THE GROWTH OF THE CONCEPT OF RIGHT AND WRONG

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THE GROWTH OF THE CONCEPT OF RIGHT AND WRONG

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State Teachers College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

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Commerce, Texas

May, 1945
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

This thesis is a study of selected moral philosophies as they contribute to an understanding of the evolution of the concept of right and wrong.

Method of Gathering Data

The material for this thesis has been gathered through extensive reading of books and periodicals written by and about the philosophers studied and those pertaining to moral philosophy in general.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to gather and compare representative moral philosophies with the view to selecting that philosophy which seems best suited to fit the needs of man as he strives to become a more efficient social being. It is recognized that the meaning of the words "right" and "wrong" is ambiguous. "Right" may apply in the sense meant in saying that a clock is right. "Wrong" may be used in the sense of choosing the wrong tool. Verification of right and wrong in this sense may closely follow verification of right and wrong
in a moral sense. For purposes of this work however, the moral sense alone will be considered.

Organization of Thesis

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter I is the introduction.

Chapter II consists of a short history of the moral concept and a consideration of the transcendental Philosophers Plato, Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, and Santayana.

Chapter III is a consideration of the modern philosophers Schiller, James, and Dewey.

In the fourth chapter will be the writer's choice of that philosophy which seems best suited to reality as we experience it.
CHAPTER II

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHERS

In tracing the development of moral ideas, we are first led to recognize the fact that morals came about as a result of conditions and were an effort man made to stabilize things. That primitive morals were and are what they are may be understood only by understanding the conditions of life faced by primitive man. Morals for any age then, became a reflection of man's ability to organize and stabilize his interactions with his environment. It is, after all, the necessary activities of existence that led to the forming of certain habits of character which were the beginnings of moral activity.¹

In earliest days we find man's attempt to understand his environment led to superstition. This earliest attempt to stabilize his life was somewhat of a recognition of the world's complexity and apparent discontinuity, and it was only after many centuries that he felt security enough to see the "oneness" of things. Of late, our very knowledge of the world has reintroduced an attempt to explain the world in terms of the "many" rather than the "one". Primitive man worshipped

¹John Dewey and James H. Tufts, Ethics, p. 39.
many gods with competing and contrasting, even conflicting, desires. Some gods were apparently in cooperation with man—or at least could be persuaded to become so—while others could at best be placated and kept from doing harm. That this was a true reflection of his life is obvious.

With the organization of society came a more unified idea of reality. Man became somewhat more confident of his ability to deal with the world as he found it. Such confidence led an eminent mathematician of the time to declare that the very secret of nature was on the verge of solution. Advances in astronomy and physics lead to this confidence as well as some sort of security for the common man.

At any rate, with a more thorough organization of society came a desire for something absolute and unchanging to which to tie—a firm anchor for all knowledge so to speak. "Oneness" as the important thing—not uniqueness—and if man were to seek only far enough, he would find not complexity but harmony—not novelty but stability. Complexity, man felt, was only apparent. If the connection between things was obscure, intelligence would someday bring them to light.

This confidence that man, by reason, was going to conquer the natural world led to the development of the idea of an "above nature world"—a supernatural world.

Later, as further development of science revealed not a simple nature but an unsuspectedly complex one—as every step forward opened up new fields for exploration, each more
mysterious than the last— the transcendental absolutistic truth and right began to fail to help man stabilize his world. Indeed these products of another age began obviously to hold him back and less fearful men began to seek workable substitutes for them. That products of past cultures fail to stand unchallenged in present ones is a commonplace. The point is precisely that they fail now for the very reason that they once worked. In a novel world that which is produced to meet one set of conditions will not serve equally well under very different conditions.

Evidence that man's conceptions of moral life are closely related to his ideas about nature is found in the fact that wherever there is a change of his ideas about the actual nature of things, there is an accompanying change in his ideals of conduct.²

As long as man held implicit belief in nature as "one"—as long as his interaction with his environment did not unduly strain this conception—we find no distinct separation between the political government of society and its moral or ethical governing force. Since medieval society was organized primarily in terms of security we find a corresponding organization of moral concepts. The Catholic church provided this assurance and was ample for the needs of the time. As society became more complex and facilities for trade

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²The University of California Associates, Knowledge and Society, pp. 212-213.
and production improved, we find that the church, which handled the moral, political, and social problems of a static society well enough, failed to serve the added complexities of life satisfactorily. Morals that served an individual in his simple dealings with a crude and familiar environment broke down—or rather proved not flexible enough for an expanding life. Since something had to handle the new science, art, industry and commerce, the church and state were separated. The state took over the legal, social and political affairs, while the church narrowed its interest to the "inner life" of man.

A more complex life also produced some powerful influences and needs for morality. Expanding activities also required cooperation. Mutual aid—at least for groups of like interest—became the surest road to success. Cooperation required a common end and a moral code of action. But the idea of "morality" in these spheres of action was based not on the conventional moral institutions but only on the results obtained from applying the code. In this way, it was divorced from the conventional standards of the time.

The complexities of life led not only to the separation of church and state but further to the individualization of man. The reformation, the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, and the commercial and industrial revolution

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3 Ibid., p. 224. 4 Dewey and Tufts, op. cit., p. 49.
of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries all contributed to the rise and spread of modern individualism.\(^5\)

With the rise of modern individualism, moral values became associated with the individual conscience and were withdrawn from society as a whole. Society became separated from moral restraint and has led to the dualism—moral and secular.

The discussion of the transcendental philosophies will reveal the various stages of development of moral concepts until the very time of its almost complete breakdown and to the shift from transcendentalism to nature as a moral tie. This shift is obvious with the discussion of William James and becomes complete in John Dewey's philosophy.

As life became so complex that it became increasingly difficult to tell just where we are going, the desire to tie morals back to nature becomes evident. The whole process leads to a belief that man produces what he needs according to the environment with which he interacts. That he should produce moral standards and ethical ideals in the same manner is evident.

Plato

"Listen then," says the angry Sophist, "I proclaim that might is right, and justice is the interest of the stronger."\(^6\)

So speaks Thrasymachus to Socrates. This statement, so

5 The University of California Associates, op. cit., p. 225.

clearly and defiantly spoken some four hundred years before Christ, is but one of the more terse statements springing from the same philosophy for the last 2400 years. Today we associate such a philosophy with Nietzsche who died in 1900 and with Bergson who is still alive. Indeed, today just such a philosophy is exemplified by the totalitarian nations which are using it to justify their form of government and desire for increased power wherever it may be forced on a weaker people. Any philosophy involving a moral code is likely to be ridiculed as merely a device of the weak to limit the strong to their own poor abilities by philosophers of the above stripe. The fact that some moral agencies have been used throughout all time for just such a purpose has furnished much of the impetus which has sustained the conception that "might makes right." Today, however, we are faced with the spectacle of the strong or powerful using moral agencies to control those who are weak—or at least without the means of power.

Plato, however, recognized the fallacy of the "might makes right" argument, and built his own system of morals on a system of reason; or at least he left all problems to reason to solve. He has set the style for all transcendentalists with his ideals. Right for him consisted in conforming to an everlasting, unchanging, all-pervading ideal. Man is doing right when he is in the place for which he was made. Some men are meant for one thing and some another and it is the
problem to fit every man into his intended niche. There he will find himself in harmony with all things. Right, then, lies in harmony and it is not strength that makes right, but harmonious strength, the harmony of wholes. This, Plato feels, is fundamental. Pure reason alone can ever hope to reach such ideals, of course, and lesser men must have lesser gods to hold them in the right paths.

For this reason, Plato suggests that a national myth be built up embodying a moral code complete with hope of a future life for those who conform. Plato believed that even in the best of men there is a "latent wild beast nature." 7

It being the very nature of man to be greedy, then obviously the greed would have to be tempered in order to achieve harmony. Only some sort of personal God would suffice to moderate the individual. Also, a belief in a personal God was an encouragement to personal immortality.

There is, in Plato's argument for God, much of the lack of understanding of the individual that Dewey criticises so tellingly in his Democracy and Education. We find Plato constantly hoping to soothe the protests and injured pride of those who fail to achieve governing rank and are thereby relegated for all life to a lesser post and to a lesser life in general with belief and faith in something which will do us

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7Phaedrus, p. 572, quoted in Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy, p. 34.
no harm to believe, and may do much good. It is not hard to see the force of Dewey's criticism that Plato fails to see the many potentialities of the individual and hence so easily and so mistakenly divides them into his three classes.  

