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is all too remote from anything now connected with the British stage, to the contemplation of which subject I return with a somewhat heavy heart, after reading Lichtenberg's frequent allusions to the interest once taken in it by "persons of the best society and the best taste." Garrick, he says, "helped to form" many such persons. Imagine the graces of a society formed by the best of our present English actors!

In almost all continental countries the stage is regarded as one of the great educational agencies of the nation. In that capacity it is paid and controlled by the State. We are a free people, and prefer the voluntary system in all things, except Church matters. But what man "of good taste" would now willingly go three nights running to any English theatre? If the best London acting is inferior, certainly not always in talent, but almost always in taste, to the acting of any average provincial theatre abroad; if we have no dramatic poet, no school of dramatic art, no dramatic critic, who is to blame—the authors, the actors, or the public? Surely not the authors; for what poet with any literary reputation to lose would risk it by writing for such a stage as ours? Surely not the actors; for what man of genius and culture would willingly embrace the career of an actor, in a capital where society dines at nine o'clock, and the theatres open at seven?

When Dramatic Art found lodging in a barn, a few rags were all she needed, to drape herself in tragic pomp. No elaborate or costly apparatus is required for imparting to the imagination those impressions, which it is spontaneously disposed to receive. Now-a-days we build temples to Art. The stage is decorated, as its enterprising managers assure us, on a scale of unlimited splendour. Celebrated painters labour at the scenery. Scientific chemists contrive the illumination of the scenes. Antiquaries dictate the dresses of the players. Fashionable upholsterers provide the costly curtain which is, perhaps, as well worth the attention of the public before it, as anything on which it ever rises at the tinkle of the prompter's bell. Ay, even though the play we have come to see be of Shakespeare's own writing. A work of art is ineffectual by itself. There must be an eye capable of seeing it, an ear capable of hearing, a co-operative æsthetic sense capable of understanding, that is to say *imagining*, what the eye sees or the ear hears. The imaginative faculty of the audience, who receive, must busily co-operate with that of the actors, who impart, the impression which the work of the dramatist can only produce by means of such co-operation. But what dramatic impressions are we any longer capable of receiving? Is not the public satiated?

> "The fields that sprang beneath the ancient plow,
> Spent and outworn, return no harvest now."

R. LYTTON.

ON THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE MORAL IDEAS.

There have been of late years three—what the Germans would call —"moments" towards the solution of the time-honoured question as to the Nature and Origin of the Moral Ideas in Man. (1) Mr. Herbert Spencer's bold reduction of them to inherited but half-forgotten associations of utility.[1] (2) Mr. Hutton's protest on the negative side against the tenability of this theory.[2] (3) Sir J. Lubbock's contribution towards a more positive view, based on the tribal maxims of savages.[3] The following paper is an attempt to take up this question anew from the point where it now stands. In the first place, however, while according full admiration to the interesting investigations of Sir John Lubbock, I must confess the great difficulty I feel in accepting the thesis that the savages of the present day are fair representatives of Primitive Man, and show us by living examples the condition of our ancestors and the starting-ground upon which civilisation has proceeded. I think that to establish this thesis, a "prosyllogism" was needed, and that Sir J. Lubbock has assumed his thesis, instead of demonstrating it.

It is true that historical *data* for the question are wanting, and that the whole is a matter of speculation. Yet still, regarding the very unprogressive condition of savage society, and the apparently utter absence in it of all those elements of intellect and genius which must have been at work to produce even the beginnings of that complex system of Morals, Law, Art, and Literature, under which we live, I must submit that all our analogies would guide us to the belief that the savages of the present day are the back-waters and swamps of the stream of humanity, and not the representatives of its proper and onward current.

What may have been the causes that have made savages what they are, whether they are the stunted and arrested specimens of an originally noble stock, and if so, what has stunted and arrested them; or whether they sprang from an originally different and inferior stock, and if so, why that stock was originally inferior, it is not my present business to inquire. I have only to state a general belief that the evolution of what we call Morals took place among bright and brilliant races of mankind, and that towards judging of even the earliest condition of those races the phenomena of savage life afford us no assistance whatever. Still, it may be urged, and

(1) Quoted in Professor Bain's "Mental and Moral Science," p. 721.

