WHAT MAKES RIGHT AND WRONG?

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WHAT MAKES 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

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August, 1946
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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps school teachers more than any other group of people are called upon to distinguish between right and wrong, even more than clergymen, who conveniently have ready-made answers in creeds, dogmas, or doctrines.

As a teacher I have frequently been asked whether a particular idea or act is right or wrong, whether exponents of certain ideologies are good or evil men.

This is an attempt to find out what makes right and wrong, to achieve for myself a relatively clear understanding, so that I may give reasonable answers to my students.

This study will deal with over-all questions rather than with specific personal questions, since there may be no infallible criteria by which one may judge right and wrong, good and bad. It is a philosophy of good we need rather than dogmatic answers to the questions, Is this act right at this particular moment, and, Is this one wrong?

After the study and presentation of the ideas or philosophies of certain recognized authorities of a bygone era, I will set forth the teaching of three present-day philosophers. Since each of these men has set up a particular
school of thought, they will be studied in this connection.

It is, of course, impossible to present ideas of all "recognized authorities" in a paper of this type; there are so many different philosophies, and it has often seemed to me that many philosophers were merely users of phrases. The windy verbiage they had to offer could not really solve living problems.

As Will Durant says in the preface to The Story of Philosophy:

Human knowledge became unmanageably vast. . . .
Philosophy itself which had once summoned all sciences to its aid in making a coherent image of the world and an alluring picture of the good, found its task of the coordinator too stupendous for its courage, ran away from the battlefronts of truth, and hid itself in recondite and narrow lanes, timidly secure from the issues and responsibilities of life.

This shifting of standards presents a real problem to the individual or the group that undertakes to help others choose right from wrong, especially now when we are concerned with the probable world-wide significance of individual acts and beliefs.

Yet if we are not to run away from the issues and responsibilities of life, we must evolve for ourselves some sort of working philosophy about right and wrong.
CHAPTER I

A REVIEW OF THE PHILOSOPHIES OF CERTAIN
RECOGNIZED AUTHORITIES RELATIVE
TO RIGHT AND WRONG

We shall take a look at philosophy, the study of wisdom, the front trench of the siege of truth, so that we may obtain some knowledge of good and evil.

A great many people, people who consider themselves "realists," say that philosophy is stagnant and useless.

Intelligence and reason are needed in sifting through philosophies, in selecting good from evil. Taking Socrates' advice, let us be reasonable and do not mind whether the teachers of philosophies are good or bad, but think only of philosophy herself. Let us examine her well and truly; and if she be evil, seek to turn all men away from her; but if she be good, then follow her, and serve her, and be of good cheer.

Naturally, not all philosophers have taught the same thing. Nietzsche claimed that nature is beyond good and evil; that by nature all men are unequal; that morality is an invention of the weak to limit and deter the strong;
that power is the supreme virtue and the supreme desire of man; and that of all forms of government the wisest and most natural is aristocracy. ¹ Rousseau argued that nature is good and civilization bad; that by nature all men are equal, becoming unequal only by class-made institutions; and that law is an invention of the strong to chain and rule the weak.²

Socrates had his own religious faith, he believed in one God, and hoped for some sort of life after death; but he knew that a lasting moral code could not be based upon so uncertain a theology. If one could build a system of morality absolutely independent of religious doctrine, as valid for the atheist as for the priest, then theologies might come and go without loosening the moral cement that makes of wilful individuals the peaceful citizens of a community. If "good" meant "intelligence" and "virtue" meant "wisdom," if men could be taught to see clearly their real interests, to see afar the distant results of their deeds, to criticize and coordinate their desires out of a self-cancelling chaos into a purposive and creative harmony -- this perhaps would provide for the educated and sophisticated man the morality which in the unlettered relies on reiterated precepts and external controls.³

¹Frederich Nietzsche, The Will to Power.
²Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy, pp. 9-10.
Plato reached a Utopia of hard and simple living, eugenically restricted mating, leadership by the most intelligent men and by only those educated for nearly fifty years in a rigorous political school. His "eugenic society" would demand abortion and infanticide. The best of either sex should be united with the other as often as possible, and the inferior with the inferior; and they are to rear the offspring of one sort but not of the other; for this is the only way of keeping the flock in prime condition. Our better and braver youth, besides other honors and rewards, are to be permitted a greater variety of mates, for such fathers ought to have as many sons as possible.

Plato's idea of justice was that every man should be in just the right place at the right time, performing to full measure just the type of work he is most fitted for. No class and no individual would interfere with others.