That Plato's moral code was as usable as that worked out by any later transcendentalist seems obvious when we examine it in the light of later philosophies, even that of Kant, the last of the classical philosophers. Indeed, he was even somewhat more realistic than most in providing a myth for lesser men to accept on faith. That he was correct in his assertion that common men needed the help of such a faith was amply demonstrated by the rise of the Christian religion some four hundred years later and the almost complete away it held over the moral ideas of most men for so long a time.

Plato was surely as much an aristocrat in his ethics as in his politics. He expected men who were common tradesmen to be ruled by their appetites, and men who attained the reach of philosophers to be guided by pure reason. He expected more perfection in the latter than in the former, and apparently was sure that only the latter could seek pure "truth"; for the former, the acceptance of a code of morals backed by supernatural force was the only course. That the supernatural force was impossible to demonstrate he admitted, but meant men to accept it on faith. Philosophers might seek through

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pure reason to approach the idea of justice, but for common
man a code of morals must be provided on authority. That
this dualistic code might fail because of its inherent con-
flicts may have occurred to him, but he seems to have depended
on the natural superstition of the non-philosophical mind to
sustain the duality. Indeed, who can say that such a system
might not have survived for hundreds of years. Perhaps we,
after 2400 years, are only today witnessing the breakdown of
a similar code of morals.

It seems pertinent to mention William James' statement
to the effect that all transcendentalists must sooner or later
test their moral code by the way it works on the whole. James
uses this empiricist's criterion as the only needed criterion.9

Since Plato was so complete and so masterful in setting
down his ethics, it is perhaps permissible to jump, chrono-
logically, so many years to the next transcendentalist whose
philosophy will be discussed in this thesis. In so doing,
such eminent men as Thomas Aquinas are passed over. Lest
this seem unwise, it should be explained that although the
philosophy of Saint Thomas is certainly worthwhile, especially
to the student of ethics, most of his philosophy is embodied
today in Christian Theology and as such, is more or less fa-
miliar. The philosophy of Spinoza will be considered because
of the high esteem in which his ethics is held. It has been
said that all moral codes are divisible into three classes:

the feminine code as exemplified by Christ, the masculine code as presented by Nietzsche, and the Platonic code which left it to reason to choose whether force or love should take precedence.

Spinoza

Spinoza seems to have tried to weave all of these philosophies into the cloth of a single moral program. Perhaps he injects the first qualitative good into the picture. He feels that pleasure and pain are not absolute but relative—a transition from a lesser state of perfection to a greater. He believes that the desire to understand is the essence of the will to do right.\(^\text{11}\)

Spinoza must be classified as a transcendentalist because his ethics lay in acting under the form of eternity—just as reason lay in seeing under the form of eternity. To quote: "The greatest good is the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole nature."\(^\text{12}\)

Spinoza believes that the concepts of right and wrong have entered fairly lately into the scheme of things. Since it seems that man once lived in a fairly solitary existence, he never found any need for a conception of right and wrong. Only after the formation of organized society was the need for such a conception presented. Prior to this, man determined

\(^{10}\text{Durant, op. cit., p. 197.}\) \(^{11}\text{Ibid., pp. 197-200.}\) \\
\(^{12}\text{De Emendatione, p. 230, quoted Ibid., p. 205.}\)
right or wrong according to his own fancy. Only in a society where right and wrong is decreed by a common consent and man holds himself responsible to the society will the issue be forced to the surface.

The desire to do right, even the "good nature" is not the natural state of man. Rather, goodness is acquired and varies with the place. Conscience is the gradual accumulation in the mind of the individual of the moral standards of the group. One does right because of group pressure and a desire to do good to a creature somewhat similar to oneself. Still, such group pressure—such restriction of individual activity is necessary only because all men are not reasonable. If men were universally reasonable, no restriction would be necessary. Might remains right but it is the might of society which takes place over the right of the mere individual.\(^{13}\)

Spinoza must be considered in the same light as men who came before him. He offered perhaps more humanity and more beauty in his ethics, but certainly no more practical way of determining how an individual may do the right thing than had Plato. He was forced to the conclusion that only reasonable men are capable of determining right from wrong with much consistence and, unfortunately, all men are not reasonable. Such is the problem Plato faced and failed to solve satisfactorily and such, indeed, all transcendentalists face—the eternal problem of translating the abstract "absolute" to a form which

\(^{13}\)Durant, op. cit., pp. 210-213.
is usable in a practical, changing world, where both men and objects and their interaction are seldom what they should be, but must be dealt with as they are.

Berkeley

A sincere transcendentalist whose ethics is interesting chiefly because of the ability of the Philosopher to take apparently contradictory evidence and mold it to his own use was George Berkeley.

Berkeley was absolutist and based all final determination of right conduct not on any usefulness to man or any novel basis, but on correspondence to the will of God. The following quotations demonstrate his absolutism:

Laws of nature are eternal rules of reason and are demonstrated by the infallible deductions of reason.\(^\text{14}\)

Nothing is law merely because it conduceth to the public good but because it is decreed by the will of God.\(^\text{15}\)

Berkeley, as is common with absolutists, did not hesitate to follow a negative course whenever any positive approach would lead to apparent contradiction. If a situation were met where the breaking of some positive law seemed inevitable, he suggested a negative way out. For example, in a situation where a positive law such as the duty of truthfulness conflicts with the positive law of duty to humanity, the proper course is to do nothing—simply fail to act and avoid the necessity of breaking either.

The folly of such a course is readily evident, for instead of breaking one moral law by acting, one actually has broken both by failing to perform any duty. The result of any considerable portion of humanity following such a moral course is immediately obvious. Indeed, so many persons do follow such a course and thereby fail so ignobly to serve the common good, that it is unthinkable that such a suggestion will recommend itself to intelligent men.

Berkeley goes on to contend that any eternal good is beyond the rationality of men. He thereby makes concession to the empirical fact that immoral activities seem to be inseparable from living and that some sort of "out" must be furnished. This same sort of "forgiveness feature" is found in any moral code which justifies itself on supernatural or unnatural authority. The Catholic religion furnishes an excellent example having even a device by which immortal souls may gain perfect reward by serving a time in purgatory. The Protestant sects have ample provision for blameless failure also, and even Plato held immortality possible for only the few.

Berkeley believed that God's moral law should be followed even when it was certain that harm would result both to the individual and to society. Even serious consequences as a result of following such laws should not deter us from observing them. Mere "public good" is never a valid excuse for

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16 Ibid., p. 145.  
17 Ibid.
deviating from the chosen path. Right is valid because of "natural light" and is the product of experience and intuition. He declares that moral law may be determined by "mixture mathematics". He considers much above human knowledge and thinks it irrational to dispute about those holy mysteries—things above our knowledge.

Berkeley holds man's nature as a low and unreliable guide. We must be directed not "by any emotions in our blood and spirit but by the dictates of sober and impartial reason."

Berkeley asserts that right is that which conforms to the laws of God. It is not flexible or changeable, but stands absolute. Berkeley may be accused of being vague about just how a moral course may be applied to any given practical problem, but he is clear and certain enough that God is the author of all right and that his infallibility is amply proved and all objection thereto empty pride and bigotry.

