

EPICUREANISM, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

WITHOUT accumulated and transmitted thought Science has never arisen. To trim and hand down the lamp of Knowledge has long been a favourite motto. Our modern material sciences are new, and even the sciences of Space and Balanced Force are easily traceable to their sources; for we find no need of going higher than Euclid and Archimedes. But who shall trace Morals to their origin? Until moral principles are held in common by a whole community, political cohesion is scarcely possible: therefore any long continuance in political union insures the development of a moral system, and, if any portion of freedom is attained, leads to different schools of morality. It would not then be wonderful if, in the complete mental freedom enjoyed by old Greece, all that the moderns can think concerning morals had been anticipated; nor if, in consequence, we made no progress or discoveries in this line of thought. On a superficial view such is the fact. We have contrasts of opinion now, very similar to the contrasts observed among the old Greeks, of which the extremes were held by Epicureans and Stoics. Nevertheless, it is my persuasion that our modern controversies are less chaotic, and that argument between adversaries is by no means so hopeless as in antiquity it seems to have been. Each school has at least unlearned some of its errors under the attacks of its opponents, and all hold in common that man *ought not* to live for his individual selfishness, but for the common good.

Greek efforts at scientific thought began from the material world, with all the presumptuousness of inexperienced youth. They undertook with light confidence to resolve the highest problems of Astronomy,

Geology, and Cosmogony, while ignorant of the surface of our own globe and of the very elements of Chemistry—a science which had then no name. At the same time they were most rudely furnished with instruments for measuring and weighing, and had scarcely even an idea of their importance. In the midst of the contradictory theories hence arising, which led Socrates to renounce all physical research, one man of genius, Democritus of Abdera, developed a doctrine of Atoms, founded on large conceptions of the universe, and on the universality of mechanical law. Pythagoras also maintained the sun to be the centre round which the earth and planets move: but neither of these great men rested on arguments convincing to the majority of their contemporaries; indeed, the arguments attributed to Pythagoras are moral and fanciful. On the other hand, the moral system of Pythagoras was didactic, or rather dogmatic, being taught without reasons, like a religious or ceremonial law. In the celebrated *Ipse dixit*, *Ipse* meant 'the master himself,' Pythagoras. Morals, as a science, or as a system which aimed to be scientific, is not traced by us higher than Socrates. Thenceforth there were two parallel streams of Greek philosophy—the older that of Physical Speculation, the latter that of Morals derived from Socrates; and each ran in many channels.

In the retrospect, we see not how anything else could have occurred but enormous presumptuousness, enormous error, and enormous diversity of opinion. Alike in politics, in religion, in morals, terribly difficult is the transition from the puerile to the adult stage—from the state of bondage to that of freedom. In political and religious struggles convulsions often occur too violent

to be composed by any mediator, or softened by moral principle; nay, morality itself, and whatever passes for science, are then apt to be embroiled in the general chaos. What of this kind may have happened in far-off Asia concerns us the less, because it is hopeless to get any continuous record; but the very fact makes us more value our knowledge of Greek opinion, which we see spread out before us with real continuity. The human mind, aspiring to truth and freedom, asked *the reason why* in all these high spheres at once. *Why* is a king or a polity to be obeyed? *Why* is a religion to be believed, or the existence of any Gods? *Why* is a certain course of action called moral and good? *Why* are certain doctrines, in this or that art or system, held to be true and proved? Also, when Socrates despaired altogether of Physics, and devoted his life to ground Morals more deeply, his method was that of interrogating everything, and pretending to know nothing. Who could then wonder if he established nothing? Of course he aimed to get rid of rubbish, and clear a good foundation for a new building. He really did preach and teach, alternately with his scepticism, very much of definite morals; yet, inevitably, men widely diverse one from another believed themselves his disciples, alike dogmatic Stoics and Academicians despairing of truth. All who were between these extremes were esteemed Socratic, and certainly had common principles and common-cultivation. They could learn of one another, and esteem one another, as do the sects of a common religion. But the system of Epicurus, which arose in the break-up of Greek freedom and Greek patriotism, was in entire contrast to all Socratic ideas.