Aristotle recognized that the aim of life is not goodness for its own sake, but happiness. Aristotle asked the question of questions -- What is the best of life? What is life's supreme good? What is virtue? How shall we find happiness and fulfillment? He realized that to call happiness the supreme good is a mere truism. What is wanted is some clearer account of the nature of happiness,

4Plato, The Republic.
6Aristotle, Ethics, VIII, IX.
and the way to it. Aristotle described a Superman:

He does not expose himself needlessly to danger, since there are few things for which he cares sufficiently; but he is willing, in great crises, to give even his life — knowing that under certain conditions it is not worthwhile to live. He is of a disposition to do men service, though he is ashamed to have a service done him. To confer a kindness is a mark of subordination. . . . He does not take part in public displays. . . . He talks and acts frankly because of his contempt for men and things. . . . He is never fired with ambition since there is nothing great in his eyes. . . . He never feels malice, and always forgets and passes over injuries. . . . It is no concern of his that he should be praised, or that others should be blamed. He does not speak evil of others, even of his enemies, unless to themselves. . . . He is not prone to vehemence, for he thinks nothing important. . . . He bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of his circumstances, like a skillful general who marshals his limited forces with all the strategy of war. . . . He is his own best friend and takes delight in privacy, whereas the man of no virtue or ability is his own worst enemy, and is afraid of solitude. 6a

Aristotle held to a middle road. He has been called moderate to excess. His philosophy leaves out human warmth and passion — it is too cold and intellectual.

Francis Bacon said he believed himself born for the services of mankind and reckoned the care of the commonweal to be among those duties that are of public right, open to all alike, even as the waters and the air. He wrote that he found himself best fitted to serve mankind by aiding in invention and discovery. He actually was a greater politician than scientist or discoverer, however. He declared that if a man endeavor to establish and extend the power and dominion of the human race itself over the

universe, his ambition is without doubt holy and noble. 7

Spinoza in discussing "evil" announced:

Whenever, then, anything in nature seems to us ridiculous, absurd, or evil it is because we have but a partial knowledge of things, and are, in the main, ignorant of the order and coherence of nature as a whole, and because we want everything to be arranged according to the dictates of our own reason, although, in fact, what our reason pronounces bad is not bad as regards the laws of universal nature but only as regards the laws of our own nature taken separately. As for the terms "good" and "bad," they indicate nothing positive considered in themselves. . . . For one and the same thing can at the same time be good, bad, and indifferent. For example, music is good to the melancholy, bad to mourners, and indifferent to the dead. 8

Spinoza made happiness the goal of conduct, and defined happiness very simply as the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain. He said no one ever neglects anything which he judges to be good except with the hope of gaining a greater good. 9 Spinoza built ethics on a justifiable egoism. He thought that a system of morals which teaches a man to be weak is worthless; "the foundation of virtue is no other than the effort to maintain one's being; and man's happiness consists in the power of so doing."

Spinoza said minds are conquered not by arms but by greatness of soul. He marvelled at the amount of envy, recrimination, mutual belittlement, and hatred which separates men; he saw no remedy for our social ills except in

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7Francis Bacon, Novum Organum, ch. I.

8Benedictus Spinoza, Ethics, IV, preface.

9Benedictus Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, ch. 16.
the elimination of such emotions.

Man once lived, according to Spinoza, in comparative isolation, without law or social organization; there were no conceptions of right or wrong, justice or injustice; might and right were one.

Sin cannot be conceived in a natural state, but only in a civil state, where it is decreed by common consent what is good or bad, and each one holds himself responsible to the state. 10

The law of nature under which all men are born, and for the most part live, forbids nothing but what no one wishes or is able to do, and is not opposed to strife, hatred, anger, treachery, or anything that appetite suggests. 11

In short, men are not born for citizenship, but must be made fit for it.

Spinoza's perfect state would limit the powers of its citizens only as far as these powers were mutually destructive; it would withdraw no liberty except to add a greater one.

The "scandalous" Frenchman Voltaire, living in an age of corruption and decadence, himself not "moral," hurled pure vitriol against intolerance, hypocrisy, the "infamy of ecclesiasticism," and tyrannous injustice.

"All people are good except those who are idle." Voltaire really believed this statement of his; he probably waged the greatest one-man war against public evils of any

10 Spinoza, Ethics, 37.

11 Spinoza, Tractatus Politicus, ch. 2.
man who ever lived.

About patriotism Voltaire wrote: "If a man wishes his country to prosper, but never at the expense of other countries, he is at the same time an intelligent patriot and a citizen of the universe."