Kant

For the most complete treatment of the classical ethics we must turn to Immanuel Kant. Dewey and Tufts describe Kant's philosophy as representative of the attitude theory of morals, the attitude theory being opposed to the consequences theory. Good will was Kant's God. His moral system was an emphasis on

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duty. Duty, moreover, is mandatory just because it is duty. Kant believed the human mind knew intuitively what was right and what was wrong. The conscience is the guide and if one will only follow it implicitly, no harm will be done. 20

Kant's moral philosophy might almost be called the philosophy of Good Will. He says:

Nothing can possibly be conceived, in the world or out of it, which can be called Good without qualification, except a Good Will. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and the other talents of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resolution, perseverance as qualities of temperament are individually good and desirable in many respects; but these gifts of nature may also become extremely bad and mischievous, if the will which is to make use of them and which, therefore, constitutes what is called character, is not good. It is the same with the gifts of fortune. Power, riches, honor, even health... inspire pride and often presumption if there is not a Good Will to correct the influence of these on the mind. Moderation of the affections and passions, self-control and calm deliberation are not only good in many respects, but even seem to constitute part of the intrinsic worth of the person; but they are far from deserving to be called good without qualification... for without the principles of a good will they may become extremely bad. The coolness of a villain makes him both more dangerous and more abominable. 21

We find much in this quotation that appeals to us from our everyday experience, but the meaning of the statement is open to opposed interpretations. We may hold that sincerity is worthwhile because it tends to appeal to sincerity in others and hence, in harmony of action on all sides. On the other hand, we may hold that sincerity is good as a trait of

20 G. T. W. Patrick, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 440.
character in, of, and by itself and quite apart from the results of sincerity. Immanuel Kant obviously meant Good Will to be interpreted in the light of our second meaning. "A good will is good, not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition; that is, it is good in itself . . . ."\textsuperscript{22}

Kant regarded man's mind as something greater than organic activities. He felt that to study the innate laws of thought was Transcendental Philosophy: "I call knowledge transcendental which is occupied not so much with object as with our \textit{a priori} concepts of objects."\textsuperscript{23}

Kant regarded reason as the foremost duty of mankind and felt that all moral obligations were fixed by reason: "These ends (moral obligations) are fixed for me by my own reason."\textsuperscript{24}

Kant assured us that all men are responsible for their acts. He declares that the freedom of the will is obvious because we are capable of compelling ourselves toward ends and should do so. Those ends which it is our duty to have are "our own perfection and the happiness of others."\textsuperscript{25}

Kant regarded God as the absolute. "God is a legislator whose will is one with moral law."\textsuperscript{26}

Kant tried to be as positive as he could in outlining

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 242.


\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 352.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 351.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 357.
man's duties. He spoke constantly of the performance of deity. He seemed to love the stark austerity of the concept of absolute duty. Man's duties he divided into two groups—positive duties to himself and duties to others.

Man's positive duties to himself are developing bodily and mental powers and seeking to increase the purity of his moral consciousness; man's duties to others are benevolence toward others and respect toward others.\(^{27}\)

Kant's ethical categorical imperative is: "Act only in that maxim whereby those canst at the same time will that it would become a universal law."\(^{28}\)

That this imperative leaves no room for expedient action or for change and modification to meet changing circumstance is obvious. Immanuel Kant sought pure knowledge and though it is not possible to determine one's duties on a priori principles, reason can indicate the proper course as far as imperfect humanity can follow.

Kant restates his imperative as follows: "So act as to treat humanity whether in thine own person or in that of any other as an end withal, never as a means only."\(^{29}\)

The authority Kant poses for the categorical imperatives are "universals." Moral categories seem to be based on the

\(^{27}\)Ibid., p. 1.


\(^{29}\)Ibid., p. 188.
postulate "Freedom" which is one of three postulates of which the other two are "Immortality" and "God".

The exact manner in which Kant connects the final validation of moral law to his Noumenal world is vague, but it is obvious that he feels the connection even though it cannot be sensibly proved since the senses are phenomenal.

Universality is perhaps the connection between the two worlds if indeed any exists. Rationality is supposed to be of absolute worth, hence it may lie at the interacting surface.

Kant's transcendental method is given as follows: the preliminary analysis of experience; the regress from experience to its conditions or presuppositions; the progressive or deductive validations of a priori truth.  \(^{30}\)

Kant's argument, logical and complete though it is, still fails to set the inquiring mind at ease as to right and wrong. The real fault of Kant's arguments seems to lie not in his logic but in his "givens". He fails to correctly evaluate the human organism and makes the fatal mistakes of all transcendentalists in separating morals from the human nature.

Santayana

The last transcendental philosophy to be discussed is that of George Santayana. His philosophy is interesting in that he is a product of modern life and presents the absolutist's viewpoint in a modern setting. Santayana, from the

\(^{30}\)Ibid.
first, shows some characteristics of a desire to retreat from reality whenever it seems possible, and his ethics will reveal this tendency as has his secluded life of late years.

Santayana is a moral philosopher by choice. "Moral philosophy is ... my chosen subject."  

His moral philosophy is essentially Greek in nature and is opposed to Kant and to orthodox religious theories.

Santayana is concerned chiefly with "the attainment through free and conscious effort of intrinsically satisfying goods within a lifetime bounded by the natural limits of birth and death."  

That he is a transcendentalist is evident in that he sees a "realm of timeless universals distinct from the realm of evanescent and contingent flux of material particulars encountered in action."  

His tendency toward retreat is clearly shown in that he insists on what has been called the "feminine virtue" of docility or plasticity in habit. Sacrifice seems the desirable course when faced with demands difficult to evade. Santayana believes that the attainment of happiness can best be achieved through reason and that ultimate peace may be assured through resignation and insight.

The right course, therefore, is to sacrifice to demand

32Ibid.  
33Ibid.
and bow to power. Happiness is the real purpose of life and it can be attained by contemplation and insight. Morality is never objective, but purely imaginative.

Santayana feels the reality exists in certain "essences" which are apart from their eventual realization in matters of fact. "Progress is wholly moral and signifies improvement or approach to perfection in some specific direction." 34

Such a negative attitude toward action can hardly be considered to be of help in meeting the problems of a novel, precarious existence.

34 P. A. Schlipp, The Philosophy of George Santayana, p. 499.
CHAPTER III

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE MODERN PHILOSOPHERS

Schiller

The first of the modern philosophers to be discussed is Schiller. He will reveal to some extent the shift from the methods of philosophy of the transcendentalists to the scientific bent of the modernists. In Schiller also we see the shift from the tendency to regard the nature of man as a hindrance to moral activity to that nature as the very measure of conduct. He is fond of quoting Protagoras' maxim "man is the measure of all things." Further evidence of his viewpoint is the fact that he calls his whole system of philosophy "Humanism."

Schiller, in substance, must be classed with those philosophers who regard the eventual measure of moral conduct to be in the consideration of the consequences to man of such conduct.

This double aspect of human life, however, personal and social, generates a large number of problems and demands continual adjustment of the most various kinds. In general terms, a man must learn to take account in his actions not only of his own welfare but also that of others, and of a multitude of social organizations with which he is connected, by which he is affected, and in which he is interested.2

1 F. C. S. Schiller, Our Human Truths, p. 4.
2 Ibid., p. 195.
Schiller's view of the absolutist type of morals is clearly shown by the following:

... Kant will declare that there is nothing good but the good will, and that the good will is enough. It would seem to follow that a well-meaning fool may be worthy of our highest respect, however pernicious may be the consequences of his acts.\(^3\)

Again he discounts the value of theological rules or ethics in helping man to solve his specific problems as follows:

But unfortunately the method of casuistry does not solve the problem of solving cases rightly. However detailed you make the supplementary rules which eke out your code you cannot foresee everything. You still encounter special cases which elude you. You can get no guarantee that the infinite particularity of the case will not in the end defeat your rule.\(^4\)

Schiller believes that all absolutists try to solve the innumerable variety of specific problems either by an infinite number of a priori rules which lead to absurdity or by trying to abstract the matter to the point that it has no connection at all with the human problem. He regards Kant's "categorical imperative" as a typical example of a "craven policy."\(^5\)

This effort, that of casuistry, is an attempt to forecast the circumstance of all the novel and varied events that might occur. Worse still it is at best a palpable attempt to see the future as a repetition of the past only instead of recognizing the function of creativeness.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 195. \(^4\)Ibid., p. 197. \(^5\)Ibid., p. 198.
Schiller owes much of his ethics to Darwin and Spencer, although he freely departs from the details of their ethics. He owes to Darwin the idea of evolution, of course, and to Spencer the idea that "principles of right conduct [might be] based upon the nature of existence."  

Schiller regards man as a successful animal, biologically speaking, else man would have long ago disappeared from the earth. He is thus constrained to conduct himself in such a manner as to preserve the species or else he will suffer extinction. All human action, according to Schiller, is dependent upon this biological necessity. Indeed, on such a foundation the whole psychology of the individual must be based. "All that we do [he says] either individually or collectively must in the last resort reckon with the biological necessity of achieving adaptation between man and his conditions of life in one way or another."  

He takes his point of departure for a study of moral conduct in the conditions of human life. 