If we are to believe the Epicureans, their master was indeed the divine teacher. The Roman poet

Lucretius, a man of unquestioned genius, was not aware that Epicurus owed anything to those who preceded him. Familiar as are his panegyrics to every scholar, it may not be amiss here to present two eminent passages. In the opening of his poem, he says: 'When human life was foully prostrate over the lands in open view, crushed under grievous Religion, who displayed her head from heaven, bending over mortals with horrible aspect; a man of the Greeks first dared to lift mortal eyes against her, and was first to withstand her; one whom neither the report of Gods, nor lightnings, nor heaven with its threatening murmurs, repressed, but so much the more excited the ardent valour of his soul; so that he was the first who longed to shatter the close barriers of Nature's portals. Therefore the vivid force of his soul overcame, and went forward far beyond the flaming walls of the World, and surveyed the entire of Immensity; whence he reports to us what *can* arise, what *can not*; and how possibilities are limited to everything. Wherefore, in turn, Religion is now trampled under foot, and *us* Victory lifts to heaven.' Though Epicurus is not here named, he is certainly intended. The poet opens his fifth book with a still grander eulogy: 'Who is able from weighty heart to compose a song worthy of the majesty of our topic and of its discoveries? or who is so effective in diction, that he can pour forth praises due to the merits of Him who bequeathed to us such treasures, won and earned by his own bosom? No one will be able, as I think, who is sprung of mortal body. For if we must so speak, as the notorious majesty of the subject demands, he was a God, O illustrious Memmius—a God, who first entered that course of life, which now is called WISDOM, &c. &c.'

It would seem that Lucretius learned his philosophy wholly from

within the Epicurean school, and knew no more of the history of thought, than his teachers were pleased to tell him. But this idolatry of their master was shared by the whole sect. Pomponius Atticus, in many respects a learned man—indeed a multiplier of erudite books—according to Cicero (*De Fin.* v. 1, 3) says, that he cannot forget Epicurus, if he wished; for his intimate friends have Epicurus's effigy, not only in pictures, but on cups and rings. Pliny attests that this sect carried about with them likenesses of Epicurus, and set them up in their bedchambers. The mischief done by this idolatry to the progress of their philosophy is visible in Lucretius himself, who has no desire to improve on his master, but simply to inculcate his lessons, as if from a sacred book, which may not be taken from nor added to. To this probably the true key is found in the fact, that Lucretius is careless to learn any of the secrets of Nature, except in so far as they aid him to explode the popular belief in Gods. He will give contradictory explanations of the same fact; and though quite aware that one or other is certainly false, and therefore possibly both are false, yet, believing that one or other still suffices to supersede the theory of Divine action, he is satisfied.

The opposite view taken of Epicurus by Cicero—and probably by all Socratics—is very curious. According to Cicero (*Fin.* 16) Epicurus took up the physics of Democritus only to spoil them: while his moral system was borrowed from Aristippus of Cyrene. What is there, he asks (*De N. D.*), in the physics of Epicurus which does not come from Democritus? True; he changed a few matters. When he saw, that if atoms were carried downward by their own weight [in parallel lines], their motion would be certain and necessary—to avoid

the idea of Necessity, he said that the atoms *deviate* a little! It would have been less disgraceful to confess himself ignorant. Elsewhere (*Fin.* 1, 6) Cicero adds another reason why 'deviation at uncertain time and place' must be admitted in the atoms, viz. that otherwise they would move on without collision, and nothing could be created; and in both statements he is confirmed by Lucretius (2, 216, 290). Thus Epicurus surrendered entirely Democritus's main doctrine, that the atoms moved by Law. He made them out to be lawless, yet undertook to lay down concerning them, what are the limits of possibility.

Indeed Cicero, though highly latitudinarian in his belief, towards Epicurus alone shows unconcealed aversion and high contempt. He makes Cotta (the Academician sceptic) say to Velleius (the Epicurean) 'You would rather give up your whole status in life than the authority which has sanctioned the doctrine of atoms: for you made up your mind to be an Epicurean, before you had learned the doctrine. Hence you had either to take in all these absurdities, or to lay down the name of the school which you had already embraced.' . . . 'These blunders, which Epicurus made while half asleep, are reproduced by you as by his dictation, while he, as we see in his writings, boasted that he had had no teacher; a thing which I should believe without his avowal, as easily as I believe the owner of an ill-built house, who boasts that he employed no architect.' On every side of Epicurus Cicero found something to repel him. The moral system seemed to him base or silly, the logic absurd; the very style offended him by its negligence or want of form, though he will not allow that his taste affects his judgments of truth (*Fin.* 1, 5). Nevertheless, we might hesitate to receive Cicero's representations of Epicurus, were