(2) *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1869, p. 271.

(3) "On the Origin of Civilization," &c., p. 270, *sqq*.

probably must be conceded, that the savage is, at all events, a man, and therefore that if a moral principle be essential to humanity, it must be found in the savage. I would quite accept this, and I think that any account of our moral nature ought, in order to be adequate, to embrace even that *travestie* of morals which, as far as I can gather, does not appear to be absent even in the most grovelling of the savage tribes.

Returning, then, to what I would call the main stream of historical humanity, to the noble instances of the Aryan and Semitic races, the question is, what does the literature of the past and our own internal consciousness and external observation in the present lead us to believe, as to the nature of those moral feelings in us which Kant declared to appear to him as sublime and wonderful as the starry heavens? Every one knows that the theories in answer to this question may be grouped generally under two leading classes, the Intuitionist and the Empirical. Of the Intuitionist schools of moral philosophy, Bishop Butler may be taken as a representative. He tells us that in addition to various passions and impulses, there is in every man an authoritative principle, called Conscience, which judges under every circumstance of the right and wrong of each impulse, and gives the sense of self-approval, or self-condemnation, according as the right or the wrong is followed. Thus, according to Butler, conscience would be a separate faculty, containing in itself both the standard and the sanction of morality. In the sermon on the character of Balaam, Butler tells us that every man who is true to himself knows at once what it is right or wrong to do.

The opposite or empirical view finds an exponent in Paley, who points out the diversity of moral ideas in different countries and times, as incompatible with the theory of an innate *à priori* standard. He maintains that the right and the wrong can only be discriminated by a reflection on the general consequences of particular lines of action, right actions being such as have a tendency to produce good results, in the shape of the welfare of mankind. Being further led to inquire How it comes to pass that we have a feeling of obligation to perform right actions rather than wrong ones? Paley can only account for this fact by saying that we are constrained by the fear of punishment in a future life, such having been declared to us by revelation to be the infallible result of wrong action. Paley's "sanction," therefore, is something wholly external to the mind, and in the way in which he states it, it is inapplicable to a large portion of the human race.

Kant is, on this question, more like Paley than is, perhaps, generally supposed. Kant's well-known maxim, Act so that thy mode of acting may serve as a law universal, is really identical with Paley's theory that general consequences form the test of right

and wrong. We find that in order to settle whether a mode of action is fit to be a law universal, Kant is driven to a consideration of consequences, *i.e.*, to utilitarian and empirical considerations. As to the question of the sanction of morality, Kant, of course, differs from Paley, since for the fear of eternal punishment he substitutes the Categorical Imperative of the Will. Kant appears to attribute to the Will an *à priori* function analogous to the *à priori* asserting power of the Reason. As the Reason asserts *à priori* and necessarily "*A* is *A*," and even in some cases "*A* is *B*," so the Will says to itself *à priori*, "I must," though this is left as a blank formula. *What* "I must" *do* in each case? has to be filled up by the further consideration of "What is fit to be the law universal?" *i.e.*, by empirical considerations. The internal sanction of morality, the sense of moral obligation, is thus affirmed by Kant to be an *à priori* intuition of the Will or Practical Reason, and it is not analysed further.

We may now go on to Mr. Herbert Spencer, whose bold and striking proposition is that "experiences of utility, organised and consolidated during all past generations of the human race, have been producing nervous modifications, which by continued transmission and accumulation have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition, certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility." Mr. H. Spencer is himself a moralist of a high type, and in the sentence quoted he evidently acknowledges the deep moral nature of man as an existing fact in the present; but, as a historical speculation, he conceives the "emotions responding to right and wrong conduct" to be inherited instincts derived from shadowy recollections of the utility attaching to good actions and the disadvantage attaching to bad actions—only, as the Frenchman said when he heard that *jour* was derived from *dies*, "C'est diablement changé en route!" According to Mr. Spencer's theory, to be deterred by one's moral sense from telling a lie, would be analogous to the instinctive motion of a young pointer making a half-defined halt at the scent of the first partridge that he encountered. In addition to what has been so well urged against such a proposition, I would submit that with the young pointer it is the scent of game which is the essential cause of his mechanical motion; he does not point at stones and clods; he does not exhibit a general tendency to point irrespective of the presence of a particular smell. But with the young child the case is different. The young child exhibits at once a general tendency to feel the emotions of right and wrong, irrespective of the exact character of the actions which are to call forth these feelings. For instance, the children of honourable European parents, when left much to the society of Indian servants, often exhibit a callous-