The actual adaptation of human nature to the conditions of human life will, therefore, furnish a good starting point for the theory of human behaviour and the study of ethical ideals. It is the natural starting point for all ethics, and Humanism is keenly aware of this. 

Action, or rather reaction, is the role of man and he uses and must be understood in terms of all his manifold

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6 F. C. S. Schiller, Must Philosophers Disagree?, p. 131. 
7 F. C. S. Schiller, Our Human Truths, p. 189. 
8 Ibid., p. 180.
culpabilities. Against a precarious world no source of na-
tural strength or vitality may be dismissed as of no value. Indeed, to split human nature into independent faculties which cannot cooperate for the good of the organism is a gross misunderstanding of all that is vital in men. Likewise is condemned an effort to split human life into theory and activity, contemplation from activity.  

We will see in Dewey later on a parallel assertion that one cannot divide activity into the "inner" and "outer," and show how this assertion, while purporting to explain the appeal of Kantian ethics is probably equivalent to a wholehearted approval of a pure consequences theory.

Schiller relates all knowledge to the elements of human nature and refuses to allow "pure" ethics, "pure" mathematics or indeed, "pure" anything. All of man's activity of whatever type is to be conceived is relative to his equipment. All of it he uses to live successfully a "life he feels to be worth living."

All laws of science, jurisprudence, morals or whatever, must be plastic and capable of being reworked to meet new conditions and specific situations and have no meaning outside their relation to this kind of specific case. Any which become rigid will be discarded because if we attempt to apply it in its rigidity, we will create ridiculous situations of warped application. Man will be set up against his own nature.

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9Ibid., p. 191.  10Ibid., p. 195.
In this manner, that of handling morals in the concrete, they will be rescued from "stupid rigourism and empty formalism."\textsuperscript{11}

Schiller may be regarded as important because he asserts the worth of human nature rather than deploring it, and because he is willing to test any law by referring it to the concrete. Its human worth is its only worth, and it has no authority outside its connection with the biological facts of human existence. His reliance on human intelligence working to criticise experience in the solution of moral problems is hopeful indeed, and bids fair for the valuable future of man.

James

Dewey has classified moral philosophies as those stressing utility as a means of right conduct.\textsuperscript{12} Immanuel Kant is a fine example of the "attitude" group as we have mentioned in this work. Over and against Kant, we may call John Stuart Mill a utilitarian philosopher. William James was profoundly influenced by John Stuart Mill and greatly admired him. In fact, he dedicated his great work, \textit{Pragmatism}, to Mill whom he regarded as a potential leader of the pragmatic movement were he alive.\textsuperscript{13}

It has not been easy to write a systematic account of James' moral philosophy in that we are unable to find that he dealt with morals exclusively or specifically in any given

\textsuperscript{13}William James, \textit{Pragmatism}, dedication.
work. He seemed most interested in the validation of truth. That he considered that the "true" and the "right" were subject to the same sort of validation is obvious however, so it has been the policy of the writer to use whatever he could find which appeared applicable. Indeed, he seems to have left for Dewey the job of presenting the ethics of modern philosophy. He says: "The ethical changes [of perspective] it seems to me are beautifully made evident in Professor Dewey's series of articles . . . ."\textsuperscript{14}

That James leans strongly toward the views of Mill is made obvious in the passage:

"The true," to put it very briefly is only the expedient in the way of our thinking just as the right is only the expedient in the way of our behaving . . . expedient in the long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all experience in sight won't necessarily meet all further experiences equally satisfactorily.\textsuperscript{16}

He invokes the element of intelligence in morals by the further statement; "Experience, as we know, has ways of boiling over and making us correct our present formulas."\textsuperscript{16} So it is the function of intelligence to correct and extend our activity to account for any difficulties which may be manifested, either foreseen or accidental. Later, in Dewey, we shall see the role of intelligence even more clearly.

At another time, he allied himself with the consequences

\textsuperscript{14}James, \textit{The Meaning of Truth}, p. 122.  \textsuperscript{15}ibid., p. vii.

\textsuperscript{16}James, \textit{Pragmatism}, p. 222.
theory of validation of "right" by stating that there was nothing in experience or the scriptures which would indicate any value to good intentions. 17

On the other hand, James did ascribe value to character and in his character one will find a strong leaning to the standpoint that some indication of the intents of activity is to be found there. To James, consciousness was a "stream-like" affair in that it is not made up of assignable parts as a chain is—or even a rope. Character is the result of the present state of consciousness and its aspiration and lies in the direction one takes toward assimilating those vague and obscure tendencies of action into habits.

This type of conscious activity will surely grant to purpose at least some moral approbation if that purpose results in activity which may be recognized as moral. Thereby, even in the case presented wherein a man saves another from a fatal accident only for the fiendish purpose of murdering him himself later on, we find no morality in the first act or its consequences because the intention was from the first a "wrong" one. That James would be sure to approve such an interpretation can be shown by the following quotation taken from a discussion on activity: "Generally speaking, the onlooker, with his wider field of vision regards the ultimate outcome of an activity as what it is more really doing." 18

17 James, quoted in John W. Ritchie, Biology and Human Affairs, p. 696.
18 James, Principles of Psychology, II, 549.
James contended that all values and meanings were created by human intelligence. Hence, moral values and religious values were creatures and instruments of man.

At any rate you must all be ready now to judge the religious life by its results exclusively and I shall assume that the bugaboo of morbid origin will scandalize your piety no more. Every religious phenomenon has its history and its derivation from natural antecedents.\(^{19}\)

Raw phenomenon to James was neither true nor false, right nor wrong. It began to have meaning only as it was experienced by man and began to show some definable difference in results. If no difference in activity resulted from one description of reality or another, then the two really mean the same. Moreover, of two theories, equally descriptive of facts, the one showing the most human qualities is preferable.\(^{20}\)

Indeed, even granting there could be right or wrong known intuitively, it would have to be interpreted according to human standards by the human animal. As James says, suppose there were prehuman standards "we ought to follow, the only guarantee that we shall in fact follow them must lie in our human equipment."\(^{21}\)

Again granting the existence of eternal prohibitions, we must all admit that man does not follow them.

Meywaness is here, in spite of the eternal prohibitions and the existence of any amount of reality

\(^{19}\)James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 21.


\(^{21}\)Ibid., p. 71.
ante rem is no warrant against unlimited error in rebus being incurred. The only real guarantee against licentious thinking is the circumspection of experience itself which gets us sick of concrete errors, whether they be trans-empirical reality or not. 22

That there was in William James a spiritualistic tendency, there can be no doubt. His father, Henry James, was a moral idealist and some writers prefer to think that James was profoundly guided by his father. 23 Those who profess to see James as a transcendentalist in morals seek to substantiate their beliefs chiefly in quoting from his earlier works and from the letters of his youth. James felt the great difficulty of ethical philosophy and felt that he had no "natural bent" for moralistic philosophy. He sought to develop an interest in moral philosophy and must never have entirely succeeded in view of the scarcity of material directly and specifically relating to morals in his work. 24

James is especially open to misinterpretation in that he attempts to make his writings clear and readable to a wide variety of readers, and to give ample consideration to all views. He has regretted his offering the "olive branch" to his detractors and is significant that the offering of the branch was in a moral discussion. In it he was granting the usefulness of certain beliefs in the absolute by recognizing the worth of "moral holidays." He explained that he failed

22 Ibid., p. 72.
23 H. M. Kallen, editor, In Commemoration of William James, p. 126.
24 Ibid., p. 130.
to believe in the absolute himself but secured for those who need them the luxury of the "moral holiday." His offering was spurned and misinterpreted so he says, and much of his conciliation effort used against him. 25 So, it seems, is he often taken advantage of—possibly by this writer. He later goes on to assert that "the absolute is true in no way then" 26 which statement definitely leads him away from the monism of the Intuitionists.

James constantly recognized the fact that some elements of the intuitionists school of morals held when subjected to the tests of radical empiricism.

In the last chapter of a recent work I have sought to prove in a general way the existence, in our thought, of relations which do not merely repeat the couplings of experience. Our ideals have certainly many sources. They are not all explicable as signifying corporeal pleasures to be gained, and pains to be escaped. And for having so constantly perceived this psychological fact, we must applaud the intuitionist school. 27

Again, however, he seems to be pointing out the fact that it is just this quality which holds in experience that constitutes the valuable in the intuitionist school. It is far from a support of the transcendental attitude theory of morals and merely a recognition of elements which do make an applicable difference in human conduct and are true just in so far as they meet this test and that no grounds exist to justify further authority to them.