they not so thoroughly borne out by Lucretius, where we can compare the two: a fact which makes Cicero's erudition and great perspicuity highly valuable to us. His intimate friendship with Pomponius Atticus, a veteran Epicurean, gave him great advantage. The two friends sat side by side, listening to systematic courses of lectures from two celebrated Epicurean teachers; and in the result, Atticus, while lamenting that Cicero was not convinced, confessed that he understood them perfectly.

The very first step of Epicurean logic, was, to assume that the bodily senses are perfect, and are alone trustworthy, in the decision of truth. Lucretius carries this out to such a pitch of absurdity, as to insist, that a distant object (as a heavenly body) is no larger than it looks. A modern student, who has not read him, may be slow to believe the statement, and may think that it is our misconception; but it is quite beyond doubt: his phrases are unmistakable. He says (5, 565): 'The disk and heat of the sun can not be much greater or smaller than it seems to our senses: for . . . (So again, 5, 575). And whether the moon illumines us with spurious light, or flings her own light from her proper body, in either case she is in no respect of larger form than the disk which we discern with our own eyes seems to be: for . . . Nevertheless, as we here see fires to twinkle irregularly, it may be admitted that a distant object possibly is a very little either greater or less than it appears. Nor need we wonder that so little a sun (*tantulus Sol*) is able to send us so great a light. . . . Do you not see how widely a small fountain sometimes waters the meadows, &c. . . .' It is clear by this passage, that neither Lucretius nor Epicurus understood the first elements of geometrical optics—did not know that the visible size of a distant

object is nothing but the *angle* which it subtends to the eye, and has no *linear* magnitude at all. Moreover, while he knew that the sun is vastly more distant than the moon, and ought to have inferred that it is prodigiously greater, he actually pronounces that the sun is a small body. . . . To Democritus (says Cicero) the sun appears to be vast; for he was a learned man and perfect in geometry: but to Epicurus the sun seemed to be perhaps two feet in diameter; for he insists that it is just as large as it looks, or at most slightly greater or less.

On reading, side by side with many and monstrous absurdities in Lucretius, many sagacious explanations—as of relative motion, of the ascent of flame, of the transmission of force, &c.—it is natural to suspect, that the good in his Physics comes from Democritus, and that the stupidity was added by Epicurus. It might have seemed incredible that a man could call himself a philosopher, and gravely propound as theories, that every evening the sun is extinguished, and a new sun created every morning; and similarly account for the changes of the moon: to say nothing of his greater absurdities concerning visions and dreams. But his doctrine of images was really that of Democritus. Still, we can scarcely give Epicurus credit for selecting that form of physics which came nearest to modern science, when we find him to care nothing for his physical philosophy, except as a tool to undermine the foundations of religion.

Cicero brings out this very strongly in the speech of Velleius the Epicurean, and Lucretius confirms him. The same tone of pompous assumption is ascribed to Velleius, which we read for ourselves in the poet. 'Then Velleius, with the usual confidence of this school, fearing nothing so much as to seem to doubt about anything; as if he had just come down from a cabinet of

the gods, says, 'Listen and learn, not of silly inventions, not of a Platonic artizan-god, not of Providence, that prophetic hag of the Stoics; nor of a World endowed with soul and senses—a round, glowing and rolling God. . . . Because you do not see how Nature could effect anything without some mind, you take refuge in a God. . . . Thus you have placed on our necks an *Eternal Lord, whom we are to fear day and night*. For who would not fear a forecasting, inventive, observant, curious and busy god, who thinks that everything is of concern to him?' The Epicurean here shows a positive hatred, not of the vulgar mythology only, but of the very idea of the most spiritual God whom the highest philosophy can conceive. The same tone is struck in Lucretius also; as, when he complains (5, 87), that speculators ignorant of his physics betake themselves to old-fashioned religious notions, and bring in upon themselves *severe lords (dominos acres)*, whom the wretched fellows suppose to be *omnipotent*. Enough of the Physics of Epicurus: what then of his Morals?

