

of other workers, I should advise him to go out to that lonely rock-bound altar in the wilds, and there learn to sacrifice his subjective conceits and to respect law and order.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT.

Pragmatism is the latest philosophical movement which is at present sweeping over the country, and the foregoing article by Professor Boodin may be taken as a typical instance of the philosophic temperament that is at present in the ascendancy. The founder of Pragmatism is Mr. Charles S. Peirce, and its standard bearer, Prof. William James of Harvard. We must confess that we do not share the enthusiasm of the pragmatism movement, and do not join its ranks. We believe that it has its weak points, and it is our intention to publish in the coming number of *The Monist* a critical discussion of pragmatism as a system of philosophy.

MR. SPENCER'S HEDONISM AND KANT'S ETHICS OF DUTY.

One of our contributors, an author and thinker, a man of thought and earnestness though not a specialist in philosophy, writes in a private letter concerning Kant and Spencer as follows:

"I have lately given some thought (though not very exhaustive study) to the contrasting methods of Spencer and his data of ethics, and Kant as unsympathetically presented by Porter. Spencer seems to me to occupy firm ground in his hedonistic position, and Kant to be rather weak in that particular, also in his disregard of the need for some sort of emotional dynamics as an impulse along the track laid by the understanding."

This criticism, it seems to me, represents the general impression which at first sight a comparison of Spencer's theory of ethics with that of Kant will make on readers who approach the subject for the first time. Spencer naturally appeals to the liberal broad-minded public who wish to know the facts of the origin and nature of ethics even though they would exhibit the untenableness of religious doctrines. Kant's treatise appeals to philosophers by profession who are familiar with other attempts and know exactly the problem which Kant intended to solve. Moreover, Spencer is writ-

ten in a modern style in comparison to which Kant appears stilted and metaphysical. Nevertheless the truth remains that Spencer's system of ethics is a flat failure while Kant is sound in all essentials.

In order to be just to Spencer we must understand that he was from the beginning and remained to the very end of his philosophical career a dilettante, a man who displays a great love of the subject which he takes up, but lacks a thorough preparation. Though science and philosophy are nothing but common sense, it would be a mistake to think that a scientist or a philosopher can start his work without taking note of the results accomplished by his predecessors. Mr. Spencer is hampered by his lack of acquaintance with the thoughts of others, having been, in addition, limited in his reading to works written in his mother tongue. Of foreign philosophers he acquired only an imperfect knowledge from poorly made *résumés* and bad translations. He started his philosophical as well as his ethical theory on the basis of insufficient information as to the prior efforts made in the same line, and so we must not be astonished that he adopts mistaken views which foreign thinkers had discussed and found wanting.

Kant, as he himself states, had very carefully considered the hedonistic solution of ethics, yet he discarded it without even deeming it necessary to enter into an explicit refutation. Perhaps it would have been better if he had done so, but at his time and in his country hedonism could practically be considered obsolete, and so did not need much attention.

Kant did not enter into a detailed discussion of human life or social institutions and their moral significance, but treated the problem of ethics in a general and purely formal way. In doing so he set forth a principle which may be regarded as a philosophical formulation and indeed a justification of the golden rule. He declared the essence of morality to be that we should so act that the maxim of our individual conduct can become the general rule.

In order to explain the situation we must first understand why the average public is naturally inclined to accept hedonism without further investigation as the most plausible theory.

Every one who is not under pressure of some kind, so as to be compelled to act against his inclination, will necessarily follow that phase of conduct which he has decided on. To express it in a tautology, he will do what he wants to do, or in other words, he acts as he pleases. One's "pleasure" and one's "will" are terms that are all but identical in most languages, and thus the principle

that the decisions of our will are simply an expression of our pleasure is deemed a matter of course which would imply that the tendency to procure pleasure and to avoid pain is the natural frame of mind. It seems absurd to think that a man can voluntarily will anything that could give him displeasure.

This conception is, generally speaking, true; but the identification of will and pleasure is not correct, for it happens frequently that there is a great discrepancy between the two. The mind of man, or to speak broadly, of any sentient creature that acts, consists of impulses or motor ideas, and every motor idea has the tendency to act upon the motor nerves. Will is nothing more nor less than the tension between a stimulated motor idea and its actualization in a deed. If a fighting cock espies an antagonist, his fighting propensity will be aroused and he will go for the enemy without any consideration of pleasure or pain, and the same is true of other impulses in man or beast.