ness about lying which seems incompatible with Mr. Spencer's doctrine about inherited instinct, and yet the same children think some things wrong according to the ideas they have picked up. I remember hearing a child, under circumstances of the kind, express great horror at the notion of *burning bread* as if a heinous moral offence! This idea had doubtless been derived from some scolding he had received from a servant.

Thus it would be seen that the blank formula of Conscience—the idea that some things are right and some wrong—the capacity (at all events) for feeling "I must" and "I must not," is more native to the mind, than a tendency to discriminate as right those actions which our forefathers have approved; and if this be the case, Mr. Spencer's doctrine of inherited associations connected with particular lines of action falls to the ground. If we examine our own individual history, we become, I think, conscious that the formula "I must" has been, at all events, comparatively a fixed element in our nature, while the contents of that formula have varied and been modified by the progress of time and the growth of our knowledge.

In the history of civilised mankind the same phenomenon appears. Look back for two thousand years, and the sense of "duty" (τὸ δέον) appears as strong in the minds of individuals as in the present day. This general formula remains unaltered, though the filling-up of it is in many respects changed. What could express more strongly and passionately the idea of an "immutable morality," than the words which Sophocles puts into the mouth of Antigone?—

> Οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ᾠόμην τὰ σὰ
> Κηρύγμαθ', ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν
> Νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν.
> Οὐ γάρ τι νῦν τε κἄχθες ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
> Ζῇ ταῦτα, κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη.

It is true that in this passage a religious sanction is connected with the obligations of morality, and the particular duty referred to, namely, that of not leaving a relation unburied, belongs rather to the ceremonial than to the moral law of the Greeks. But yet what could give a finer and deeper expression to the formula of moral duty than the words, "The unwritten and certain laws of God, which are not of to-day or yesterday, but have an eternal existence, and whose origin no man can tell?" Here, again, then, in the thoughts attributed to Antigone, the formula of morals is greater than the contents of the formula.

But must we really make no attempt to tell the origin whence these sure, unwritten laws have sprung? I think we may; and that to do so we must separate the matter from the form of duty. It is the form of duty—being a form of the mind itself—which gives rise to the feeling of the eternal immutability of the par-

ticular, concrete duty; just as first love, from its depth and passion, impels the man who feels it to declare that it must be eternal. Let us, then, try to analyse this form of duty in the mind, and see if we can give any account of its origin. The law of parsimony prevents us from assuming the existence of Conscience as a separate faculty, if the phenomena which are attributed to it can be accounted for more simply.

I think that these phenomena will be found to be all involved in and necessarily deducible from the simple notion of the human soul, when we consider what that notion is; and here I wish to make no assumption and to build on no hypothesis, beyond what all would grant. Whether the soul be the result of material organisation, and dependent for its duration on the duration of material organic conditions, or whether it be a principle transcending matter and capable of self-existence, need not for the present purpose be discussed. All that I mean by a human soul at present is, a human personality such as we must be perfectly certain of as existing in ourselves and others. Such a personality is a self-conscious agent, conscious also of the not-self; knowing, thinking, and acting; capable of pleasures and pains; and invariably possessed with the idea, whether true or false, that it has a certain choice in action, this being the characteristic of a personal agent as distinguished from a machine. Every man that exists, every human personality, must have, or be, a soul possessed of these properties, though in sleep, madness, and the like, they may be held in suspension. And whether man was developed out of lower organisms, or originally created in full humanity — at whatever point man became man, he must have possessed, or been, a soul as above described.