He praises virtue of every kind, especially moderation and contentment with a little. The wise man will keep his desires limited, will chase away those which are neither natural nor necessary. He disregards death; he fearlessly holds the truth concerning the immortal gods [that they are blessed in perfect inactivity, absorbed in self-enjoyment]; he does not hesitate to withdraw from life, when death will please him better. Thus armed, he lives in perpetual contentment and tranquillity, which is the highest pleasure. He avoids all perturbations, therefore also all vehement passions, as conducing to pain. If pain assails him, as from disease, he tries to balance it by some pleasure, as by the smell of flowers; or if flowers are not at hand, then by the remembrance and imagination of

them. He cherishes, as pleasant, the memory of all past pleasure. He refuses public honours, as embroiling him in the strife of politics. He pities all bad men, as fools; but does not disturb his own equanimity by hating either them or their conduct. His own enjoyments are simple and cheap. His paradise is a garden, or even a field, if it have but trees and a stream of water—fine weather indeed is needed; then 'at no great expense he has much corporeal delight.' Not but that he esteems mental pleasure highly, provided that it be not bought by study too severe. To vie with others in intellect is folly; for it strains the mind. Geometry demanded too much effort to please Epicurus, whose speculations were luxuriously easy; indeed to test them laboriously was the last thing to which he or his school was inclined. Nevertheless, in a popular view his morality had little to distinguish it from that of Solon, the great Athenian lawgiver, except on its political side; and here, strange to say, it agreed remarkably with early Christianity. The Epicurean, as the Christian, saw how hopeless a task it was to establish political freedom and good government; and moreover, he considered that it was very laborious and thankless, involving many discomforts. Solon's precept to take decided part on one side of politics, did not at all commend itself to him: nevertheless, Solon's verses on virtuous contentment and cheap pleasure, in which is a couplet too gross for translation into English prose, entirely harmonize with the Epicurean spirit. Lucullus Asiaticus might call himself an Epicurean, but he was not of the orthodox type; he was a libel on his master; for his pleasures, however refined, were too expensive: yet the popular notion of Epicureanism has been propagated from wealthy and self-indulgent men.

Torquatus the Epicurean, in Cicero, admires and defends the stern virtues of his celebrated ancestors, of whom one, consul in the great Latin war, put his own son to death for fighting out of the ranks. A painful virtue, says Cicero. True, replies Torquatus; but it is not virtuous because painful; it is virtuous, although painful. The virtue consisted in its conducing to military discipline, hereby to victory, hereby to the safety of the Roman state, 'in which he perceived that *his own* safety was contained.' Thus until he has made out that his great ancestor was selfish, Torquatus will not allow that he was virtuous. Aristotle indeed sets before us the same thought, but only as a paradox: 'There are two kinds of self-lovers,' says he; 'bad men ought not to love themselves, and good men ought; for the good man assigns to himself what is noblest and best, and gratifies his highest part, and thereby may justly be esteemed a self-lover, since, while benefiting others, he benefits himself most.' But this is the sentiment of a man who maintained virtue to be good in itself. Epicurus regarded virtue as desirable only for the pleasure which it brought with it; on which account he declared that unselfish virtue was impossible.

Another peculiarity of Epicurus lay in his interpreting mere absence of pain to be pleasure, while pain was a sort of negative quantity, to be subtracted in estimating the balance. He regarded himself as being master of fortune as truly as any Stoic: for, ordinarily, so long as foolish pleasures which entail pain are avoided, pleasure in a healthy frame far predominates over pain; and if ever the extreme case occurred that life was more painful than pleasant, the orthodox follower of Epicurus had in his own hands the prompt remedy; he had only 'to

migrate from life.' What more could the wisest of Stoics do?

The greatest controversy turned on the meaning of the word Pleasure. Epicurus bestowed the word on 'everything that gladdens us;' all other philosophers insisted on using separate words, such as delight, gladness, joy, concerning affections purely mental. No one doubts that virtue *in general* tends to impart and diffuse mental pleasure of some kind: but even if this were *universal*, it is certain that a good man in exercising the virtue is not seeking for the resulting pleasure, or at all thinking of it, but accounts the virtue good in itself. A very despicable 'sentimentalism' results, if any one try, for instance, to relieve poverty for the sake of the pleasure which he will have in the action. It is hardly credible that anyone in modern times will justify this; but most of us will say that Epicurus defended his case unskillfully, and that he ought to have dwelt on the fact that a virtue (if real) produced pleasure *to some one else*. Thus Torquatus, in beheading his son, may have got absolutely no advantage, no tranquillity, no pleasure for himself; but if his deed is to be justified, it must have brought much advantage, ultimately much pleasure, to Roman citizens.