Have we some innate idea of right and wrong? John Locke argued that all knowledge comes from experience and through our senses.

Voltaire sounded the arrival of the Age of Enlightenment in France, an age of materialism and atheism. John Locke, Bishop Berkeley, and others of this age were constantly in controversy over mind versus matter. Jean Jacques Rousseau fought this materialism and atheism. However, Rousseau was neurotic, inept, and miserable. He declared that education does not make a good man, it only makes him clever, usually for mischief. Rousseau argued that though reason might be against belief in God and immortality, feeling was overwhelmingly in their favor. Why should we not trust in instinct here, rather than yield to the despair of an arid and unfounded skepticism?

Kant said science is absolute, and truth everlasting; but that any attempt, by either science or religion, to say just what the ultimate reality is, must fall back into mere hypothesis. "Understanding can never go beyond the limits of sensibility." The German professor thought that religion cannot be proved by theoretical reason. Then in his
Critique of Practical Reason he set out to prove that religion can be based on morals.

... we must show that pure reason can be practical, i.e., can of itself determine the will independently of anything empirical, that the moral sense is innate, and not derived from experience. The moral imperative which we need as the basis of religion, must be an absolute, a categorical, imperative.\textsuperscript{12}

This categorical imperative is the unconditional command of our conscience. We know, not by reasoning, but by vivid and immediate feeling, that we must avoid behavior which, if adopted by all men, would render social life impossible.

An action is good not because it has good results, or because it is wise, but because it is done in obedience to this inner sense of duty, this moral law. The only thing unqualifiedly good in this world is a good will -- the will to follow the moral law regardless of profit or loss for ourselves. Never mind your happiness; do your duty. "Let us seek the happiness in others; but for ourselves, perfection -- whether it brings us happiness or pain."

Kant thought that an interest in the beauty of nature for its own sake is always a sign of goodness.

Concerning religion of his time, Kant said:

\begin{quote}
Creed and ritual have again replaced the good life; instead of men being bound together by religion, they are divided into a thousand sects; and all matter of pious nonsense is inculcated as a
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12}Immanuel Kant, \textit{Critique of Practical Reason}, p. 31.
sort of heavenly court service by means of which one may win through flattery the favor of the ruler of heaven.

Concerning world peace, Kant wrote that struggle is the indispensable accompaniment of progress. "Man wishes concord; but nature knows better what is good for his species, and she wills discord, in order that man may be impelled to a new exertion of his natural capacities." 13

Kant did not like standing armies. He thought that nations will not really be civilized until all standing armies are abolished. Militarism in Europe he deplored. In his judgment, this militarism was due to the expansion of Europe into America, Asia, and Africa, with the resultant quarrels of thieves over their booty.

If we compare the barbarian instances of inhospitality... with the inhuman behavior of the civilized, and especially the commercial, states of our continent, the injustice practiced by them even in their first contact with foreign lands and peoples fills us with horror, the mere visiting of such peoples being regarded by them as equivalent to a conquest. America, the negro lands, the Spice Islands, the Cape of Good Hope, on being discovered, were treated as countries that belonged to nobody; for the aboriginal inhabitants were reckoned as nothing... and all this has been done by nations who make a great ado about their piety, and who, while drinking up iniquity, like water, would have themselves regarded as the very elect of the orthodox faith. 14

Kant calls for equality:

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13 John Watson, *Selections from Kant's Philosophy*, I.
Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in himself; and it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being, to use him as a mere means to an external purpose.\(^{15}\)

Kant's equality is not of ability, but of opportunity for the development and application of ability; he rejects all prerogatives of birth and class, and traces all hereditary privileges to some violent conquest in the past. He takes a stand for the new order, for the establishment of democracy and liberty everywhere.

Hegel wrote that "reason is the substitute of the universe; the design of the world is absolutely rational."\(^{16}\)

He did not say that strife and evil are merely negative imaginings; they are real enough, but they are stages to fulfillment and the good. Struggle is the law of growth; character is built in the storm and stress of the worlds; and a man reaches his full height only through compulsion, responsibilities, and suffering. Life is not made for happiness, but for achievement. Every condition, though destined to disappear, has the divine right that belongs to it as a necessary stage in evolution; in a sense it is brutally true that "whatever is, is right," and as unity is the goal of development, order is the first requisite of liberty.