A healthy human mind is a very complicated piece of machinery made up of motor impulses that are constantly stimulated but kept under control by being organized at a central station, a kind of headquarters acting as a check, and allowing nothing to pass into action except after a consideration of all the objections of conflicting impulses. This process is called deliberation, and it is natural that in the average man the decision among a number of alternatives will result in a choice of that motor idea which promises pleasure and would avoid pain. But this average type is by no means a universal rule applicable to all cases. If we ask the question whether every man will choose among all the possible courses of action necessarily the one which promises most pleasure, we must answer that there are innumerable cases in which people of an impulsive nature rush thoughtlessly to action frequently with an utter disregard of their own welfare. But in addition there are men who deliberately set aside their pleasure and choose a course of conduct in which they neither shrink from pain nor attempt to procure happiness, allowing themselves to be governed by maxims that are foreign to the large masses of the vulgar and commonplace people. Every man follows the most powerful motor idea which need not be a love of pleasure nor a fear of pain.

There are many thoughtful men who will now and then with deliberation come to the conclusion that the better course does not always result in happiness, and may involve misery and pain. How many people have suffered martyrdom for the sake of their con-

victions, for their religious faith, for truth, and for their ideals, sometimes for noble purposes, but as often also for Utopian vagaries.

It has been claimed that martyrs think of their future happiness in heaven, in comparison with which the suffering of the present life seems trivial, but a closer investigation will show that these calculations are mere assumptions, and that martyrdom is suffered even by those who do not hope for recompense in the beyond. As a glaring example we mention the fate of Giordano Bruno who did not believe in heaven and yet allowed himself to be burned at the stake simply for the sake of remaining faithful to his convictions, though he might have escaped his tragic fate by a few words of recantation. He mounted the fagots firmly and without hesitation preferring a painful death to a surrender of his philosophical principles. In his case, as well as in all others, he acted as he willed, but in his special case his will was not bent on pleasure but on asserting his convictions which were dearer to him than any consideration of pleasure or pain.

It is a question of fact in ethics whether or not man is guided by a desire for pleasure alone, or whether other motives, too, come into play. Hedonists assume as a matter of fact that every man seeks the greatest happiness and avoids pain as much as possible, and we have to answer as a statement of fact that they are mistaken. Further, it is a question of principle, whether or not we should recommend our children to seek pleasure and to shun pain; and it seems to me very unwise to do so, for it would take the backbone out of man's character, if states of feeling became the sole guide of life, and conviction would count for nothing. In either case, whether we deal with the actual facts of conduct or with principles of education, hedonism breaks down when giving so much prominence to a consideration of pleasure and pain.

The next question in order is whether among the motor ideas of the mind there is such a thing as the intention of doing one's duty irrespective of pleasure or pain; and this is not a question of principle but again of fact, and I would answer this also against the commonly established theory of hedonistic ethics in saying that the idea of duty irrelevant of ulterior expectations of either procuring pleasure or avoiding pain is an undeniable factor in the life of man, and in the phenomena of any community, primitive as well as highly civilized. The notion of a common welfare originated naturally in the shape of what is commonly called society, and the

injunctions of parents, educators, teachers, priests, etc., impress upon the mind of the growing child notions of what ought to be done, irrespective of personal considerations. This "ought" is not a mere theory, but a most powerful factor in the development of mankind, and this "ought" upon the whole aims upon the common welfare of the tribe, the commonwealth, the state, the church, the nation, or any social group of which the individual is a member.

The "ought," or the effort to do one's duty, is a motor idea expressive of a common will and establishes the interconnection of individuals who belong to some superpersonal unit that is being formed in the development of mankind. These superpersonal units follow a law of development similar to that of bodily organisms in animal and plant worlds, their organs being vested in the individuals of the community, consisting of the relations among their members and of the ideals with which they are inspired. We may call them institutions; yet, though they are purely formal, not bodily beings, but mere relations among individuals, they are nevertheless real and highly important.

The motives of the tribal or communal "ought" are similar to the corresponding motives of the individual, and so it has been claimed by hedonists that states, nations, churches, and other bodies also follow a tendency to procure pleasure and to avoid pain, which tendency, in the opinion of individualists, can only be as Mr. Spencer actually expresses it, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number of individuals."

However, if we resort here again to a question of fact, we will find that communal motives are not always bent on the greatest possible happiness of the greatest number of individuals in a community, nor even always on the survival of the tribe, the nation, or whatever it may be, but on the preservation of the communal will, which is the ideal of the community or some purpose characteristic of it. The historian has frequently met with events in the development of races in which a tribe or a city or a state prefers extinction to a survival in an unwelcome form. It is not always the happiness of the greatest number, not always the shirking of pain, trials, difficulties, etc., not always, even, the survival of a tribe or state in the struggle for existence that is aimed at, but we find frequent instances of a persistence of the type of a communal will without any regard to happiness or even survival. Thus the citizens of Saguntum did not surrender to the Romans, and refused all offers of peace committing a wholesale suicide rather than to submit to their hated

enemies, or alter the constitution of their communal life. They preferred non-existence under the most trying and terrible circumstances, allowing themselves to burn to death in the flames of their last stronghold to which they applied the torch themselves before the Romans could enter.