If it be convenient to fix the name Pleasure on everything that gratifies us, whether intellectual, affectional, or corporeal, there may be no ground for objecting to it, any more than to say Gratification or Satisfaction, so long as the vagueness of the word is kept in mind. But when anyone goes on to imagine that he can combine all such pleasures into a single total, and mentally discuss its maximum, calling the maximum HAPPINESS, it is evident that he regards all such gratifications as *of the same kind*. Moreover, the moment this is conceded, and morals built upon it, no

standard of morals, any more than of tastes, can be so rigid as to justify punishment. Contrast the taste of Aristotle with that of Epicurus. 'It is right,' says Aristotle, 'to do many things for the sake of virtue or one's friends or one's country, even if it be requisite to die for them: for the good man will fling away property and honours, and in short all the good things for which men contend, while purchasing for himself nobleness. For he would rather be pleased intensely for a short time than moderately for a long time, and live nobly for one year than many years in chance-fashion, and do one action noble and great rather than many small actions. And perhaps this happens to those who die in a great cause, for they choose great nobleness for themselves.' Evidently the character of men principally depends on their tastes, in this larger sense of the word; but there is nothing in the Epicurean doctrine to elevate taste and kindle noble passion—a task which is cardinal in Morals.

In the Platonic, Aristotelic, or Stoical school a true passion for virtue was often kindled. Plato, in his own characteristic way, says, 'that if True Wisdom could be revealed to men's bodily eyes, all men would fall in love with her.' This is the critical matter in all that we have now learned to call *spiritual* morality. Why does the man, who under Christian teaching is 'convinced of sin,' moan so profoundly and humble himself so deeply? why does he lash himself with extravagant invective, and account himself worthy (as many a one has said and will say) of everlasting punishment? It is because he has an unutterable contempt of his own evil conduct and low desires, and has glimpses of a better life which he ought to have pursued. And when raised out of despair into hope, the vehemence of his longing after a nobler state becomes a real

power to help him forward, and to cut away all relations with his baser beginnings. Nothing of this is possible from an Epicurean foundation. One who supposes deeds to differ only in the more or less of pleasure, and all pleasures to be either the same in kind or at least co-ordinate in value, cannot sternly rebuke himself, cannot suffer deep inward shame, cannot pant and agonise for a nobler state: indeed, the more such a struggle is needed, the less is it possible. In trying to raise depraved men into better courses, the great difficulty notorious to us all is truly pointed out by Aristotle. Socrates, says he, was wholly wrong in thinking that bad men differ from good men in knowledge only, and that to remove ignorance is to create virtue. It is in desires and aims that good and bad men differ; the depraved man has wrong desires, and to bring them right needs training, not mere teaching; but with depraved adults we find no possibility of training: a fact which leads Aristotle to fall back on early education as alone of avail, for (says he) the depraved man has not the first principles (*οὐκ ἔχει τὰς ἀρχάς*), i.e. right desires. But, according to Epicurus, all men have the very same desires, namely, the desire of pleasure, which is the same in everything.

Substantially the same moral doctrines have been advanced in recent times by the justly celebrated Jeremy Bentham, a man whose eminence as a jurist and a keen-sighted scorner of political injustices has aided to give currency to his theory of morals. He propounded 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' as the goal to drive at, and the very statement is a disowning of selfishness—a vast improvement on Epicurus. Besides, however strongly we may insist that Virtue, not Happiness, is man's chief good, which every wise man chooses for himself,

and every wise mother would choose for the child she most loves, yet it is undeniable that to choose virtue *for others* is generally quite impracticable, indeed is an offensive pedantry. While we may reverently believe that the Supreme Mind designs the virtue of man as man's highest good, not the less must we confess that individual man has extremely limited power to promote the virtue of his brother-man. To abstain from whatever will hinder his virtue or tend to deprave him, is good negatively; positively there is little to do, but to promote his comfort, his powers, in short his happiness; and then we practically adopt Bentham's formula, which is not ill calculated for political use. Even so, how much better to say, that all citizens *ought* collectively and singly to promote the general *welfare*? Who will deny this? But when the 'greatest happiness' is proposed to us as a moral foundation, grave embarrassments arise. The greatest happiness? But what is happiness? No two men have the same idea of it, nor has the same man at different times. No doubt, we are told that happiness means *the total sum of pleasures minus pains*: an explanation which is of little avail for practical use. Is it indeed imagined that in selecting one course of action rather than another, we can enter into such computation? Take any ordinary occurrence of daily life. A gentleman's footman behaves saucily, and there is a question whether to dismiss him. By what high calculus is it to be approximately determined, whether the maximum of pleasures and minimum of pains will accrue to the human race or (say) to the English nation by overlooking or by punishing the fault?

It is impossible to pass by the name of Mr. John Stuart Mill in this connexion, though I regard his writings on this subject as chiefly an attempt to infuse a nobler mo-

rality into those whom he accounts as on his side. It is chiefly with his phraseology that I quarrel, as leading to evil; but, in substance, he seems to come very close to the school which he supposes opposite. Indeed, he is justly severe on Bentham for asserting that all pleasures are the same in kind; but the moment it is allowed that pleasures differ in kind, the idea of any *total* of pleasures which can be intelligently contemplated and measured mentally, must be abandoned. Mr. Mill justly adds, that pain is always heterogeneous with pleasure. The question also enters, whether the pleasures thus heterogeneous are at all co-ordinate; whether they do not lie in wholly different planes, so that a higher pleasure is paramount over any imaginable total of the lower; and whether a single pain may not annihilate an infinity of pleasure? Nay, the question instantly answers itself. The pain of having a vicious son cannot be balanced against minor pleasures. In ancient times it was asked, whether the pleasure which a cow has in rubbing herself against a stone was the same in kind with the pleasure of discovering the solution of a mathematical problem. This may suggest to ask, whether the pleasure of friction with a bath towel, ever so often repeated, can be compared with the pleasure of repaying to a revered and honoured benefactor kindnesses and benefits, with great sacrifice to ourselves? Surely we do not overstrain universal sentiment, in saying that the nobler pleasure is here so pre-eminent that it eclipses and annihilates the lower; and if so, on the showing of Utilitarianism itself, right action is determined by the consideration of the higher pleasure only. And the case is not exceptional. It must be normal, whenever heterogeneous pleasures come into competition. Surely then we have a true grievance against those who insist on

using this word *pleasure*, which is the popular name for the lowest kind, as descriptive of the highest kind. Mr. Mill's complaint of the stupidity of the public, who so often mistake what the word means, seems to me a confession how ill his phraseology is chosen. A like objection attaches to Mr. Mill's pertinacious use of the word happiness, as, 'It results from the preceding considerations that there is nothing desired [in virtue] except happiness,' after he has admitted that the pleasures which make up happiness (so called) are too diverse to be presented to the mind at all by the word. In fact, this sentence can only be understood to assert that 'nothing is desired in virtue except something or other which people like.' Surely such vague statements, whether he mean it or not—nay, however much he desire the contrary—must tend to degrade moral sentiment.

For the word utilitarianism he claims some personal credit. 'The author of this essay,' says he, in footnote to p. 9, 'has reason to believe himself to be the first person who brought the word utilitarianism into use.' It is common in systems of ethics to insist that a thing is called useful when it is a means to a further end; and that the end is higher than the means. Hence, to call a thing useful puts it below things which are desirable and desired for their own sake. Mr. Mill admits that virtue is certainly desired for its own sake, but only just as money is, by the effect of habit; that it is an artificial desire needing a justification; and the justification is, that virtue tends (whether the aspirant to virtue know it or not) to produce happiness in other people, more or few, if not in the person himself. Happiness is thus exalted into a primary and natural end, Virtue depressed into a secondary and artificial end; and this while happiness may mean nothing but

the gratification of desires neither exalted nor exalting.