25 James, Meaning of Truth, Preface. 26 Ibid., p. v.

27 The Will to Believe, quoted in H. M. Kallen, editor, In Commemoration of William James, p. 137.
That this interpretation seems warrantable is shown by
the quotation from the same source given below.

The moment we take a steady look at the question,
we see not only that without a claim actually made by
some concrete person there can be no obligation, but
that there is some obligation wherever there is a claim.
Claim and obligation are, in fact, coextensive terms;
they cover each other exactly. Our ordinary attitude of
regarding ourselves as subject to an overarching system
of moral relations, true "in themselves," is therefore
either an out-and-out superstition, or else it must be
treated as a merely provisional abstraction from that
real Thinker in whose actual demand upon us to think as
he does our obligation must be ultimately based. In a
theistic-ethical philosophy that thinker in question is,
of course, the Deity to whom the existence of the uni-
verse is due.\textsuperscript{28}

The language he uses below is hardly that of a Kantian:

\begin{quote}
Since everything which is demanded is by that fact
a good, must not the guiding principle for ethical phi-
losophy (since all demands conjointly cannot be satisfied
in this poor world) be simply to satisfy at all times as
many demands as we can? That act must be the best act,
accordingly, which makes for the best whole, in the sense
of awakening the least sum of dissatisfactions. \ldots
ideals must be written highest which prevail at the least
cost. \ldots
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{29}

These obligations and duties seem hardly to exist over
and beyond human experience. It is, indeed, the social ex-
istence of men that makes their demands assertable at all.

Even those who try hardest to assign any defense of the
absolute to James have in the end to admit his pluralistic
morals if only to claim that he so emphasizes them to coun-
teract a "monistic peril coming from Hegel."\textsuperscript{30}

Perhaps the greatest contribution James made to morals

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 137. \textsuperscript{29}Ibid., pp. 137-138.

\textsuperscript{30}Kallen, op. cit., p. 138.
is made in his Principles of Psychology in which he discusses the will and the development of character.

James regards the basic function of free will to lie not so much in what one will choose to do as in what one should now resolve to become. He defines as the "ethical energy par excellence is to go farther and choose which interest out of several, equally coercive, shall be supreme." 31

One's entire life lies thus time and again in balance for he is, in even moral decision, faced with the problem of what he shall become. As James says:

The issue here is of the utmost pregnancy, for it decides a man's entire career. When he debates, Shall I commit this crime? choose that profession? accept that office, or marry this fortune?--his choice really lies between one of several equally possible future Characters. 32

The development of character lies then in the exercise of the will. The fundamental function of it is the directing of attention according to James. The conception of the will and the development of character is brought out in the following problem:

What constitutes the difficulty for a man laboring under an unwise passion of acting as if the passion were unwise? Certainly there is no physical difficulty. It is as easy physically to avoid a fight as to begin one, to pocket one's money as to squander it on one's cuppitudes, to walk away from as towards a coquette's door. The difficulty is mental; it is that of getting the idea of the wise action to stay before our mind at all. 33

The difficulty seems to lie in directing the attention

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31 James, Principles of Psychology, I, 288.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., II, 562-563.
to the wise, or deliberate, course of action at all. The passion is so strongly tended toward one point, that is, the interest is so strongly centered there that no other idea—least of all one which might disparage the passion's end—can force its way in. Once even a consent can be obtained even for consideration of deliberate ends, it is the problem to hold it there against the forces of the passion to dismiss it. Once our consent is gained a "motor volition" occurs and the body moves to accomplish the reconsidered end. The point is that wherever the right end is not an impulsive one, the entire intellectual machinery is allied to force out any thought of interests which might prove inimical to the carrying out of the impulsive desire.34

James, at length, describes the excuses used by the potential wrong-doer to justify his impulsive act and to force consideration of the fundamental fact that he is becoming a drunkard from the mind. Once this fact is seen and accepted, it proves to be the very act that saves the drunkard from a life as such, for the body cooperates fully once the attention fills the whole mind.35

James goes on to assert that what finally happens is that some course of action as it becomes action gains consent of our will. This consent is a matter of our relation to life. It concerns our caring for things, wanting them, et cetera.

34Ibid., p. 565. 35Ibid.
Beyond this standard he says, right has no meaning and we can never know what it means beyond that.\textsuperscript{36}

Since human conduct depends on the function of the will controlling the passions and the will a development of choice from things we desire, it is obvious moral standards must be based not on transcendental standards, but upon human nature itself. We are then led to a utilitarian sort of ethics modified to some extent from Mill but yet tending most strongly in that direction.

William James may have doubted himself as a moral philosopher, but his psychology should be studied by every student of ethics. His humanistic, kindly attitude possibly made him an easy target for misinterpretation and criticism, yet one cannot help but gain in feeling the warmth of his sincerity and his desire to make all intellectual achievement available for the use of men as they struggle together in this world.

Dewey

In John Dewey's philosophy, we find a novel approach to the problem of morals. Dewey's philosophy is hopeful, stimulating and gives one a sense of optimism. Perhaps this happy result is chiefly due to the fact that wherein the absolutist moral code decry most of the more energizing elements of human nature, Dewey's morals code considers these very elements as the basic point of departure.

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 569.
We find that all transcendentalists fear impulse—some even to the extent of regarding the human being as innately "bad." This is an extreme, certainly, but even at the other extreme the transcendentalist merely passively accepts human nature as an unavoidable hindrance to moral conduct. Dewey, on the other hand sees in impulse neither good nor bad, but simply possibilities. Impulse, properly sublimed, becomes part and parcel of the creative act.

Perhaps at the very root of absolutist doctrine is a desire to confine human nature. The variety and originality of man seems to have been the despair of moral philosophers until the time of William James. It is in this diversity that all progress, moral and otherwise, lies. Fear of the diverse possibilities of the human organism has led to a desire for static and never changing patterns which had led on to frustration in practice. Indeed, whenever activity was most intense and diverse, conventional morals have been divorced from such activity and it is just such a situation which we face at this moment.

It is this fear of the novel and varied that makes men seek a foolproof pattern by which all activity can be measured. The failure of any such pattern to solve human problems is decided from the start. Philosophers have long tried to eliminate or at least subjugate human nature and impose "reason" which must be derived, not in, but beyond, human nature. Dewey, on the other hand, turns to "intelligence," which is
in some sense a derivative of impulse, as the guide for human conduct. This recognition of that which is empirically undeniable in our natures gives an optimistic glow to his philosophy rather than the sense of futility so often left by other philosophies.

To Dewey, right conduct has two obvious aspects:

On the one hand it is a life of purpose. It implies thought and feeling, ideals and motives, valuation and choice. These processes are to be studied by psychological methods. On the other hand, conduct has its outward side. It has relations to nature and especially to human society.

Again:

... to study choice as affected by the rights of others and to judge it as right or wrong by this standard is ethics.

There is none of the transcendentalist in the conception of judging right and wrong simply and only as it affects the rights of others.

Perhaps the most practical way to present Dewey's answer to the problem of right and wrong is to begin with his psychology of conduct. In this psychology, we are introduced to human nature in a most empirically satisfying way. Therein we shall find a way to a fuller understanding of his ethics.

Dewey introduces his psychology of moral conduct by discussing habits. He justifies this apparent logical misplacement of the subject by contending that "impulses while first

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38 Dewey and Tufts, Ethics, p. 2. 39 Ibid., p. 3.
in time are never primary in fact; they are secondary and
dependent.\textsuperscript{40} Further discussion will clarify this statement.

Dewey uses the word "habit" in a rather unusual sense.
"Habit" to Dewey is never routine and does not involve repe-
tition. In fact, his use makes the word "habit" nearly the
same as "disposition" or "attitude". This use relieves the
word of its connotations of restriction and mechanical activ-
ity and frees it for use in describing a tendency toward a
certain end. Habits become arts. They involve interaction
with environment. Thus breathing, though a function, may be
compared to habit, and involves not only beings but the atmos-
phere.

Habits actually are demands for a certain kind of activ-
ity. To understand this fully, it is necessary to turn to
bad habits such as excessive drinking. There it is easier to
see the "pre-disposition" quality of habit at work. No one
wants to believe that he drinks beyond sensible limits be-
cause he desires to do so. He is willing only to believe
that he is in the throes of a "bad habit." This extreme in-
stance of habit simply shows the primacy of all habit and
brings to light the supremacy with which habit sustains itself
and seeks its particular activity. Habits are tools for activ-
ity—ways for doing things. We enable ourselves to walk,
talk, carry on a multitude of daily affairs strictly as a

\textsuperscript{40} Dewey, \textit{Human Nature and Conduct}, p. 89.
result of forming habits and doing so without conscious direction on our part. 41

Habits, then, must be considered in light of the urgency with which they act. They are beyond the control of conscious direction and to this extent limit and circumscribe our activity. They must be considered as dispositions only as the conception of pre-disposition enters into the matter.

The importance of habit in our activity must be recognized before we can understand why we act as we do. Habit must be understood as having been acquired and influenced by prior activity. It is ready to act and has a tendency to act in a certain direction. It is in this broad usage that the term "habit" is most meaningful.

Impulses and instincts have long been ignored in modern psychology, but now they are taking their rightful place. However, when psychology tries to explain all human activity in terms of native tendencies, the explanation becomes far-fetched. 42 It must be explained that the word "instinct" is made synonymous with "impulse" to relieve it of the idea that the native tendency is definitely organized and established. Though the native tendency is there and is strong and active indeed, it is not organized in that its meaning or the course of its activity is determined. While impulses are certainly present before any learned activity can take place and are to

41 Ibid., p. 25. 42 Ibid., pp. 90-91.
this extent primary they are always secondary in that they are controlled and directed by this environment. There are three possibilities of impulses; they may be simply blind discharges in which case the activity will be undirected and to no end, and will have the essences of the primitive; they may be sublimated and turned to useful activity, such as anger being sublimated to become the driving force in obtaining justice for the oppressed or in rectifying conditions to the betterment of under-privileged people; the impulses may be inhibited—prevented from expressions—in which case since emotional energy is no more destructible than the physical energy, they are merely hidden where, undirected by conscious control they fester and corrupt until psychiatric disorders are obvious. The pathological psychic cases are examples of impulse inhibited. 43

That meaning of natural impulse is acquired may be amply demonstrated in history. Despite the fact that the native equipment is much the same in man the world over, he has sublimated it to such a varying degree that cultural institutions over the world vary to all extremes. Possibly somewhere on earth, nearly every type of conduct has at some time or another been held in esteem by some group of people. It has been the varied environing conditions with which natural impulse has interacted that has made the differences in cultural patterns today.

43 Ibid., pp. 89-94.
Dewey says that it is in the "unformed activities of childhood and youth" that our idealization of childhood finds its ground. Life, then, is active without drudgery and habits are not restraining but expanding. This means that by an intricate combination of habit and impulse a reconstruction of experience may be achieved and progress may be made. Thus this primitive man in us becomes the very means, when carefully balanced with habit, for a more moral conduct rather than the despair of it.

It is just in these fields, morals and religion, that we most need intelligent direction of habit and impulse that we are forced by society to inhibit impulse and restrain it by creating inflexible habit. This is a result of some kind of carry-over from early habits and is blocking our progress in those very fields where progress is most effective for man's welfare.

In summing up the importance of instructive action, Dewey has this to say:

Man can progress as beasts cannot, precisely because he has so many "instincts" that they cut across one another, so that the most serviceable actions must be "learned." In learning habits it is possible for man to learn the habit of learning. Then betterment becomes a conscious principle of life.45

Given the driving action of impulses and the channeling influence of habit, we come to the arbitrator-intelligence.

44 Ibid., p. 99.
It must be remembered that habits are of two orders. First habits are by nature restraining in that they fix the limits of action—determine the course of action so to speak. Habits are matters of efficiency in gaining ends and in so far are restraints. However, habits are a negative restraint because they indicate positive activity. Our fields of endeavor can be counted by the number and variety of our habits. The more the habits, the more adaptable to use and the less restraint any one will have. Habits, in so far as they accomplish for us the feats of remembering, observing, foreseeing and judging, take the place of a mind or soul which many philosophers place in the human body to take care of these functions.

We have then, on the one hand, a group of rather staid, circumscribed set of habits and on the other a chaotic, confused set of impulses. Neither of these does Dewey consider as capable of "knowing." Knowing is finally possible in the intelligent activity that is the derivative of the fine, deliberate balance between habit, as described, and impulse.

Deliberation is the calm appraisal of various possible actions in imagination instead of in overt action. As they exist in imagination they may always be called back and changed for better activity without harming the individual. Unintelligent action on the other hand proceeds on impulses guided only by prior fixed habits which may not be at all applicable to the given situation. Choice, further, is never
made in indifference. It is only the intelligently picked course of action among many desirable ones. If only one course is desirable then no real choice exists, and intelligence is not exhibited.

The concluding point of the fine balance of impulse and habit in intelligence is best described by Dewey. In explaining the answer to the old dispute of the desirable place of desire and reason in conduct, he has this to say:

"Reason" as a noun signifies the happy cooperation of a multitude of dispositions, such as sympathy, curiosity, exploration, experimentation, frankness, pursuit (to follow things through), circumspection (to look about at the context). The elaborate systems of science are born not of reason but of impulses at first slight and flickering; impulses to handle, move about, to hunt, to uncover, to mix things separated and divide things combined, to talk and to listen. Method is their effectual organization into continuous dispositions of inquiry, development and testing. It occurs after these acts and because of their consequences.46

Having discussed Dewey's psychology of conduct, we are now better prepared to proceed to answer the question, "What has Dewey contributed to the evolution of the moral concept?" We can see much that will characterize his contribution. We shall expect to find that:

1. Aims will never be externally composed and a priori principles as such will not be invoked. Aims will be "ends in view" and with their accomplishment will become "means" to further aims.

2. "Right" will be manifested in activity deeply embedded in human needs and desires.

3. "Right" will be evaluated in activity and not be compared with external rules, absolute in principles.

in so far as these are outside human nature.

4. "Right" conduct will grow out of deliberation to absolve impasse created by the presentation of a variety of possible activities.

5. Intelligence will be the judge as well as the result of activity when possible courses of action and their consequences are wrought out in imagination prior to overt action.

6. "Wrong" will exist just to the extent that the above conditions are not present in activity.

The nature of aims, according to Dewey are:

... ends objectives, of conduct are those foreseen consequences which influence present deliberation and which finally bring it to rest by furnishing an adequate stimulus to overt action. Consequently ends arise and function within action. They are not, as current theories too often imply, things lying beyond activity at which the latter is directed. They are not strictly speaking ends or termini of action at all. They are terminals of deliberation and so turning points in activity.47

Again: "In empirical fact perceptions of ends are projections of possible consequences; they are ends in view."48

Such statements are of course, in direct contrast to the conception of "ideals" as something more than mere human instruments. "Ideals," such as self-realization, are external perfect standards which we ought to aim at whether we do or not.

This latter conception was expelled from scientific thought during the intellectual revolution of the seventeenth century but since, as far as morals are concerned, we are not


logical but believe according to tradition, ends outside human conduct were made a basic part of orthodox moral theory. 49

The failure of such aims when invoked in novel situations are obvious when we consider the rationalization necessary to twist them into any workable meaning. Being something for which we ought to act and not expressions of intelligent thought such aims limit intelligence—indeed even deny its existence. 50

Aims outside human experience in addition to inhibiting intelligent activity stimulate the reliance on pure habit as a guide for conduct thereby actually destroying the "right" in an act by removing that intelligent choice which is the arbiter of "rightness." The situation instead of stimulating deliberation becomes indifferent and since no choice is possible no sense of rightness or wrongness will be felt. Activity is actually the "making" or "becoming" of a type of character. When ends are truly a part of activity, deliberation is direct decision as to what type of character is desired and given supremacy. 51

True ends, then, are ends only in the sense that they are focusing points toward which activity will proceed and any question of ends soon becomes a question of means as activity moves along. 52

We can examine this question of good intentions by our conception of ends also. Dewey does not deny the value of motives. Rather, he merely fails to fall into the ridiculous position of denying that consequences are of no importance in evaluating activity. Good intention, meaning well, is valuable in so far as it leads to activity that may be valuable. That the desired end is reached is not the final determination but activity toward an end will determine the value of meaning well. In this war, we escape the sentimental futility of denying responsibility of consequences and at the same time the brutal standard by which all acts are measured by arbitrary consequences.