Some followers of Hegel, Karl Marx for one, developed

\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 340.}\)

\(^{16}\text{G. Hegel, Philosophy of History, pp. 9, 13.}\)
Hegel's philosophy into a theory or concept of class struggle leading to socialism. Others found it a justification for politics of absolute obedience.

Schopenhauer did his philosophizing after the defeat of Napoleon, in a time of chaos in Europe. Instead of turning to a revival of faith and hope, Schopenhauer became a rather terrible pessimist. He said there was no divine order, after all; God, if there was one, was blind, and evil brooded over the face of the earth.

This philosopher declared will to be the essence of reality; character lies in the will and not in the intellect.

Schopenhauer had a Freudian theory of the importance of sex. He called the relation of the sexes the invisible central point of all action and conduct, the cause of war, and the end of peace. He had an exaggerated conception of sex and love, possibly because he himself was unhappy.

He preached that this is a world of will, but an evil world of suffering with its basis stimulus of pain. Pleasure is merely a negative cessation of pain. Life is evil because life is war. Everywhere in nature there is strife, competition, conflict. Every species fights for the matter, space, and time of others.\footnote{Arthur Schopenhauer, \textit{The World as Will and Idea}, I, 400, 182, 111-112.}
thought. However, he tried to find a way out of the evil. By seeing things purely as objects of understanding rather than as objects of desire, one might rise to freedom. The ultimate wisdom is to reduce one's self to a minimum of desire and will.

Herbert Spencer coined the phrase, "The struggle for existence leads to the survival of the fittest."

Spencer in his *First Principles* said that not only is there a soul of goodness in things evil, but generally also a soul of truth in things erroneous. He thought that conduct, like anything else, should be called good or bad as it is well adapted or ill-adapted, to the ends of life; "the highest conduct is that which conduce to the greatest length, breadth, and completeness of life." Conduct is moral, according as it makes the individual or group more integrated and coherent. Morality, like art, is the achievement of unity in diversity; the highest type of man is he who effectively unites himself with the widest variety, complexity, and completely integrated wholeness of life.¹⁸

Friedrich Nietzsche agreed with Spencer that life is a struggle for the survival of the fittest; but to Nietzsche strength is the greatest virtue, and weakness the only fault. "Good" is that which survives, and "bad" is that which gives way and fails. Nietzsche was the voice of

German military might. He announced that what was needed was not goodness but strength, not humility but pride, not altruism but resolute intelligence; equality and democracy are against the grain of selection and survival; not masses but geniuses are the goal of evolution; not justice but power is the arbiter of all differences and all destinies.

Having lost faith in God, Nietzsche went looking for another faith. For his lost faith he substituted his "Superman." He claimed to believe in a will to war, a will to power, a will to overpower.

To him morality was not the betterment of the masses, who are really worthless, but the creation of geniuses, supermen, a hero-morality.

Energy, intellect, and pride make the superman. To have a purpose for which one can be hard upon others, but above all, upon one's self; to have a purpose for which one will do almost anything except betray a friend -- that is the final patent of nobility, the last formula of the superman, Nietzsche's superman.

To Bertrand Russell freedom is the supreme good; without it personality is impossible. Life and knowledge are today so complex that only by free discussion can we pick our way through errors and prejudices to that total perspective which is truth.
Summary

As was pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, not all philosophers have taught the same thing. Summarizing their most familiar teachings, we find that some of their views are diametrically opposed while some of them lead into or help to explain the ideas held by other authorities.

Socrates thought that "good" means "intelligence," and "virtue" means "wisdom." In the next chapter we shall see that certain twentieth-century philosophers agree with him.

Plato believed that the better people are the stronger and more intelligent. He was one of the first to advocate a hard, tough, "eugenic society," a race kept strong by surgery, by destroying the weak parts; he advocated abortion and infanticide.

Aristotle recognized that the aim of life is not goodness for its own sake, but happiness; but he held to the middle road, leaving out human warmth and passion. His Superman did not care very deeply for anything.

Francis Bacon, like the twentieth-century Dewey, wanted change and growth for the good of the public.

Spinoza made happiness the goal of conduct, to him happiness being simply the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain. To him sin could not be conceived in a
natural state, but only in a civil state, where common consent decrees what is good and bad.

To Voltaire, "all people were good except those who were idle."

Kant believed in the equality of men. To him every man is an absolute end in himself, and it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being to use him as a mere means to an external purpose.