The following passage of Mr. Mill (p. 42, Utilitarianism) is highly satisfactory. He says: 'The ultimate sanction therefore of all morality (external motives apart) being a *subjective feeling* in our own minds, I see nothing embarrassing to those whose standard is UTILITY, in the question, What is the sanction of that particular standard? We may answer, The same as of all other moral standards—the *conscientious feelings of mankind*.' This goes far to remove all differences between us, except those of phraseology. I cannot see what ground he leaves himself to find fault with intuitional morals; for the doctrine of Intuition does not throw away the appeal to experience or the arguments from tendencies. Intuition is concerned principally with establishing that *gradation* in the value of things desired, or in the dignity of motives, which Mr. Mill admits and contends for, which also he enforces by means of men's *inward feelings*. He uses the emphatic language, 'It is BETTER to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; BETTER to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied' (p. 14). Thus to be satisfied (which is identical with Epicurean happiness) is not *so good* as to be a higher being, a nobler person. Mr. Mill's idea of happiness is not that of mere content: he evidently rises high above Epicurus. But when he is such, why will he torment us by that vague word happiness? and how can he imagine that Science can be founded upon it? If he merely mean that '*that cannot be virtue which tends to general misery*,' he can say this clearly and strongly, without setting up any particular system of morals.

Although James Martineau is not likely to have been overlooked by any disputants on this subject, it would certainly appear that few of them can have understood his

very luminous statements. A man may do the same action from one set of motives or from another. He has an inward judgment as to the relative nobleness of the motives. This inward judgment we call an intuition. If the individual is very singular, he may be singularly wrong; but if we discern that the judgment is shared by all the men whom on other grounds we most respect, we call it a human intuition, and think it deserves to be made an axiom. Sir James Mackintosh tells us that Bentham said, 'There ought to be no such word as Ought;' and undoubtedly Bentham struggled to abolish it. Mr. Mill talks of men's 'conscientious feelings!' but Bentham said, 'Here is a man who tells me he disapproves, because he has got a *thing* which he calls a conscience.' Accordingly, Macaulay with good reason said that Bentham could give no reason why a person *ought* to care for the general welfare, *ought not* to be selfish. But Mr. Mill has a reply, which Bentham could not use. His intuition (which he prefers to call his 'subjective feeling') tells him, as mine tells me, that Disinterestedness is BETTER than Selfishness. I cannot but wonder why it is, that while he thinks no justification, nor any further analysis of the fact, is needed for loving a minor pleasure for its own sake, he makes such difficulty about loving a virtue for its own sake; and this, admitting the fact, that it is loved. It would seem that any meaner instinct is a born citizen of the utilitarian soil, and needs no passport; but if a nobler instinct venture thither undisguised, the police at once molest it; and it has to plead at the bar of the meaner to get a ticket of leave. Mr. Martineau's words on a kindred topic will here apply: 'While this logic is permitted, in every battle of the Gods and Titans, the children of earth will vanquish the sons of heaven.'

Pleasure is asserted to be good in itself, yet to esteem virtue good in itself is treated as a paradox by Utilitarians: and then they shriek with amazement, as injured and slandered persons, when told that under their doctrine the majority of mankind will gravitate into baser sentiment.

Paley, who almost agrees with Bentham when he attempts theory, has excellently said, that to have the habits well set is of primary importance to morals. Of not less importance is it, to have the noblest desires most cultivated, which is in fact an intensifying of intuition. The Utilitarian school (I do not include Mr. Mill) want to reduce intuition to its minimum: the Spiritual school want to exalt it to its maximum. The two schools perhaps do not at bottom disagree as to the several elements of Morals; but they clearly differ much as to their relative importance; and out of this comes the difference in phraseology. If we wish to excite an enthusiasm, a passion for a nobler state, we must cultivate quick inward perceptions of what is *ignoble*. This certainly will never be done by exclusive talking about experience, by swamping the most diverse sets of feelings under the word pleasure, or by any preachings about happiness. The modern doctrines are better than those of Epicurus; yet they have a large smack of his opium.

Epicurus was highly temperate, and highly extolled universal temperance; yet it is notorious that his doctrine gravitated into the lusts of the flesh, in the largest sense of the word. In regard to what are called the pleasures of the table, Epicureans were not necessarily or perhaps often excessive; but however cautious of his health a man might be, yet to live for such enjoyments was morally fatal. Numbers of thoughtful persons are now seized with alarm at the symptoms dis-

played in all the great towns of Christendom; which a prophet would probably denounce as addicted to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Mr. Mill, we may well believe, groans under this, as much as any of us. If we can suggest the sources of the evil, and whence a remedy is to be looked for, he will not disdain it.