In the case of a man trying to save another from death by drowning, we give hearty approbation for the effort even if it fails. 53

Obviously, the approbation we feel is for the activity involved as an indication of the good intention. Indeed, the activity is testimony for the good intention.

That "right" conduct is manifest in activity deeply embedded in human needs and desires may be shown by the following quotation relating to moral experience. "Moral experience is a matter of conduct, behavior; that is, of activities which are called out by ideas of worth, the desirability of results." 54 Moreover, problems of right conduct are products of situations

53 Ibid., p. 245. 54 Ibid., p. 209.
in which one must consider relations of meanings, values, choices, desires, attitudes, et cetera. Indeed, morality is so entirely a product of man that motives, when they do not affect activity itself, leave no effect on morality. 55

Right is so closely tied up in human affairs that all its meanings lie in satisfying experiences in human life resulting in welfare and happiness. Right is often a choice between many desirable things and it is the function of intelligence acting in imagination to evaluate and choose the best course. Right could never be the same at any one moment as it was before, because as we have seen in our discussion of psychology, the organism and environment are never in the same relation. Where right could be mere exact repetition, there would be no consciousness of either right or wrong.

It is true that since experience means social interaction and our moral code is tied up in experience that we can set forth excellent conditions for social welfare. Since our own determination of moral conduct will consist of extending our experiences to give greater meaning to our activity, we obviously act to give the same meaning to welfare of others. Others are selves also and their moral conduct will be manifest in activity. That which liberates and renders flexible the habits and impulses of man will react to the good of all and all social reforms will be so evaluated. Activities are broadened by a variety of contacts and social experience so

the individual concept of right will in so far be rendered more flexible as social life is fastened. Likewise will social life expand as experiences liberate activity. In evaluating conduct according to its results in activity, Dewey steps widely away from the transcendentalists. Indeed the transcendentalist is usually forced into contradicting himself in his effort to logically connect a "universal" which was the very negation of experience with some sort of moral education which would instruct one as to proper conduct in some special cases. He did so by requiring that one decide whether his own act could logically and beneficially be considered as a "universal." The contradiction lies in the violation of Kant's avowed intention, that is, to base moral decision on something outside consequence. Yet the very act of considering whether one's own act could serve as a universal is a necessary evaluation of the consequences of that act.56

It must not be supposed that Dewey's moral theory is mere repetition of the utilitarian theory. The point is not the judgment of consequences alone, but a judgment of the overt activity which may fail to yield final consequences by which the utilitarian would judge. Thus purpose or intention has a very definite and real part to play in moral activity. The desired or intended end may never come to pass if physical conditions intervene—or indeed new choices—but the activity that will result from purposes will be the characterization

of the purposes. How else could they become known or be more
than shallow excuses? We must constantly remember that the
very power of intelligence is that it is not fixed but capable
of modification and redirection. This is the ground for judg-
ing consequences not directly foreseen. 57

We must now consider the role played by deliberation and
intelligence in morality. Deliberation, as we have already
said, is the "dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various
competing possible lines of action." 58 Deliberation itself is
an intelligent activity precisely because it is retrievable.
Overt action on the other hand may not be called back nor its
consequences rubbed out. Deliberation considers and weighs
possible lines of action performed in the imagination and de-
liberation ends only when the block to acting that first called
it into play is dissolved by the choice of possible lines of
action that stimulates the organism to action again.

Deliberation is also invoked when many lines of action
are apparently equally desirable. Indeed, to the intelligent
man this apparent multiplicity of desirable means and ends may
be a warning. As Dewey says, "... every day experience in-
forms us that finding satisfaction in a thing may be a warning,
a summons to be on the lookout for consequences." 59

57 Dewey and Tufts, op. cit., p. 261.
Again:

Only dogmatism can suppose that serious moral conflict is between something clearly bad and something known to be good, and that uncertainty lies wholly in the will of the one choosing. Most conflicts of importance are conflicts between those things which are or have been satisfying—not between good and evil.60

In the making of such choices lies the function of deliberation and intelligence. Intelligence is actually the only answer to the traditional moralist's search for a rule-of-thumb law which would determine all moral conduct at a glance and in a foolproof manner. It is because the human is an intelligent creative animal that no such rule could possibly work. Static conditions might be served by such a rule but this is a novel world. Hence, any science of morals must be a growing science if it is to exist at all. Novelty need not mean uncertainty in the light of intelligence. Intelligence enables one to revise, adapt, expand and alter rules as the need arises. Our quest shall be a thing of continuous and vital readaptation.

In discussing intelligence in morals, we are ready to discuss motive and intention. Both of these words imply foresight, intent and purpose, and must not be thought of as blind and merely impulsive. Dewey's use of the word and motive and intention are governed by the following statement:

Intention and motive are on the same moral level. Intention is the outcome foreseen and wanted; motive, this outcome as foreseen and wanted. But the voluntary

60 Ibid., pp. 264-265.
act as such, is an outcome, forethought and desired and hence attempted. 61

Men have been taught that there are many feelings and attitudes which are worthwhile of themselves and to evaluate them by results would be crude and impertinent. These feelings have been held sacred and as such wholly good and desirable regardless of their results. Over and against such philosophy have been the utilitarians whose contention has been that the only possible evaluation of any act is in the consequences. In light of the discussion and quotation in the previous paragraph it is obvious that Dewey would hold the Utilitarian group entirely correct, and he does: "It is true . . . that if motives are good or bad it is on account of their results. 62

He goes further to say that to teach that feelings are worthwhile in and of themselves is to lead to "hypocrisy and weakened moral fibre." 63

The fundamental truth of morals is that the moral qualities of impulses depend on their results no matter how noble they may feel.

Dewey also says that there is value in the converse of the above statement. Herein lies the answer to those who contend his moral code is coldly intelligent, whereas actually morals are full of warm feeling. Intelligence to Dewey is

61Dewey and Tufts, op. cit., p. 250.
62Ibid., p. 251.
63Ibid., p. 252.
never cold since it is the creature of impulses and habits. Here is the source of the impelling force of motive and intention and it is in this warm and vital quality of human nature that motive and intention must be studied.

"Active tendencies, personal attitudes, are thus in the end the determining causes of our having certain intentions in mind, as well as the causes of their active or moving influence. ... motives make intentions."\(^64\)

Since our present interests control our memories, it is very important to consider just how this should happen. By limiting our interests to special fields we can incline ourselves to "forget" or just fail to consider many things which are pertinent to action in any given situation. It is in this situation that we find much of the type of thinking that causes men to beg "good intentions" when their overt acts bring bad results. Their apparent surprise at certain consequences may be real enough because they limited their interests at the present so as to recall only certain things and they stimulate only certain types of consideration. Hence, by narrowing interest to certain channels unpleasant possible results need not even be considered in the process--or lack of it--of deliberation. Hence the apparent sincerity of the wail of good intentions.

Here we have the role of character. Dewey says:

\(^64\)Ibid.
Character is that body of active tendencies and interests in the individual which makes him open, ready, warm to certain aims, and callous, cold, blind to others and which accordingly habitually tend to make him acutely aware of and favorable to certain sorts of consequences, and ignorant of, or hostile to other consequences."

Remembering how the personality is formed by an intelligent readjustment of impulses and habits we easily see the development of character as a constant choice, a continued selection of modes of conduct through modification.

Having covered some of the main features of Dewey's moral code, we are ready to conclude modern philosophies. Dewey's contribution is certainly the highest development of the philosophical method called critical empiricism.

Dewey has said:

There is in the character of human experience no index hand pointing to agnostic conclusions, but rather a growing progressive self-disclosure of nature itself. The failures of philosophy have come from lack of confidence in the directive powers that inhere in experience if men have but the wit and courage to follow them.

This statement, optimistic and challenging, is certainly applicable in moral philosophy. By its guidance we may establish a new order of social life through constant criticism and reconstruction keep moral conduct in pace as we create new worlds.

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65 Ibid., p. 255.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the second chapter the development of the moral concept was discussed in its relation to man's knowledge of nature. Morality was said to reflect man's attempt to stabilize the universe as he understood it. In early group life morality was chiefly vested in custom and tradition. Early man's knowledge of the workings of nature was slight and he exhibited this by his superstitious beliefs in the mysterious. His gods were many and conflicting as were his ideas of reality. Later as man began to feel some confidence in his understanding of his environment, he began to see its unity and to contemplate on the likenesses rather than the diversities. It is during this period that we find the great transcendental philosophers coming on the scene. Contributing to the absolutistic view of the universe was the fact that customs and traditions of early group life were to some extent being discarded. It became necessary then, to set up more general and authoritative rules of conduct in order to relate the individual to the group. This effort is quite obvious in transcendentalism.

As knowledge led not to simplicity as man had expected, but to complexity, we find a corresponding shift in moral
philosophy. The absolute standards are failing to serve and new guides to conduct are being sought. This pluralistic tendency is well marked in the group discussed in the chapter on modern philosophy.

The transcendentalist group of philosophers set up moral standards outside and apart from human nature. Indeed, human nature with its vagaries was deplored rather than considered a point of departure for studying ethics. Right was right and ought to be recognized by its own inherent authority. It was not subject to the test of its use nor by the good or evil resulting to man. Indeed, it was of another world completely inaccessible as such, and to be approached, copied, or corresponded to rather than attained. Right was to be regarded for its inherent value and ought to be implicitly obeyed even if the result to human life was disastrous.

No thought was given to the understanding of man's desires and wishes, for these human frailties were considered the very things which kept man away from goodness. A knowledge of the absolute right might be approached by intuition. Right was divulged to man through his conscience which, if he exercised it rigorously, would never fail to guide him. This being the case, little could be expected of man except that he follow the dictates of his conscience. Hence, if his conscience were clear, i.e. he meant well, the morality of his act was determined already regardless of the outcomes of that act. This is the school of morals which regards the only measure
of the moral act as the good intention of the doer. It is not surprising, then, that man's everyday life and his moral life take widely separate paths. Different rules of conduct began to apply in every varied phase of conduct and lip service only was paid to conventional morals. Business and political life were especially separated from the restrictions of the church which acted as the arbiter of moral conduct.

It is not in the above mentioned fields alone that the conventional moral agencies have failed to function. In our everyday lives, we prefer the good fellow to the puritan. Indeed, strict attempt to follow conventional morals has led to fanatical and split personality features or to disillusionment. The need for new and more workable ethics became acute and man began to cast about to find them.

If we see the moral concept as a product of evolution, there is evidence that the pure morals philosophic line is gradually petering out. Since Kant, and even in Kant, we find definite, if disavowed, tendencies toward a more realistic conception of human nature. In Santayana we find some considerable evidence of a trend toward the modern concept. The point, it seems to the writer, that must not be lost in regarding this tendency toward modern philosophy as evidence of its continued value is that modern philosophy offers a wide, optimistic, new world for human progress while the transcendental line is a failing one—a casualty of evolution.

The modern philosophers lean strongly toward the consequences theory of determining right and wrong, although with certain reservations. They, especially Dewey and James, base their conclusions on human nature as determined by their understanding of psychology.

Dewey, with particular reference to James' psychology as to development of character, proceeds to develop the theory in an admirably complete manner. Men, he says, depend for social efficiency on the habits they have learned. These habits should not be considered rigid response fixed by mechanical repetition, but more accurately termed tendencies or dispositions. He reminds us that we consider that bad habits have a compelling influence on conduct strikingly evident to us all, but that we are inclined to ignore the fact that our good habits are also powerful guiding tendencies.

Instinct, on the other hand, refers to the unguided, unlearned impulses men have. Instincts are not finally formed and may be sublimated to varying types of conduct. The idea that instincts cause us to perform certain specified acts he discounts completely. They are, rather, to be regarded as entirely unguided as such and originally tending in no given direction. Anger, as an impulse, may be exhibited in overt activity as violent temper tantrums or again as righteous indignation which acts to thwart or rectify injustice. The

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2 Dewey, Ibid., p. 86.
guiding in this manner is not, then, original with the instinct, but is the function of habit.

Human conduct is then the carefully balanced interaction of habit and conduct and this balance accounts for a great part of our lives. When, however, previously formed habits in the function of directing impulse conflict and present a variety of possible activities, a temporary halt in activity occurs. It is the function of deliberation to resolve this difficulty so that overt activity may continue. Intelligence is the solution of this difficulty in an expedient, valuable manner.

We may with considerable benefit refer to William James here in regard to development of character. It is precisely at this point in activity that actions form habits of resolving problems which is what men call character. The point, it seems, is not so much what we do but what we are becoming. However, a character valuable at any one time is going to remain valuable only in a static situation. It is obvious that we are not living in a static world and so character must be intelligently modified to meet novel situations. This modification lies exactly where the character appeared—in the deliberation which solves problems and results in further activity. Thus, original impulse is sublimated by the guidance of newly formed dispositions and a new character results.

Since it is in character that our intentions have their source, we may examine "good intentions" here. Dewey has escaped the difficulty of placing the measure of morality in the
intention or consequence by contending that the attitude school and the consequence school have fallen into error in separating the two. Each theory, he says, tends to pass into the other and neither apart from the other has any moral quality at all. We may begin the analysis of a voluntary act at whichever end we please, but we are always carried to the other end in order to complete the analysis. The so called distinction between the "inner" and "outer" parts of an act is in reality a distinction between the earlier and later period of its development. 3

We have arrived at the point where activity is temporarily halted by the presentation of new difficulty. The difficulty must be solved so that activity may progress. Solution of the difficulty, in so far as it is intelligent, is the trial in imagination of various courses of action and the selection of that one which seems most valuable. Modification of the original selections may occur in the same way as the selection itself. Further selection will depend on whether the course chosen resulted in activity which was good—that is valuable for further activity. Herein is character being formed and in character lies our intention. Each time a new course is chosen, it is chosen in light of the consequences of previous choices performed either in overt activity or in imagination.

In consequences, then, all moral value seems to lie. The redirection of our activities lies in synthesis of our

3Dewey and Tufts, Ethics, p. 239.
experience and the resulting formation of habits by which impulse is guided. By taking consequences into account, we are enabled to redirect any intention however good it may have felt. We are obliged constantly to avoid restriction of our interests, thereby narrowing the scope of our trial of possible activity in imagination. Here, in the narrowing of interest, lies much of the cause of good intentions which failed of good results. Here also lies the stunting of character by formation of habits so narrow in scope as to allow particularly selfish activity without attending warning of contrary experience.

It is only by constantly measuring our motives by the standard of the results of our activity that we can hope to maintain a realistic, healthy view of the "right" in conduct.

Dewey has shown us the way to a new and workable moral philosophy. Let us set up our ethical standards within the workings of human nature and not in an absolute, transcendental law or "God." We must come to realize that we are living our lives together now, and that for all we know, it is our only life. Let us measure our successes and failures, our right and wrong, by human standards. Let our values be human values derived in the continuous reconstruction of human experience. Too far have we strayed from the teachings of our experience and a critical interpretation of them.

We must come to realize that the solving of difficulties on a certain level by transferring all responsibility from
ourselves to the lap of gods has lost its pragmatic value however much it may have once had. Indeed, we have long taken our thinking only to a certain point and there, realizing the greatness of the problem have seen fit to leave its solution to supernatural forces, thereby absolving ourselves of all responsibility. Even in some realistic minds we find the problem of so great a scope that it was simply dismissed. Huck Finn, on his raft with the negro slave fugitive Jim, was torn by similar doubts. All "good" people he knew had declared it a sin not to report the presence of runaway slaves and Huck supposed it to be one of God's laws to do so. After driving himself in an effort to overcome his feeling that to betray Jim would be an inhuman thing, he finally wrote a letter to Jim's owner.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hands. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide forever, betwixt two things, and I knewed it. I studied for a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll go to hell"--and tore it up. It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming.4

Actually we may see Huck's decision as a triumph over ridiculous customs--an unconscious return to humanity.

We must all of us accept our responsibility as members of a society which has the ability to progress, limited only

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by its own intellectual laziness and which may indeed indulge in a reconstruction of society so that we may have more of the beautiful, valuable and good. "Moral holidays" will be a useful instrument for years, perhaps forever, but we must not expect to solve our problems intelligently by leaving their solutions to supernatural interference.
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