Schopenhauer, himself miserable and suffering, found this to be an evil world of pain, with no pleasure except the negative cessation of pain. This is a world of war with every species fighting for the matter, space, and time of others.

Such a world would necessarily mean the survival of the fittest, a view also held by Herbert Spencer.

Somewhat like Schopenhauer and Spencer, Nietzsche believed strength to be the greatest virtue, and weakness the only fault. "Good" is that which survives, and "bad" is that which gives way and fails. To him nature is beyond good and evil; by nature all men are unequal.

In the next chapter we shall examine the teachings of three more "modern" men.
CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF WILLIAM JAMES,

SCHILLER, AND JOHN DEWEY

This chapter might be called the philosophy (singular) of F. C. S. Schiller, William James, and John Dewey, since humanism, pragmatism, and instrumentalism are so closely akin. James himself treats humanism and pragmatism as the same.1

Schiller called James the great initiator of the pragmatism movement and dedicated his Humanism to James, the "humanest of philosophers."

These three men are of special interest to us because they are contemporary, and because James and Dewey caught the spirit of America. Dewey particularly has given philosophic form to the realistic and democratic temper of the American people.2

We shall examine these doctrines, "new names for some old ways of thinking," in this chapter.

Schiller has said that human interest is vital to the existence of truth: to say that a truth has consequences

1William James, Pragmatism, ch. VII.

and that what has none is meaningless, means that it has a bearing upon some human interest. Its "consequences" must be consequences to some one engaged on a real problem for some purpose. If it is clearly grasped that the truth with which we are concerned is truth for man and that the "consequences" are human, too, it is, however, superfluous to add either (1) that the consequences must be practical, or (2) that they must be good.

For (1) all consequences are "practical," sooner or later, in the sense of affecting our action. Even where they do not immediately alter the course of events, they alter our own nature, and cause its actions to be different, and thus lead to different operations on the world. (2) If an assertion is to be valuable and therefore "true," its consequences must be "good." They can only test the truth it claims by forwarding or baffling the interest, by satisfying or thwarting the purpose which led to the making of the assertion. If they do the one, the assertion is "good" and "true"; if they do the other, it is "bad" and "false."

All testing of truth is fundamentally alike. It is always an appeal to something beyond the original claim. It always implies an experiment. And it always ends in a valuation. Truths are logical values.3

3F. C. S. Schiller, Studies in Humanism, pp. 5-7.
Pragmatism, which is a part of humanism, seems to have as its essential feature its insistence on the fact that all mental life is purposive. 4

Humanism is really in itself the simplest of philosophic standpoints; it is merely the perception that the philosophic problem concerns human beings striving to comprehend a world of human experience by the resources of human minds. Not even pragmatism could be simpler or nearer to an obvious truism of cognitive method. Man is the measure of his experiences, and so an ineradicable factor in any world of experiences. 5

Humanism insists that the "external world" of realism is still dependent upon human experience. 6

Seeing that everywhere truth and falsity depend upon the purpose which constitutes the science and are bestowed accordingly, we begin to perceive what we ought never to have forgotten, that the predicates "true" and "false" are not unrelated to "good" and "bad." For good and bad also (in their wider and primary sense) have reference to purpose. "Good" is what conduces to, "bad" is what thwart, a purpose. And so it would seem that "true" and "false" were valuations, forms of the "good-or-bad," which indicates a reference to an end. Or, as Aristotle said long ago,
"In the case of the intelligence which is theoretical, and neither practical nor productive, its 'good' and 'bad' is 'truth' and 'falsehood.'" 7

Things are not "true" or "false" as simply and unambiguously as they are "red" or "blue." Our truths may turn out to be false, and our goods to be bad: falsehood and error are as rampant as evil in the world of our experience.

According to Schiller, there is a natural tendency to subordinate all ends or purposes to the ultimate end or final purpose, "the Good." 8

To Schiller goodness is harmonious with truth, and there must be a connection between theoretic truth and practical use. As a pragmatist, Schiller believed that action or experience is primary, knowledge secondary, and "the Good" is the source of "the True." Knowledge which is not usable is useless knowledge; in fact, it is not knowledge at all. 9

Our knowing is driven and guided at every step by our subjective interests and preferences, our desires, our needs, and our ends.

Our interests impose the conditions under which alone reality can be revealed. Only such aspects of reality can

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 153.
9 Ibid., ch. II.
be revealed as are (1) knowledge and (2) objects of an actual desire, and consequent attempt to know.

Pragmatism has freed us from the horror of the view of an indifferent universe. To Schiller our works is our own making, to some extent, and without us nothing is made that is made.\^10

William James says that "humanism" is the doctrine that to an unascertainable extent our truths are man-made products, as are our laws and languages.\^11

An idea is "true" so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives. That it is good, for as much as it profits, you will gladly admit. If what we do by its aid is good, you will allow the idea itself to be good, in so far forth, for we are the better for possessing it. Ideas are also true for this same reason.

Truth is one species of good, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct from good, and co-ordinate with it. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons.

The true is the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as "the right" is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient is almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole, of course; for what meets expediently all the experiences in sight won't necessarily meet all further experiences equally satisfactorily.\^12

If there be any life that it is really better we should lead, and if there be any idea which, if believed in, would help us to lead that life, then

\^10Ibid., pp. 10, 12.

\^11William James, Pragmatism, p. 242.

\^12Ibid., pp. 75-76, 222.
it would be really better for us to believe in that idea, unless, indeed, belief in it incidentally clashed with other greater vital benefits.\textsuperscript{13}

James calls Schiller and Dewey his contemporary pragmatists, and says that all three have the same conception of truth.

Humanism treats human minds as resources. Humanism and pragmatism show that knowledge is not knowledge unless usable. The pragmatic method is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences.\textsuperscript{14}

John Dewey developed the doctrine of instrumentalism, the doctrine that thought is a tool or an instrument used to meet a particular crisis or to solve a particular problem.

A thought, an idea, a theory, is not "true" unless it will "work."

The instrumentalist is a biologist, a believer in evolution. He is interested in the evolution of knowledge.

Instrumentalism is an attempt to establish a precise logical theory of concepts, of judgments and influences in their various forms by considering primarily how thought functions in the experimental determinations of future consequences. That is to say, it attempts to establish universally recognized distinctions and rules of logic by deriving them from the reconstructive or mediative function

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\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 76. \textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 45.
ascribed to reason. It aims to constitute a theory of the general forms of conception and reasoning, and not of this or that particular judgment or concept related to its own content, or to its particular implications.\(^{15}\)

Intelligence has descended from its lonely isolation at the remote edge of things, whence it operated as unmoved mover and ultimate good, to take its seat in the moving affairs of men. . . .

The brain is primarily an organ of a certain kind of behavior, not of knowing the world. Thought is an instrument of re-adaptation; it is an organ as much as limbs and teeth.\(^{16}\)

What Dewey sees and reverences as the finest of all things, is growth; so much so, that he made this relative but specific notion, and no absolute "good," his ethical criterion:

Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining, is the aim in living. . . . The bad man is the man who, no matter how good he has been, is beginning to deteriorate, to grow less good. The good man is the man who, no matter how morally unworthy he has been, is moving to become better. Such a conception makes one severe in judging himself and humane in judging others.\(^{17}\)

Physical science has for the time being far outrun psychical. We have mastered the physical mechanism sufficiently to turn out possible goods; we have not gained a knowledge of the conditions through which possible values become actual in life, and so are still at the mercy of habit, of haphazard, and hence of force. . . . With tremendous increase in our control of nature, in our ability to utilize nature for human use and satisfaction, we find the actual realization of ends, the enjoyment of values, growing unassured and precarious. At times it seems as


\(^{17}\)Ibid.; John Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, p. 177.
though we were caught in a contradiction; the more we multiply means the less certain and general is the use we are able to make of them. No wonder a Carlyle or a Ruskin puts our whole industrial civilization under a ban, while a Tolstoi proclaims a return to the desert. But the only way to see the situation steadily and see it whole is to keep in mind that the entire problem is one of the development of science and its application to life. Morals, philosophy, returns to its first love; love of the wisdom that is nurse of good. But it returns to the Socratic principle equipped with a multitude of special methods of inquiry and tests; with an organized mass of knowledge; and with control of the arrangements by which industry, law and education may concentrate upon the problem of the participation by all men and women, up to the capacity of absorption, in all attained values.  

To the instrumentalist, the humanist, and the pragmatist the individual lives in a plastic world. With the tools of his intelligence and his knowledge, he may control his environment in such a way as to foster his own welfare; he must achieve the good and avert the evil.  

CHAPTER III

SOME CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE TEACHINGS OF
THE EARLIER PHILOSOPHERS AND THE
MORE MODERN PHILOSOPHERS

In some of the theories we have discussed we find fairly clear definitions of "good" and "bad."

As was pointed out in Chapter I, not all these philosophers have taught the same thing. We sometimes find their ideas in direct opposition.

This third chapter is a comparison of doctrines set forth in Chapters I and II.

There are three systems of ethics, three conceptions of the ideal character and the moral life. One is that of Buddha and of Jesus, which stresses the feminine virtues, considers all men to be equally precious, resists evil only by returning good, identifies virtue with love, and inclines in politics toward democracy. Another is the ethic of Nietzsche, which stresses the masculine virtues, accepts the inequality of man, relishes combat, conquest, and rule, identifies virtue with power, and exalts a hereditary aristocracy. A third, the ethic of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, considers that only the informed and mature mind

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can judge, according to diverse circumstances, when love should rule, and when power; identifies virtue with intelligence, and advocates a mixture of aristocracy and democracy in government.

James Stuart Mill, William James, Schiller, and John Dewey seem to combine in their philosophies parts of both the first and the last systems. They hold all men to be equally precious, and they incline toward democracy. They identify virtue with intelligence, as did Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato.

As we have seen, Socrates believed in one God and a sort of life after death, but he wanted a moral code as valid for the atheist as for the priest. He identified "good" with "intelligent" and "virtue" with "wisdom" and believed that men should see afar the distant results of their deeds.

Socrates' doctrine might conceivably have been a fore-runner of Mill's utilitarianism, the doctrine that a thing is good if it has the tendency to produce the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people.

James Stuart Mill was somewhat humanistic in his outlook. Certainly if an act contributes to the happiness of a great number of people, that act has a bearing upon some human interest.

Speaking of humanists, we are reminded that Schiller held that if an assertion be "valuable" and "true," its
consequences must be "good." To Schiller "true" and "false" are not unrelated to "good" and "bad." Goodness is harmonious with truth, and there must be a connection between theoretic truth and practical use. Here we see the similarity to Socrates, to whom "good" meant "intelligent."

Perhaps the most common point of difference among the various teachings is whether or not the goodness or value of an idea or action is to be judged by its "consequences" or "distant results."

Schiller, James, and Dewey insist upon the statement of the ends in terms of the means. Dewey says there is no other test of intelligence, of moral and intellectual hypotheses, except that they "work."

James, with his passion for the immediate and actual and real, believed that to find the meaning of an idea we must examine the consequences to which it leads in action.

To James truth and goodness are not objective, but are relative to human judgment and human needs. Truth is a process and happens to an idea. Truth is one species of good and coordinates with it.

James and Kant, the greatest of German idealists, are often in direct conflict. Kant believed that an act is not good because it has good results, but because it is done in obedience to an "inner voice," the "moral law." James had no patience with metaphysics.

Kant, metaphysician though he may have been, took a
stand for democracy and liberty everywhere. He believed in
equality not of ability but of opportunity for development
of ability. In this he is like Dewey, the philosopher of
democracy; and, like Francis Bacon, he believed that good
means growth and development.

Bacon said that man's ambition to extend the power and
dominion of the human race itself over the universe is
without doubt holy and noble.

In Chapter II we said that what Dewey sees and rever-
ences as the finest of all things, is growth; so much so
that he made this relative but specific notion, and not
absolute "good," his ethical criterion.

Spinoza said: "The foundation of virtue is no other
than the effort to maintain one's being; and man's happi-
ness consists in the power of doing so."

To Dewey virtue lies not in maintaining one's being,
but in moving to become better.

Hegel's philosophy, which holds that life is not made
for happiness but for achievement, is not quite the same
as Dewey's emphasis upon growth; for Dewey does not rule
out happiness. Hegel, who saw natural conflict and strug-
gle in the world, said that this struggle is good, for it
leads to growth and advancement, as man reaches his full
height only through conflict, compulsion, and the assump-
tion of responsibilities. To Hegel, "Whatever is, is right,"
for it is a stage in growth. The pragmatist and the instrumentalist are also evolutionists.

Schopenhauer, like Hegel, saw everywhere strife, competition, and conflict; but unlike Hegel, Schopenhauer saw this strife only as an evil, not as a stage in growth.

According to Nietzsche, equality and democracy are against the grain of selection and survival. Not masses, but geniuses, are the goal of evolution. Nietzsche despised the common man and found this to be a world of evil. Power is the supreme virtue. Morality is an instrument of the weak to deter the strong.

James, Dewey, and Schiller are interested in the growth of the individual in a plastic world. This includes the "common man" or the "masses" so despised by Nietzsche.

Dewey found that American schools needed to change if they were properly to guide growth of individuals in a plastic world; they needed to become more sensitive to individual and social needs. Dewey teaches that a school should be a small democracy. Knowledge gained in school is an instrument for the training of the child's ability to make a better adjustment to his environment.¹

Rousseau thought that education does not make a good man; it only makes him clever, usually for mischief.

Reviewing these various philosophies of good and evil,

we see that the terms "good" and "true" are used interchangeably.

An idea is "true" or "good" so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives. Truth is one species of good. The "true" is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons. An idea is true and good only if it "works." This is the definition for "true" and "good" that we find in the teachings of Schiller, Dewey, and James.

Kant declared truth to be everlasting, and he said any attempt by science or religion to say just what the ultimate reality is, must fall back into mere hypothesis.

In answering the question, What is good? we find from this study three general answers:

1. There is no good, according to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

2. Good is obedience to an inner voice; so think idealists like Kant and Spinoza.

3. An act is good if its consequences are good. This is the definition of Schiller, James, and Dewey.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

We have been forced to learn that individualistic though we may be, still we are a part of all humanity, and to be good we must have a social conscience.

Said J. William Lloyd: "There is but one virtue: to help human beings to free and beautiful life; but one sin: to do them indifferent or cruel hurt; the love of humanity is the whole of morality. This is Goodness, this is Human- ism, this is the Social Conscience."

Carlyle said: "It is great, and there is no other greatness -- to make one's nook of God's creation more fruitful, better, more worthy of God, to make some human heart a little wiser, manlier, happier -- more blessed -- less accursed."

When we are giving definitions for good and bad, when we are giving out moral precepts, we must realize that this teaching encompasses the whole of life and not just the time spent in churches on Sundays or other holy days, if we expect our teaching to lead to a greater morality.¹

If we are to live as a composite people of one world,

¹C. Bennett, Meaning and the Western Way; John Dewey, Philosophy of Freedom, p. 211.
we must be able to foster and promote policies which will help men and women the world around to live and grow invigorated by independence and freedom.\textsuperscript{2}

This will mean taking that "far-distant view" both of individual and public policies, since there is no difference between public and private morals.\textsuperscript{3}

Considering beforehand the consequences of policies and actions will change some ideas of patriotism. Voltaire said that if a man wishes his country to prosper, but never at the expense of other countries, he is at the same time an intelligent patriot and a citizen of the universe.

Since moral leaders preach different doctrines because of their different religious affiliations, since civic leaders do not take the time really to educate their constituents and perhaps are not able to do so, and since the family no longer provides all the training, school teachers really have a task. It has rather been delegated to us.

If teachers love life enough to let it humanize their teaching, if they themselves have a workable philosophy of good, then they are the most important group in helping to determine what is right and wrong. After all, teachers have very close contact for some twelve to fifteen years

\textsuperscript{2}Wendell Willkie, \textit{One World}.

\textsuperscript{3}J. H. Tufts, \textit{America's Social Morality}, ch. XX.
with most of the children of America. "The nation that has the schools has the future," said Bismarck, though schools set up by a Bismarck would not suit democracy.

Bismarck did not have in mind Peter Cooper's, "Let our schools teach the nobility of labor and the beauty of human service, but the superstitions of ages past -- never!"

One has to exercise judgment in selecting the good. "The true rule, in determining to embrace or reject anything, is not whether it has any evil in it, but whether it has more of evil than of good. There are few things wholly evil or wholly good. Almost everything, especially of government policy, is an inseparable compound of the two, so that our best judgment of the preponderance between them is continually demanded."

It takes intelligence, vision, and courage to be good; intelligence and vision to choose the good, courage to achieve the good.

Courage and wisdom are earnestly needed to see the right at a time when nearly the whole world has recently been engaged in the business of killing. Science teaches us how to kill and how to heal, but only wisdom, desire coordinated in the light of all experience, can tell us when to kill and when to heal. It is well to remember that out of the faith in themselves people have created things like liberty and equality and freedom and democracy. True, they have at the same time created wars and dictators and horrors.
But through tragedy people sometimes find and strengthen themselves; justice is born strong and militant from injustice. Freedom arises as an adversary to tyranny.\(^4\)

\(^4\textit{Ladies' Home Journal},\ June, 1942, p. 73.\)
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