Epicureanism rises naturally, as soon as a State becomes corrupt, as, in the break-up of nationality. For the State is the moral heart of the nation, the most potent diffuser of good or evil. It cannot have organic life, until some common morality actuates men. It gives shape and body to that morality, and variously enforces its moral judgments on delinquents. It can reach family life and greatly modify men's habits, and thereby their minds: and according as the public institutions are good or bad, so does the nation become. A vicious nation is a certain index of vicious institutions.

In early times the State has generally taught *religion* with temporary benefit to political order; but if the religious doctrine be made authoritative, the State, in the course of centuries, upholds artificially the immature notions of barbarism. Again, in early times, questions of right are fought out between neighbour tribes, or between the orders of a community. Conquerors assume rights over *land*, which, if not very oppressive at the moment, become more and more oppressive as the nation lives on and multiplies. Out of this oppression grows class-enmity, pilferings, dishonesty; with which family-pride keeps pace, and luxury too, if the higher class be enriched. Again, conquerors regard *women* as having no rights, and licentiousness spreads wide; and if standing armies arise, it is perpetuated in another way. Further, men, having legislation all to them-

selves, enact laws, especially *marriage* laws, unjust to the female sex, which, taking different form under different circumstances, under all yield a bitter crop. Expensive *courts* set the example of luxury and change of fashion, spreading and almost demanding habits of pecuniary extravagance; hence a general rush after wealth, and much unscrupulousness: for the saying goes abroad, that one who has not such or such an income is trodden under foot. Last, and not least, *capitalists* are permitted to deprave a nation for their private gain, while perhaps the State, instead of forbidding them, condescends to share their ill-gotten income. Who can deny that all these causes of demoralization conspire in England as much as in any nation on earth? Let all the moralists, all the philanthropists, all the ministers of religion, all the thoughtful heads of families unite their influence; yet they are helpless to stem the flood of immorality. It can only be done through the STATE; and the first necessity is to recall the fundamental idea of State action, that it must promote the WELFARE of the community, which primarily depends on its morality. We have collectively no higher interest. Though individuals can do so little for other men's virtue, the State can do an immensity; and much more can it immensely deprave the country. On both sides, therefore, it is *upon* and *through* the State that philanthropists have to act.

Mr. Mill well understands that we need to exalt the object of promoting the public good and depress (each of us) his own private cupidity. In other words, we need simpler, severer tastes; perhaps the frugality of Epicurus, who generally dined on herbs, and certainly laid great stress on being satisfied with a little. Some people, oddly calling themselves Economists, think it a great gain to infuse into a popula-

tion artificial desires, and name it civilization. Where a powerful aristocracy has persecuted socially every politician who dares to discuss the *rights* of land, or where the ruling sex tries to crush all talk of the *rights* of women, Mr. Mill comes to the front on the side of the oppressed. Does he not hereby bid us hope that he will step out farther? We need his protest more distinct for simplicity, and against corrupting trades. In regard also to sexual purity, it is to be feared that every approach to Epicurean doctrine is highly sinister. To shield the male temperament from vice, we need not only that the female sex shall have high defensive power, but that a reverence for them, with a stern sense of justice, should lie deep in men's hearts. It is said that, 'a woman who hesitates is lost;' and why say less of a man? If a man once begins to compute (what is incomputable) the *pro*-and-

con of a special vicious action which he allows himself calmly to contemplate, it is ten to one that low instinct and base passion will carry him away. Every young man eminently needs an *instinctual hatred* of allowing carnal desire to be dominant, or to be gratified *for its own sake*: yet novelists, poets, and artists pander to voluptuousness without being disgraced and shunned. A powerful passion can only be encountered by a higher passion; and undoubtedly the spiritual passions are the strongest. The moralist's task—whatever name he assume, to whatever school he refer himself—is to strengthen and purify the intuitions—the inward judgment, the inward desires: for these are the vital forces of action. Otherwise, only the despairing wail will be heard from those best taught in moral systems—'Video meliora proboque: Deteriora sequor.'

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