Now, all living monadic existences we find to be provided with an impulse or tendency towards self-preservation. The struggle for existence characterises alike all the different types of organised nature. In the instinct of animals we see marvellous developments of this impulse, resulting in methods, faculties, arts, we might almost say sciences, and even in societies, polities, and governments. The impulse of self-preservation of course exists equally in the human soul. But the wonder of it is that in a self-conscious reasoning agent this impulse is metamorphosed into something far greater and higher. By the fact of its union with self-consciousness and reason this impulse no longer remains a mere struggle for existence, but comes out under the new and deeply important form of self-love, and in this all morality is implied.

Bishop Butler did well to distinguish self-love from selfishness, and in some parts of his writings (though he is inconsistent with himself) to speak of self-love as if synonymous with conscience. But, on the other hand, adhering too much to words, instead of thinking

of things, Butler failed to recognise that, essentially, selfishness and self-love are merely different manifestations of the same principle. The one principle of the impulse of self-preservation, when existing as modified in a self-conscious agent, becomes generally self-love, but at the same time is capable of Protean varieties, ranging from the lowest selfishness to the noblest conscientiousness and self-abnegation.

It may seem a paradox to speak of self-abnegation as a form of self-love. But Aristotle fully recognised it as being so, and in a beautiful passage of his *Ethics* (IX. viii. 9) he speaks of the good man being actuated by the dictates of self-love to die for his country or his friends. Aristotle explains his use of terms by saying that self is of two kinds,—the lower self, consisting of appetites and passions, and the higher self, consisting of reason and the moral nature. Self-love in the highest and truest sense is, then, according to Aristotle, identical with a self-devotion to what is noble and great.

It may, however, appear too metaphorical to talk of two selves within a man. I think that the same idea might be more simply expressed by saying that the better forms of self-love differ from the inferior forms in being more thoroughly transfused with consciousness. The more fully a man can realise to himself his own personality as a whole, the less blind will be his instinct of self-preservation, the less animal in character will it become. Given such a being as man, with a self-consciousness of his own nature as a voluntary agent; constituted also, as man evidently invariably is, with a tendency to discriminate between things, and *admire*[1] some in preference to others, and at the same time endowed with a great inherent regard for himself—it could not but follow that that regard must come to take the form of self-respect, and a great desire to be able to respect himself. It could not but follow subsequently that the pleasure of self-respect, self-approval, self-admiration, would be found on experience to outweigh all other pleasures, ; and thus Aristotle says that the reason for a man being able to sacrifice his life for a noble cause is, that he prefers the intense pleasure of a moment to inferior pleasures for a longer period. We may add that not only is self-

(1) It may be thought that in this use of the word *admire*, in attributing to man an inherent tendency to admire some things in preference to others, I concede the whole intuitionist theory. But this is not really so. By some things I mean undefined things; *what* those things are to be that man shall admire, is not predetermined in his own individuality, but will be determined for him by external circumstances and experience. The word admire really expresses a later developement, of that which I conceive to be inherent in a personal agent—in an *ego*—in a will—namely, *choice*. The agent in either acting or not acting, necessarily performs an act of choice : choice repeated becomes approval or admiration; and this feeling of admiration or approval in a self-conscious being, becomes attached both to the idea of self and also to certain external objects. The *genesis* of morals seems to consist in the weaving together of the purely subjective impulses of the will with objective elements gradually added on.

approval naturally desired by the self-conscious soul, but the want of it causes so great a discord and uneasiness as to be almost unbearable. Hence self-approval comes to be viewed as a paramount necessity by the mind, and this is perhaps the real explanation of Kant's Categorical Imperative, of the formula "I must," of moral obligation; of the sense of duty; and all other synonymous terms. This, then, is the subjective, and at the same time the permanent, element in morality. It is universal, and exists in every man, being the necessary result of the instinct of self-preservation in a reasoning and self-conscious agent. It gives rise to the distinction between right and wrong. The right may be defined as That which an agent fully conscious of his own personality would approve of himself as doing.