Similar incidents happened in different countries, and some of them are still remembered of some Indian tribes of North America, where the communal will was so strongly built upon the preservation of their own way of being, that they acted without any consideration of their own happiness or avoiding pain or disasters.

If any one should doubt that many actions are performed without regard to pleasure or pain, he should think of religious motives which appeal to men as a duty commanded by the supreme power that regulates the destiny of the world. If King Manasseh of Judah had his children pass through the fire of Moloch, or if the King of Moab offered his oldest son and royal heir as a holocaust on the walls of his city, or if Hiel laid the foundation of Jericho in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, it was certainly not done for the sake of procuring pleasure or avoiding pain. It was done simply from the sense of duty, because these men were under the impression that their god demanded the sacrifice. Jephthah expected no increase of happiness nor a diminution of pain by the sacrifice of his only daughter, although he may have feared punishment if he did not comply with the divine will. But the story relates that he simply obeyed the behest of the deity because he deemed it his duty, and this motor idea, not checked by any doubt, was strong enough in him to make him act without any consideration of the pleasure and pain of himself or his family, or his tribe.

The principle of hedonism that a consideration of pleasure and pain rules all decisions of the human soul, though at first sight quite plausible, is very superficial, and it is astonishing that a man who devoted so much time to the subject as Mr. Spencer, did not see the fallacy of it.

The question of hedonism is frequently confused with the proposition that man has a natural right to a pursuit of happiness. But a right to the pursuit of happiness has nothing to do with the problem of duty. Man has a right to smoke in the smoking-car, but for that reason we can not say that smoking is a duty. The pursuit of happiness was deemed wrong according to a mediæval conception of the world, which looked upon nature as evil and upon pleasure

as sin. In contrast to the ethics of self-mortification which proposes to suppress the most natural wants of the human heart, both physical and emotional, hedonism rehabilitates the justice of the pursuit of happiness and in this point hedonism is right. But we must not forget that the pursuit of happiness is not a moral obligation nor a duty, but simply a right. Every man has a right to pursue his happiness in his own way—so long as he does not come in conflict with the legitimate interests of others, or in other words, so long as he does not collide with moral obligations. This limitation, however, is overlooked by the hedonist, and he makes of a right a duty. Unchecked pursuit of happiness according to common experience would very soon produce innumerable conflicts, and the science of ethics has been invented to regulate the interrelation of individuals in a community, and the aim of ethics may lead to, but can not be formulated as “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.”

Ethics is a question of quality, not of quantity. It is not the greatest number that should decide what should be moral, and what immoral, but the morally best should be taken as authority; and in the history of the world the aim of communal life is not to produce as much pleasure as possible, but to produce higher and better men, and keep the communal life as much as possible pure and undefiled. What mankind needs most is physical, mental and moral health, conservative progress, and an increase in comprehension as well as power, for the sake of leading better, worthier and more intensive lives.

We will not deny that upon the whole this may produce an increase of happiness, but if it does, it is incidental and should not be taken as the criterion; still less as our guide. It is not the standard of measurement but only an accidental result.

Hedonism is practically a denial of the existence of morality. If man always acted in such a way as to follow the bent of his pleasure, and if no other motive could take hold of his soul; if he were incapable of living up to his convictions as soon as they came in conflict with the happiness of himself or of his own, and furthermore, if the idea of duty should have to be superseded by a pursuit of happiness; we should freely state that ethics did not exist, and that there would be no need of its existence, but that man would remain at the mercy of his passions. However, we do not deem the problem of the justification of hedonism an open question, but an unequivocal fallacy. It is a flagrant contradiction of facts and has originated only through the wrong impression that people saw their

right to the pursuit of happiness endangered by the ascetic's bigoted conception of morality.

We must bear in mind that there are two kinds of hedonism,—the hedonism of Bentham, which alone is consistent, and the hedonism of Mr. Spencer, which under the pressure of circumstances makes considerable concessions to its opponents. Bentham is an individualist. According to his theory man follows the bent of his own individual pleasure, and Bentham deems it right that man should do so. Mr. Spencer substitutes for the happiness of the individual, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and thus introduces a new factor which recognizes the rights of others, and so radically subverts Bentham's individualistic principle without, however, succeeding thereby in justifying the principle of hedonism itself. If we grant that pleasure is and should be the end and aim of all our actions, and at the same time grant the principle of individualism, there is no way to demonstrate why any individual should sacrifice his own pleasure for the sake of others whether or not they be in the majority.

