, and not virtuous, so its opposite is not criminal, but only foolish. Clarke says that it is the essence of reason to respect order; that is, to use the language of his system, the relations derived from the nature of things. This is true; but in what sense? In the sense that reason cannot, without abdicating its office, fail to recognize these relations; for, since they exist, it is absurd and contrary to reason, whose law is truth, to deny them. But does it follow, because these relations constitute truth, that they also constitute good, and are the law of reason, in such a sense that reason feels itself morally obliged to respect them in action? This is by no means what facts prove. We are in error, and act without conformity to the nature of things, when we attempt to warm ourselves with ice; but such conduct is not immoral; the two spheres of absurdity and immorality do not coincide. This defect of Clarke's system is confirmed by the fact that the psychological coincidence is equally wanting with the external coincidence. Undoubtedly, we are obliged, in many cases, before we can determine what we ought to do, to consider both our own nature and the nature of other beings, and the relations existing between us. But observe, we do this for the purpose of determining another fact, which is a knowledge of what is good and of what we ought to do. And, unless we are led to some



decision upon this point, our inquiries fail to communicate the light we seek; moreover, we do not need, for this end, to know all the relations which arise from the nature of things, but only certain relations. So that, though consciousness, when imperfectly examined, may seem to give some appearance of truth to Clarke's definition, it entirely contradicts it, when more faithfully consulted.

I pass now, gentlemen, to a third system—that of Malebranche. Connected as the moral ideas of this philosopher are with those of his metaphysics, you will be unable to comprehend the former without at least a superficial acquaintance with the latter.

You have all probably heard repeated that fundamental maxim of Malebranche—"We see all things in God." What is the import of this maxim? I will tell you, in a few words.

Malebranche admitted, what was considered established by the philosophers who preceded him, that we see, not things themselves, but the ideas of these things, in our own minds. Starting with this opinion, Malebranche did not allow, because we had the idea of a tree, that a tree therefore existed. He granted only, that, as the idea of the tree is not produced by the effort of our own minds, it must have some originating cause distinct from ourselves. This cause he sought to discover; and, reviewing successively the various theories which had been suggested—that these ideas are produced in us by objects—that they are innate—that God creates them in our minds—and, finally, that our souls are united with the divine intelligence which includes the ideas of all possible

beings, and that we see these ideas as there existing — he believed it to be susceptible of demonstration that this last supposition is alone admissible. He laid it down, therefore, as a principle, that, excepting the ideas of what passes within us, we see all other ideas in God, who is the essence of the intelligible world, and with whom our intelligence is in perpetual communion. Such is the meaning of the celebrated maxim of Malebranche, that “we see all things in God.”

It follows, from this doctrine, that, as all individual intelligences can see, in God, the ideas which each intelligence sees there, ideas are not peculiar to any, but common to all, and belong to God alone. Each individual possesses, therefore, first, the idea of himself, which is peculiar to him, and then ideas of all other existences, which, being in God, where they are seen, are a portion of absolute truth, belong only to God, and are common to all individuals who perceive them. Malebranche finds, as he thinks, in facts, a strong confirmation of this theory. No one, beside myself, can feel the pain that I feel; pain, then, emanates from me, and is wholly personal. But every intelligent being can see the truth that I see; this truth, then, emanates neither from them nor from me; and yet it must emanate from some intelligence; this can be only God, to whom, therefore, it belongs. Reason, therefore, or the aggregate of truths, is substantial with God; and, as we are rational only by partaking of reason, this reason is appropriate not to us, but to him; if it belonged to us, we should be entirely and perfectly reasonable, which we are



not; we see only a portion of truth, because we see only a portion of the ideas which are in God; and therefore are we imperfect and infinitely beneath him.

Such, gentlemen, are some of Malebranche's metaphysical ideas. The moral consequences which he deduces from them are as follows:—

When I perceive a truth, it is certain that God perceives it too; for he perceives all truth. Consequently, what I think is a portion of what God thinks; in other words, there is a communion between God and me, in the perception of truth. As God perceives with perfect clearness all truth, and all ideas, I cannot think all that he thinks, nor know all that he knows; but, as what I do think and know constitute a portion of truth, God thinks it, God knows it. I know, then, a part of what God knows, and think in part as he thinks.

Now, two kinds of relations exist between ideas; first, relations of agreement and disagreement, which constitute speculative truths, and do not concern morality; secondly, relations of perfection, which alone do concern it. For example, the idea of man seems to me to contain more perfection than the idea of an animal; the idea of an animal more than that of a plant; and the idea of a plant more than that of a stone. From these relations of perfection, I am led to love and esteem most that which is most perfect; in other words, to these inequalities of perfection correspond in me different degrees of esteem and love, which seem to be their necessary consequences. But how do I perceive these relations of

perfection? I see them in God. God, then, perceives them as I do; and they excite in him the same inequalities of love which I experience. But God, says Malebranche, can have but one kind of love — love for himself; God loves himself unchangeably; he can have, therefore, he adds, but one motive for action — self-love. God is all perfection, however, so that the love of himself is only the love of perfection. Now, what are the ideas of different beings which exist in him, and these different beings themselves, if it is supposed that he has, in creating them, realized these ideas? They are emanations from himself; and it is because they are such emanations, that they have their different degrees of perfection. In loving them, therefore, God still loves himself, and loves perfection. But this love must necessarily be proportioned to the degree of perfection; hence the love of God varies with the degree of perfection manifested in the ideas of these different beings, and realized in them, if they exist. His conduct must be governed by the same law, as his only motive is love. If it is supposed, therefore, that God has in part realized his ideas, he will act in relation to the beings thus produced, proportionally to the love which they inspire, that is to say, proportionally to their degree of perfection. And now what follows? It follows, that, whenever, in loving things, our love is proportioned to their degree of perfection, our love is in a communion with God's love, and that, whenever our conduct is regulated by such a love, we act in communion with him, that is to say, according to his law, which is the law of reason and of truth.

As we can think and know the truth with God, so can we love and act with him, if we take for our rule the relations of perfection in things, which is the true law of love and conduct. These relations of perfection constitute order. To love, according to these relations, is to love order, and to be in conformity with it. Whence you see, that the love of virtue is only a respect for order. Its motive, then, is the love of perfection; its proper object is God, who is perfection itself, and the source of all that is found in beings; and whatever being, therefore, we love, if our love is directed to the perfection which is in it, we love not only with God, but we love, as he does, himself.

And, gentlemen, if we actually learn thus to proportion our love, and to regulate our conduct by the degrees of perfections in things, what is the effect upon ourselves? It is, that we not only love and act in communion with God, but also become more perfect; for, as our perfection consists in our likeness to God, the more we love him and act with him, the more do we resemble him, and so become perfect: Now, the more perfect we are, the more will God love us; for, as it is his necessary law to love himself, it must also be his law to love every thing in proportion to its degree of perfection and likeness to himself. But his conduct is not less necessarily regulated by his love, than his love is by degrees of perfection. The more, then, we follow the law of order, the happier will God render us; and thus will virtue produce happiness, and this not only in another life, but here and now, inevitably. For God cannot

alter the laws of his own conduct; he is irresistibly impelled to govern his acts by the degree of a being's perfections; and, as our perfection results immediately from our virtue, happiness must result from it equally.

Such, gentlemen, in a few words, and in a mode of description quite unworthy of this great philosophy, is Malebranche's theory, as to the nature of good.

The defect of this system is not its want of exactness; for it would be easy, by a slight change of form, to resolve it into the very system which I shall hereafter present to you. Its defect is, rather that it leaves the idea of order, into which it resolves the idea of moral good, extremely vague, by leaving in vagueness the idea of perfection, into which it resolves the idea of absolute good. Its defect, in other words, is, that it gives a definition of good which is so metaphysical and profound, that when, after hearing the definition, we attempt to settle what is meant by good and evil, and the way, accordingly, in which we should conduct ourselves, we are much embarrassed to discover the reality which these words denote. Thus it is only with great difficulty that Malebranche succeeds in deducing from his principle our duties to ourselves, to God, and to our fellow-beings. And, after all, he does not so much describe precise duties, as give general directions, which are characterized by like uncertainty and vagueness with his fundamental maxim. This vagueness, in which the idea of good is left, by Malebranche, seems to me to result from the fact that his morality is only his metaphysics,

presented under another aspect. Undoubtedly, the moral idea is only one side of the idea of God; and so long as this latter is undetermined, the former must be so too. But as many moralists, beginning with man, have failed in attaining the true idea of morality, because they had not the idea of God, so metaphysicians may equally fail, from wanting the idea of man. This, as it seems to me, was the case with Malebranche; and I cannot but think, that if, after having established his metaphysical theory, he had, instead of rigidly applying it, paid some attention to what observation reveals in man, the moral idea would have appeared to him under a form more in accordance with human sentiment, and more readily applicable to the practice of life. Let us not, however, forget, in thus finding fault with Malebranche, that this great metaphysician was a Catholic priest, and that he may, on this account, have avoided expressing his thought in too definite terms. For, notwithstanding his obscurity and mysticism, he gave but little satisfaction to theologians; and his life, in consequence, was one long controversy.

A system which seems, by its definition of good, to approach nearly to that of Malebranche, but which errs in just the opposite way, in not being metaphysical enough, is that of the celebrated disciple and successor of Leibnitz, Wolf, who has resolved the idea of good into that of perfection. I will tell you Wolf's mode of proceeding in determining his fundamental principle of ethics. But I hardly dare to refer you to his work on ethical philosophy, since, like all others which he wrote, it is of appalling di-

mensions. To give you an idea of it, it will be sufficient to state that his *Systema Moralis* fills five volumes quarto. You can judge from this of the size of the other portions of his philosophical system.

Wolf distinguishes two kinds of good; *personal good*, or that of each human individual, and *common good*, or that of all human beings collectively. In his somewhat barbarous phraseology, he calls the first *bonum suitatis*, and the second *bonum communionis*. And here let me remark, that, beside the individual man, Wolf takes no note of any other beings except men, which certainly is a narrow view. What is his idea of *personal good*? It consists, for every human being, in the perfection of his nature, which imposes upon him a twofold duty; first, self-preservation; secondly, self-perfection. To say that, when the nature of a being is given, good consists in the perfection of that nature, is the same as saying that this consists in the greatest development of all the elements of his nature. The first thing to be done, then, to secure this greatest development is, to take care that its elements are not impaired or destroyed, and, consequently, for a still stronger reason, that the being itself is not. Preservation is, then, the condition of good. This condition being secured, self-perfection, or the greatest possible development of all the constituent elements of the being, is the means of good. Such, then, according to Wolf, is the good of the individual, its condition and its means.

*Common good* consists, for each one of us, in the

perfection of all the individuals of our race, and of all the various associations by which they are bound to each other or to us. This also imposes a twofold duty; first, the preservation, secondly, the improvement, of every individual and of every community. Thus, in the circle of the family, we are bound to labor for the preservation and improvement both of the family itself and of all the members of which it is composed. And, in the circle of society and in that of humanity, our duties are the same. We see, thus, that, for every individual, good is divided into personal good, and the good of our fellow-beings; so that, for the attainment of personal good, we must preserve and perfect ourselves, and, for the advancement of common good, we must labor to preserve and perfect our fellow-beings separately, and the various associations of family, society, and humanity, in which they are united.

Wolf has clearly seen, gentlemen, the connection between these two kinds of good. The preservation and perfection of the individuals of which they are composed depend upon the development of families, of societies, and of the race. When these associations suffer, each individual suffers; while all developments of families, of societies, and of the race, add to the development—that is to say, to the power, intelligence, and happiness—of each separate individual. It is reciprocally true, that the good of communities results from the good of each of its members. These two kinds of good mutually imply and suppose each other; and hence it results that each individual has a strong reason for regarding the good of his

fellow-beings, while they have an equally strong reason for regarding his. This reason is not, however, that each of these kinds of good is seen to be a personal good by every human being, but that they are recognized as good in themselves; for, according to this system, the ideas of good and of perfection are identical, and, in the eyes of reason, individual good and common good have equal claims.

From all these ideas, Wolf deduces what he calls a general idea of good and evil; that is to say, a formula which defines a good action. This formula I will quote; you may gather from it an idea of the scholastic language which the author habitually uses: —

*“Actiones bonæ tendunt vel ad conservationem perfectionis essentialis, vel ad acquirendum accidentalem, vel ad conservationem generis humani et in specie familiæ suæ, ejusque perfectionem, vel ad conservationem perfectionis essentialis et acquisitionem accidentalis aliorum, vel denique ad perfectionem communem sociorum atque status eorundem.”*

Such is the general formula in which Wolf sums up his whole doctrine as to the nature of absolute good, and of a good action. This doctrine, which fills one whole volume of his work, constitutes the first part of his ethical philosophy. The second part has for its object to determine the various situations in which men may be placed, and to ascertain the acts which are good and bad in each of these. Upon this task Wolf enters in the four remaining volumes of his work.

What this system chiefly wants is a foundation.



Why does Wolf see fit to resolve the idea of good into that of perfection, rather than into some other idea? On this point he says not a word. He assumes that these ideas are equivalent, without declaring whether he considers this a self-evident axiom, or whether he is determined by some reason in adopting his opinion. One thing is certain — he actually gives no reason for so doing, and thus leaves it to be inferred that he considers them equivalent, by intuitive evidence. This arbitrary mode of proceeding is wholly unscientific; and if his system was the truest possible, every one would still be authorized to reject it.

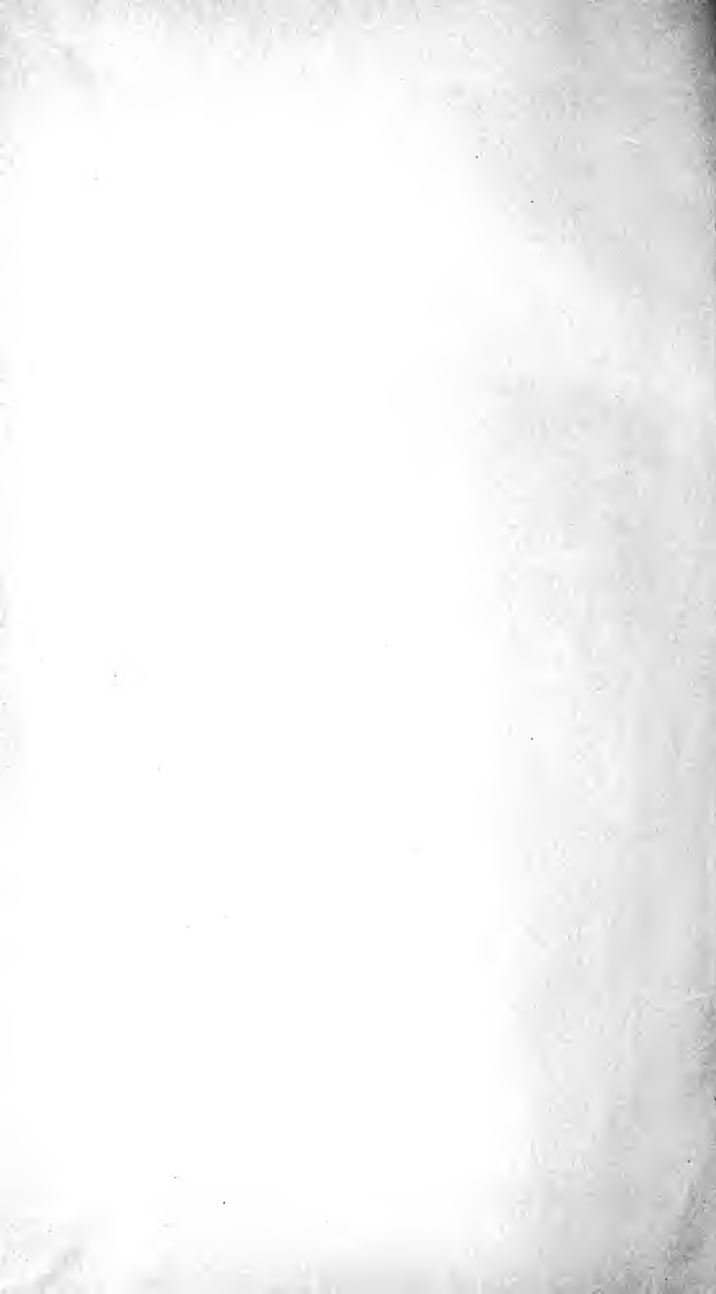
When we examine this fundamental maxim of Wolf, we see at once that he resolves the idea of good into an idea which itself must be resolved. Doubtless it is more definite than the idea of good, and our duties may be deduced from it with less difficulty; and yet it leaves the question undecided as to the essential characteristics of our own perfection, and of the perfection of families, societies, and the human race. Certainly, it would seem as if Wolf ought to have devoted at least some pages of his five volumes to the solution of this question, as if he ought, by a metaphysical examination, to have fixed more precisely his general formula, and to have deduced from it some method which could be applied in ascertaining the perfection of any particular being. He might, then, have applied this method to man individually and collectively, and thus have arrived at strict and exact conclusions, by which his reader would have been enabled to judge of the excellence

of the results to which his system led. But Wolf has done nothing of the kind; and although his good sense did not allow him to misconceive either the essential nature of a being's perfection, or of the mode of ascertaining it, he still seems to have had no scientific assurance for what he thought and said; and his mode of determining the idea of perfection is as arbitrary as his conception of the idea. In a word, notwithstanding the alarming profusion of divisions, subdivisions, and classifications, with which his works abound, Wolf really was deficient in the scientific spirit, as you may readily infer from what has now been said of his ethics. I will add nothing to my remarks upon his theory now, but will reserve my criticism until after I have given an exposition of my own system.

THE END.

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