This is evidently a mere blank formula, as devoid of content as that of the categorical imperative, or any other mode of expressing the individual's sense of obligation to do, or leave undone, certain things. It is submitted, as being perhaps a simpler account of the idea of duty than has yet been given. It is not a shallow account, for it is based on the "abysmal depths of personality," on the idea of the ego as necessarily implying in itself morality. And it is universally adaptable, as we find when we come to inquire how this formula has been variously filled up. It explains the morality of the savage, who is pleased with himself for doing what his tribe approves, and therefore thinks that he "ought" to take bloody vengeance, and put a feather in his cap by the slaughter of some human being, and the like. Having no other standard, he approves himself for such deeds, and is morally happy in doing them. It explains from the subjective side the overpowering force of the idea of religious duty. For when once the individual entertains, without doubt, the idea that a course of action is prescribed to him by a divine command, self-love, whether under the form of fear and hope, or of desire to see himself in harmony with that which he believes highest, must urge him to the pursuance of that course.

Again, this permanent element of self-love and desire for self-approbation in the individual soul must always have been a powerful auxiliary in the working out of those moral ideas, which independently of religion, we find to have gradually taken hold of the best races of mankind. Whatever the household maxims of families, or the edicts of the legislator, or the generalisations of the philosopher enunciated as good in action, *that*, if accepted by the reason of the individual, would be ratified by the self-love of the individual as right to do. The reason of the individual has, however, always a power of protest, and in the long run it is the common sense of most, whether in a country or in a course of ages, that decides what

is right. In all cases it has been the self-love[1] of the individual which has supplied the subjective side to moral ideas. This is the necessary spring of all action, but we need not conceive that it has invariably assumed its highest form. Self-love, of course, readily takes the form of prudence, and gives rise to prudential ethics; again, in all but the strongest minds, it tends to rest in the approbation of others, and thus produces a conventional and superficial morality, what the Germans call *Sittlichkeit*—a sort of decent conformity with custom.

Moral philosophy has a threefold province: *firstly*, it has to inquire psychologically into the nature of that idea of duty which is universal in the human race, and into the relation of the individual to that idea; *secondly*, it has to trace historically the filling up and development of the idea of duty through the various stages of society, so far as we have any record of them; *thirdly*, it has to supply criticism and corrections of the last fillings-up and developments of the idea, at which society may have arrived. The history of morals is extremely interesting, and also very important, as throwing light on the validity and worth of the moral tenets of the present day. But the materials for a full history of this kind do not exist. The first books of this narrative, so to speak, like the concluding books of Livy, are lost to the world, and we are reduced to speculation in the attempt to replace them. I would fain believe that the primeval fathers of the Greeks and the Hebrews, from whom we also are collaterally descended, did not pass through a period of the disgusting customs of savages. I conceive them placed on the earth, in whatever way, as gracious creatures, not civilised, indeed, for that would imply a later development, but endowed with such rich potentialities of mind, that to acquiesce or settle down into national institutions and moral ideas which we should now condemn as brutal, would have been to them impossible. It is all a speculation, and yet the earliest historical monuments seem to bear out this view. And at all events, we know for certain that if the best races did pass through a period of communal marriages, and the like, they passed out of it early and completely.

I think that the conception of great capacities is absolutely necessary for primeval man, else I do not see where we are to get the starting-point for civilisation; and it seems to me much more natural to conceive of the typical progenitor of the Aryan race as an undeveloped Pericles, than as a Feejee Islander of the present day, contentedly acquiescing in a degraded round of life, without the glimmer of an idea beyond it. But however this may be, wherever man was

(1) The word self-love is likely to cause a prejudice against my suggestions. It is so hard not to associate it with selfishness. But I beg to repeat that, as Aristotle said, it is finally developed into complete self-denial.

man, there must have been the human personality, with its deep instinct of self-love, taking the form of a desire for self-respect. And from this, morality of some kind or other is a necessary deduction. The Utilitarian theory is powerless to explain the deep and mysterious feelings of duty; to account for these we must look into the human soul itself. But the Utilitarian theory will explain a very large proportion of the maxims of duty gradually adopted by the human race, and it will form an important element in the speculative history of morals. The system of Kant, equally with that of Paley, admits the Utilitarian criterion of every so-called moral law as the test of its validity.

I doubt, however, if Morality came to primeval man under the guise of the useful. It has been well remarked that the saying, Honesty is the best policy, is not the original form of the doctrine about honesty, but is a modern epigrammatic inversion of the original doctrine, which probably was to the effect that instead of being politic, one "must be" honest. Morality has no existence except in an individual mind, and it is contrary to, rather than identical with, the idea of the immediately useful, that is, the pleasant. The first realisation of a moral idea was probably when a man became conscious of the existence, exterior to himself, of another personality, when, by sympathetic imagination, he conceived a peculiar interest in that personality, perhaps a sort of awe for it, or a feeling of love for it. Sir John Lubbock tells us of savages who are devoid of the idea of family affection. But it is difficult to believe that the highest type of primeval man was in this condition, else we should have to believe in some Prometheus who invented affection, as well as the art of procuring fire, for the barbarous world. Anyhow, wherever the sense of another's personality first struck upon the mind, there the birth of morality[1] took place, for morality is essentially, beyond anything else, the relation of soul to soul.

All that is implied in this relationship was by no means early or speedily unfolded even to the best races—nay, it is not fully unfolded, or, at all events, not acted on, even yet. But the idea of a person as opposed to a thing, of one possessed of rights by virtue of personality, of one that must be respected and considered, and not merely used as a means to selfish ends—this idea was probably got at a very early period, only limited at first to persons within the family, or within the tribe. When the idea of the world as a City of Souls is fully realised and acted on by all, then the Christ may be said to have come again, and the golden age of the future to have been attained.

(1) I mean on the objective side. The idea of its being right to behave to persons in a particular way, would require the subjective element of the thought of the agent about himself.

Another highly moral notion may be conjectured to have been not long hidden from primeval man—that is, the subordination of the particular to the universal. This notion springs necessarily from the nature of things as recognised by the reason of man. The individual recognising himself to be the particular, cannot long fail to see himself as surrounded and swallowed up by the members of the tribe or nation; he sees around him a society of which he is but a unit, which existed before him, and will exist after him. Hence arises the consciousness of something greater than himself, and more enduring; hence the idea, perhaps dimly felt, yet still apprehended, of a universal law to which the individual must give way. When once the idea of the universal was entertained, however indistinctly, self-love would prompt the individual to endeavour to be in harmony with it; for nothing can conduce to greater satisfaction and peace of mind than a sense of being in harmony with the universal. This is what later philosophers called "Naturæ convenienter vivere." Morality consists, from one point of view entirely, in the acceptation of the truth of things as they exist; and the recognition by mankind at an early period of the greatness of the universe, must have had a great determining influence on the feelings of the individual about himself. The sense of the contrast between the illimitable greatness of the world and the comparative nothingness of the individual finds its expression in the Psalms of David: "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy hands, and the moon and the stars which Thou hast created, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou so regardest him?" From the impressions thus enforced upon the mind, there would arise a whole train of moral ideas regarding the attitude of the individual soul, more especially the idea of humility, which in its healthy form is only a recognition of the greatness of the not-me.[1]

My conception of the progress of morals in pre-historic times, is that it might be described in the same terms in which Aristotle described the progress of metaphysics, *προϊόντων δ᾽ οὕτως, αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα ὡδοποίησεν αὐτοῖς.* "As men went on, the nature of things was their guide, and conducted them from one point to another." I think it unnecessary to enter into the question of the divine revelation of morals. In one sense all truth is of divine revelation, in another sense, man seems to discover everything for himself under the guidance of nature. Man by his constitution was evidently predestined to life in society; he was predestined, as I have endeavoured to show, to realise the sense of his own personality, and then the personality of others; he was predestined to attain the idea of the universal in contrast with himself as the particular; his own natural

(1) That is, in society and generally—not with relation to the Universe alone. This also is an objective filling in of the blank formula, "I must."