The expression "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" is characteristic of an ethical theory which is in touch with a philosophical interpretation of the world that discards the word and idea "quality" and explains all qualitative difference as due to difference of quantity. We have discussed the problem as to the nature of quality in another article, and it will be sufficient in this connection to refer to our arguments as to why the idea of quality can not be abolished without leading to a confusion which would render all issues unintelligible.* We must recognize that quality is a real feature of the world, and in almost all practical questions the essential thing is quality and not quantity. Unless we understand the significance of quality, we shall either end in mysticism or in agnosticism. Mr. Spencer ended in agnosticism which is a declaration of bankruptcy in philosophy.

If there is anything in this world in which quality is essential and quantity indifferent, it is most assuredly the nature of right and wrong, of good and evil, and of truth and falsehood. No majority vote can establish truth, and no amount of bad eggs can be deemed equal in quality to one good one; and no preference as to the happiness of the greatest number can establish the morality of certain actions.

The acknowledgment of the rights of others to happiness is

* See *The Monist*, Vol. XV, pp. 375 ff.

a concession which Mr. Spencer in the name of hedonism makes to the traditional ethics of duty; it exposes the weakness of hedonism, but it is insufficient to remedy its shortcomings, and serves only as a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Though it is true that immorality will bring misery, the hankering after happiness is like a *fata morgana* which allures people into errors and mistakes of all kinds by the various false hopes which it arouses, and ethics comes to our rescue by giving us a better insight into the nature of conditions, and warning us of the dangers to which a blind pursuit of happiness inevitably leads.

Kant's ethics may be called the ethics of pure reason. He takes his stand on the principle that a man of goodwill will adopt a maxim of conduct which can be made a universal rule, and whatever may be said in criticism of this principle of pure reason introduced into the domain of ethics, we have no lesser endorsement than its application to practical life by the greatest republic in the world, the United States of North America. One most important and fundamental principle of our social and political life consists in the rule that all laws should apply generally, that there should be no exceptions which apply to one class of people alone, and this apparently insignificant little rule of our legislation has proved a most important safeguard against innumerable ills and illegitimate irregularities that otherwise would have crept into public life. We owe more to this little maxim than to any other part of the constitution, however important they may be in their own way. While this is generally acknowledged by lawyers, legislators, and social economists, philosophers have not as yet noted that it is a practical application of Kant's ultimate maxim of ethics. Those who criticize Kant may well consider the important endorsement his code of ethics has received in this way in the American constitution.

We abstain from entering into further details, but will mention one more point raised by our correspondent, who says that Kant shows a disregard to the need for some sort of emotional dynamics. This criticism is worth mentioning, because to a casual reader of Kant's ethics this seems to be a grievous fault of the great philosopher, but we must bear in mind in this connection that Kant did not intend to preach morals but to explain morality, and as Schopenhauer said, "To preach morals is easy, but to explain morality is difficult." It is a miscomprehension of Kant's purpose to say that he lacked emotional dynamics, for in his essay on ethics emotional dynamics has no place, but would only be a disturbing element.

Many a fervid negro preacher may possess more oratorical dynamics when addressing his emotional audience, and he may indeed be more impressive than the philosopher of pure reason, but for that reason I would not quite deem his ethical system superior to Kant's. Kant is not a preacher, but a thinker, and when writing his treatise on the subject he did not intend to work upon the emotions of his readers.

I have discussed the subject because it seems to me that our correspondent represents a large class of the thinking public who have not been able as yet to give a detailed study to the problems of ethics and are naturally carried away by arguments that lie on the surface. For similar reasons the principles of hedonistic ethics are favored by a large majority of liberal, broad-minded and even serious men, and though we are far from deeming that the pursuit of happiness is to be condemned, we are convinced that the errors of hedonism exercise a baneful influence upon the growing generation of the present age.

EDITOR.

MYSTICISM AND SCIENCE.

To the Editor of The Monist.

I have read with interest your article on Mysticism in the last *Monist* and beg to say that I see very little difference in our points of view. It seems to me, if I may say so, that in common with so many others you have regarded mysticism in its abnormal and negative, rather than its normal and positive aspect. It is partly of course a matter of terms. If one identifies mysticism with mystification and individualism and extravagance—and it certainly has these features—he will find little to value in it. But when one gets at the heart of mysticism it seems to me that he finds something that stands for a true appraisal of moral and spiritual truth as above the world of sensation and science. Here again, I find your use of the term “science” far ampler and more inclusive than the common usage. The term itself of course warrants your usage, but can it be made the recognized meaning? Your concluding words upon page 109, which seem to me most admirable, would make a place for what I am contending for as the heart of mysticism under science, but I question if the majority of scientists would endorse them.

I am indebted to you, as no doubt others will be, for the “Cherubinean Wanderer” extracts, as also for the entire discussion.

BERKELEY, CAL.

JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM.