Human Nature and Conduct

Excerpted from John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt and Company. First published in 1922, the book is based on a series of invited lectures that Dewey delivered at Stanford University in spring of 1918.

Dewey concedes in the preface that "the sub-title requires a word of explanation. The book does not purport to be a treatment of social psychology." Perhaps the problem, as Murray G. Murphey suggests, is "that here, as often before, Dewey is seeking to say something new and that he does not have an adequate vocabulary for his purpose."

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Part One: The Place of Habit in Conduct

I

Habits may be profitably compared to physiological functions, like breathing, digesting. The latter are, to be sure, involuntary, while habits are acquired. But important as is this difference for many purposes it should not conceal the fact that habits are like functions in many respects, and especially in requiring the cooperation of organism and environment. Breathing is an affair of the air as truly as of the lungs; digesting an affair of food as truly as of tissues of stomach. Seeing involves light just as certainly as it does the eye and optic nerve. Walking implicates the ground as well as the legs; speech demands physical air and human companionship and audience as well as vocal organs. We may shift from the biological to the mathematical use of the word function, and say that natural operations like breathing and digesting, acquired ones like speech and honesty, are functions of the surroundings as truly as of a person. They are things done *by* the environment by means of organic structures or acquired dispositions. The same air that under certain conditions ruffles the pool or wrecks buildings, under other conditions purifies the blood and conveys thought. The outcome depends upon what air acts upon. The social environment acts through native impulses and speech and moral habitudes manifest themselves. There are specific good reasons for the usual attribution of acts to the person from whom they immediately proceed. But to convert this special reference into a

belief of exclusive ownership is as misleading as to suppose that breathing and digesting are complete within the human body. To get a rational basis for moral discussion we must begin with recognizing that functions and habits are ways of using and incorporating the environment in which the latter has its say as surely as the former.

We may borrow words from a context less technical than that of biology, and convey the same idea by saying that habits are arts. They involve skill of sensory and motor organs, cunning or craft, and objective materials. They assimilate objective energies, and eventuate in command of environment. They require order, discipline, and manifest technique. They have a beginning, middle and end. Each stage marks progress in dealing with materials and tools, advance in converting material to active use. We should laugh at any one who said that he was master of stone working, but that the art was cooped up within himself and in no wise dependent upon support from objects and assistance from tools.

In morals we are however quite accustomed to such a fatuity. Moral dispositions are thought of as belonging exclusively to a self. The self is thereby isolated from natural and social surroundings. A whole school of morals flourishes upon capital drawn from restricting morals to character and then separating character from conduct, motives from actual deeds. Recognition of the analogy of moral action with functions and arts uproots the causes which have made morals subjective and "individualistic." It brings morals to earth, and if they still aspire to heaven it is to the heavens of the earth, and not to another world. Honesty, chastity, malice, peevishness, courage, triviality, industry, irresponsibility are not private possessions of a person. They are working adaptations of personal capacities with environing forces. All virtues and vices are habits which incorporate objective forces. They are interactions of elements contributed by the make-up of an individual with elements supplied by the outdoor world. They can be studied as objectively as physiological functions, and they can be modified by change of either personal or social elements.

If an individual were alone in the world, he would form his habits (assuming the impossible, namely, that he would be able to form them) in a moral vacuum. They would belong to him alone, or to him only in reference to physical forces. Responsibility and virtue would be his alone. But since habits involve the support of environing conditions, a society or some specific group of fellowmen, is always accessory before and after the fact. Some activity proceeds from a man; then it sets up reactions in the surroundings. Others approve, disapprove, protest, encourage, share and resist. Even letting a man alone is a definite response. Envy, admiration and imitation are complicities. Neutrality is non-existent. Conduct is always shared; this is the difference between it and a physiological process. It is not an ethical "ought" that conduct *should* be social. It *is* social, whether bad or good.

Washing one's hands of the guilt of others is a way of sharing guilt so far as it encourages in others a vicious way of action. Non-resistance to evil which takes the form of paying no attention to it is a way of promoting it. The desire of an individual to keep his own conscience stainless by standing aloof from badness may be a sure means of causing evil and thus of creating personal responsibil-

ity for it. Yet there are circumstances in which passive resistance may be the most effective form of nullification of wrong action, or in which heaping coals of fire on the evil-doer may be the most effective way of transforming conduct. To sentimentalize over a criminal—to "forgive" because of a glow of feeling—is to incur liability for production of criminals. But to suppose that infliction of retributive suffering suffices, without reference to concrete consequences, is to leave untouched old causes of criminality and to create new ones by fostering revenge and brutality. The abstract theory of justice which demands the "vindication" of law irrespective of instruction and reform of the wrong-doer is as much a refusal to recognize responsibility as is the sentimental gush which makes a suffering victim out of a criminal.

Courses of action which put the blame exclusively on a person as if his evil will were the sole cause of wrong-doing and those which condone offense on account of the share of social conditions in producing bad disposition, are equally ways of making an unreal separation of man from his surroundings, mind from the world. Causes for an act always exist, but causes are not excuses. Questions of causation are physical, not moral except when they concern future consequences. It is as causes of future actions that excuses and accusations alike must be considered. At present we give way to resentful passion, and then "rationalize" our surrender by calling it a vindication of justice. Our entire tradition regarding punitive justice tends to prevent recognition of social partnership in producing crime; it falls in with a belief in metaphysical free-will. By killing an evil-doer or shutting him up behind stone walls, we are enabled to forget both him and our part in creating him. Society excuses itself by laying the blame on the criminal; he retorts by putting the blame on bad early surroundings, the temptations of others, lack of opportunities, and the persecutions of officers of the law. Both are right, except in the wholesale character of their recriminations. But the effect on both sides is to throw the whole matter back into antecedent causation, a method which refuses to bring the matter to truly moral judgment. For morals has to do with acts still within our control, acts still to be performed. No amount of guilt on the part of the evil-doer absolves us from responsibility for the consequences upon him and others of our way of treating him, or from our continuing responsibility for the conditions under which persons develop perverse habits.

We need to discriminate between the physical and the moral question. The former concerns what *has* happened, and how it happened. To consider this question is indispensable to morals. Without an answer to it we cannot tell what forces are at work nor how to direct our actions so as to improve conditions. Until we know the conditions which have helped form the characters we approve and disapprove, our efforts to create the one and do away with the other will be blind and halting. But the moral issue concerns the future. It is prospective. To content ourselves with pronouncing judgments of merit and demerit without reference to the fact that our judgments are themselves facts which have consequences and that their value depends upon *their* consequences, is complacently to dodge the moral issue, perhaps even to indulge ourselves in pleasurable passion just as the person we condemn once indulged himself. The moral problem

is that of modifying the factors which now influence future results. To change the working character or will of another we have to alter objective conditions which enter into his habits. Our own schemes of judgment, of assigning blame and praise, of awarding punishment and honor, are part of these conditions.

In practical life, there are many recognitions of the part played by social factors in generating personal traits. One of them is our habit of making social classifications. We attribute distinctive characteristics to rich and poor, slum-dweller and captain of industry, rustic and suburbanite, officials, politicians, professors, to members of races, sets and parties. These judgments are usually too coarse to be of much use. But they show our practical awareness that personal traits are functions of social situations. When we generalize this perception and act upon it intelligently we are committed by it to recognize that we change character from worse to better only by changing conditions—among which, once more, are our own ways of dealing with the one we judge. We cannot change habit directly: that notion is magic. But we can change it indirectly by modifying conditions, by an intelligent selecting and weighting of the objects which engage attention and which influence the fulfilment of desires.

A savage can travel after a fashion in a jungle. Civilized activity is too complex to be carried on without smoothed roads. It requires signals and junction points; traffic authorities and means of easy and rapid transportation. It demands a congenial, antecedently prepared environment. Without it, civilization would relapse into barbarism in spite of the best of subjective intention and internal good disposition. The eternal dignity of labor and art lies in their effecting that permanent reshaping of environment which is the substantial foundation of future security and progress. Individuals flourish and wither away like the grass of the fields. But the fruits of their work endure and make possible the development of further activities having fuller significance. It is of grace not of ourselves that we lead civilized lives. There is sound sense in the old pagan notion that gratitude is the root of all virtue. Loyalty to whatever in the established environment makes a life of excellence possible is the beginning of all progress. The best we can accomplish for posterity is to transmit unimpaired and with some increment of meaning the environment that makes it possible to maintain the habits of decent and refined life. Our individual habits are links in forming the endless chain of humanity. Their significance depends upon the environment inherited from our forerunners, and it is enhanced as we foresee the fruits of our labors in the world in which our successors live.

For however much has been done, there always remains more to do. We can retain and transmit our own heritage only by constant remaking of our own environment. Piety to the past is not for its own sake nor for the sake of the past, but for the sake of a present so secure and enriched that it will create a yet better future. Individuals with their exhortations, their preachings and scoldings, their inner aspirations and sentiments have disappeared, but their habits endure, because these habits incorporate objective conditions in themselves. So will it be with *our* activities. We may desire abolition of war, industrial justice, greater equality of opportunity for all. But no amount of preaching good will or the golden rule or cultivation of sentiments of love and equity will accomplish

the results. There must be change in objective arrangements and institutions. We must work on the environment not merely on the hearts of men. To think otherwise is to suppose that flowers can be raised in a desert or motor cars run in a jungle. Both things can happen and without a miracle. But only by first changing the jungle and desert.

Yet the distinctively personal or subjective factors in habit count. Taste for flowers may be the initial step in building reservoirs and irrigation canals. The stimulation of desire and effort is one preliminary in the change of surroundings. While personal exhortation, advice and instruction is a feeble stimulus compared with that which steadily proceeds from the impersonal forces and depersonalized habitudes of the environment, yet they may start the latter going. Taste, appreciation and effort always spring from some accomplished objective situation. They have objective support; they represent the liberation of something formerly accomplished so that it is useful in further operation. A genuine appreciation of the beauty of flowers is not generated within a self-enclosed consciousness. It reflects a world in which beautiful flowers have already grown and been enjoyed. Taste and desire represent a prior objective fact recurring in action to secure perpetuation and extension. Desire for flowers comes after actual enjoyment of flowers. But it comes before the work that makes the desert blossom, it comes before *cultivation* of plants. Every ideal is preceded by an actuality; but the ideal is more than a repetition in inner image of the actual. It projects in securer and wider and fuller form some good which has been previously experienced in a precarious, accidental, fleeting way.

II

It is a significant fact that in order to appreciate the peculiar place of habit in activity we have to betake ourselves to bad habits, foolish idling, gambling, addiction to liquor and drugs. When we think of such habits, the union of habit with desire and with propulsive power is forced upon us. When we think of habits in terms of walking, playing a musical instrument, typewriting, we are much given to thinking of habits as technical abilities existing apart from our likings and as lacking in urgent impulsion. We think of them as passive tools waiting to be called into action from without. A bad habit suggests an inherent tendency to action and also a hold, command over us. It makes us do things we are ashamed of, things which we tell ourselves we prefer not to do. It overrides our formal resolutions, our conscious decisions. When we are honest with ourselves we acknowledge that a habit has this power because it is so intimately a part of ourselves. It has a hold upon us because we are the habit.

Our self-love, our refusal to face facts, combined perhaps with a sense of a possible better although unrealized self, leads us to eject the habit from the thought of ourselves and conceive it as an evil power which has somehow overcome us. We feed our conceit by recalling that the habit was not deliberately formed; we never intended to become idlers or gamblers or rouès. And how can anything be deeply ourselves which developed accidentally, without set intention? These traits of a bad habit are precisely the things which are most instructive about

all habits and about ourselves. They teach us that all habits are affections, that all have projectile power, and that a predisposition formed by a number of specific acts is an immensely more intimate and fundamental part of ourselves than are vague, general, conscious choices. All habits are demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self. In any intelligible sense of the word will, they *are* will. They form our effective desires and they furnish us with our working capacities. They rule our thoughts, determining which shall appear and be strong and which shall pass from light into obscurity.

We may think of habits as means, waiting, like tools in a box, to be used by conscious resolve. But they are something more than that. They are active means, means that project themselves, energetic and dominating ways of acting. We need to distinguish between materials, tools and means proper. Nails and boards are not strictly speaking means of a box. They are only materials for making it. Even the saw and hammer are means only when they are employed in some actual making. Otherwise they are tools, or potential means. They are actual means only when brought in conjunction with eye, arm and hand in some specific operation. And eye, arm and hand are, correspondingly, means proper only when they are in active operation. And whenever they are in action they are cooperating with external materials and energies. Without support from beyond themselves the eye stares blankly and the hand moves fumblingly. They are means only when they enter into organization with things which independently accomplish definite results. These organizations are habits.

This fact cuts two ways. Except in a contingent sense, with an "if," neither external materials nor bodily and mental organs are in themselves means. They have to be employed in coordinated conjunction with one another to be actual means, or habits. This statement may seem like the formulation in technical language of a common-place. But belief in magic has played a large part in human history. And the essence of all hocus-pocus is the supposition that results can be accomplished without the joint adaptation to each other of human powers and physical conditions. A desire for rain may induce men to wave willow branches and to sprinkle water. The reaction is natural and innocent. But men then go on to believe that their act has immediate power to bring rain without the cooperation of intermediate conditions of nature. This is magic; while it may be natural or spontaneous, it is not innocent. It obstructs intelligent study of operative conditions and wastes human desire and effort in futilities.

Belief in magic did not cease when the coarser forms of superstitious practice ceased. The principle of magic is found whenever it is hoped to get results without intelligent control of means; and also when it is supposed that means can exist and yet remain inert and inoperative. In morals and politics such expectations still prevail, and in so far the most important phases of human action are still affected by magic. We think that by feeling strongly enough about something, by wishing hard enough, we can get a desirable result, such as virtuous execution of a good resolve, or peace among nations, or good will in industry. We slur over the necessity of the cooperative action of objective conditions, and the fact that this cooperation is assured only by persistent and close study. Or, on the other hand, we fancy we can get these results by external machinery,

by tools or potential means, without a corresponding functioning of human desires and capacities. Often times these two false and contradictory beliefs are combined in the same person. The man who feels that *his* virtues are his own personal accomplishments is likely to be also the one who thinks that by passing laws he can throw the fear of God into others and make them virtuous by edict and prohibitory mandate.

Recently a friend remarked to me that there was one superstition current among even cultivated persons. They suppose that if one is told what to do, if the right *end* is pointed to them, all that is required in order to bring about the right act is will or wish on the part of the one who is to act. He used as an illustration the matter of physical posture; the assumption is that if a man is told to stand up straight, all that is further needed is wish and effort on his part, and the deed is done. He pointed out that this belief is on a par with primitive magic in its neglect of attention to the means which are involved in reaching an end. And he went on to say that the prevalence of this belief, starting with false notions about the control of the body and extending to control of mind and character, is the greatest bar to intelligent social progress. It bars the way because it makes us neglect intelligent inquiry to discover the means which will produce a desired result, and intelligent invention to procure the means. In short, it leaves out the importance of intelligently controlled habit.

We may cite his illustration of the real nature of a physical aim or order and its execution in its contrast with the current false notion.[1] A man who has a bad habitual posture tells himself, or is told, to stand up straight. If he is interested and responds, he braces himself, goes through certain movements, and it is assumed that the desired result is substantially attained; and that the position is retained at least as long as the man keeps the idea or order in his mind. Consider the assumptions which are here made. It is implied that the means or effective conditions of the realization of a purpose exist independently of established habit and even that they may be set in motion in opposition to habit. It is assumed that means are there, so that the failure to stand erect is wholly a matter of failure of purpose and desire. It needs paralysis or a broken leg or some other equally gross phenomenon to make us appreciate the importance of objective conditions.

Now in fact a man who *can* stand properly does so, and only a man who can, does. In the former case, fiats of will are unnecessary, and in the latter useless. A man who does not stand properly forms a habit of standing improperly, a positive, forceful habit. The common implication that his mistake is merely negative, that he is simply failing to do the right thing, and that the failure can be made good by an order of will is absurd. One might as well suppose that the man who is a slave of whiskey-drinking is merely one who fails to drink water. Conditions have been formed for producing a bad result, and the bad result will occur as long as those conditions exist. They can no more be dismissed by a direct effort of will than the conditions which create drought can be dispelled by whistling for wind. It is as reasonable to expect a fire to go out when it is ordered to stop burning as to suppose that a man can stand straight in consequence of

[1] I refer to Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*.

a direct action of thought and desire. The fire can be put out only by changing objective conditions; it is the same with rectification of bad posture.

Of course something happens when a man acts upon his idea of standing straight. For a little while, he stands differently, but only a different kind of badly. He then takes the unaccustomed feeling which accompanies his unusual stand as evidence that he is now standing right. But there are many ways of standing badly, and he has simply shifted his usual way to a compensatory bad way at some opposite extreme. When we realize this fact, we are likely to suppose that it exists because control of the *body* is physical and hence is external to mind and will. Transfer the command inside character and mind, and it is fancied that an idea of an end and the desire to realize it will take immediate effect. After we get to the point of recognizing that habits must intervene between wish and execution in the case of bodily acts, we still cherish the illusions that they can be dispensed with in the case of mental and moral acts. Thus the net result is to make us sharpen the distinction between non-moral and moral activities, and to lead us to confine the latter strictly within a private, immaterial realm. But in fact, formation of ideas as well as their execution depends upon habit. *If* we could form a correct idea without a correct habit, then possibly we could carry it out irrespective of habit. But a wish gets definite form only in connection with an idea, and an idea gets shape and consistency only when it has a habit back of it. Only when a man can already perform an act of standing straight does he know what it is like to have a right posture and only then can he summon the idea required for proper execution. The act must come before the thought, and a habit before an ability to evoke the thought at will. Ordinary psychology reverses the actual state of affairs.

Ideas, thoughts of ends, are not spontaneously generated. There is no immaculate conception of meanings or purposes. Reason pure of all influence from prior habit is a fiction. But pure sensations out of which ideas can be framed apart from habit are equally fictitious. The sensations and ideas which are the "stuff" of thought and purpose are alike affected by habits manifested in the acts which give rise to sensations and meanings. The dependence of thought, or the more intellectual factor in our conceptions, upon prior experience is usually admitted. But those who attack the notion of thought pure from the influence of experience, usually identify experience with sensations impressed upon an empty mind. They therefore replace the theory of unmixed thoughts with that of pure unmixed sensations as the stuff of all conceptions, purposes and beliefs. But distinct and independent sensory qualities, far from being original elements, are the products of a highly skilled analysis which disposes of immense technical scientific resources. To be able to single out a definitive sensory element in any field is evidence of a high degree of previous training, that is, of well-formed habits. A moderate amount of observation of a child will suffice to reveal that even such gross discriminations as black, white, red, green, are the result of some years of active dealings with things in the course of which habits have been set up. It is not such a simple matter to have a clear-cut sensation. The latter is a sign of training, skill, habit.

Admission that the idea of, say, standing erect is dependent upon sensory ma-

terials is, therefore equivalent to recognition that it is dependent upon the habitual attitudes which govern concrete sensory materials. The medium of habit filters all the material that reaches our perception and thought. The filter is not, however, chemically pure. It is a reagent which adds new qualities and rearranges what is received. Our ideas truly depend upon experience, but so do our sensations. And the experience upon which they both depend is the operation of habits—originally of instincts. Thus our purposes and commands regarding action (whether physical or moral) come to us through the refracting medium of bodily and moral habits. Inability to think aright is sufficiently striking to have caught the attention of moralists. But a false psychology has led them to interpret it as due to a necessary conflict of flesh and spirit, not as an indication that our ideas are as dependent, to say the least, upon our habits as are our acts upon our conscious thoughts and purposes.

Only the man who can maintain a correct posture has the stuff out of which to form that idea of standing erect which can be the starting point of a right act. Only the man whose habits are already good can know what the good is. Immediate, seemingly instinctive, feeling of the direction and end of various lines of behavior is in reality the feeling of habits working below direct consciousness. The psychology of illusions of perception is full of illustrations of the distortion introduced by habit into observation of objects. The same fact accounts for the intuitive element in judgments of action, an element which is valuable or the reverse in accord with the quality of dominant habits. For, as Aristotle remarked, the untutored moral perceptions of a good man are usually trustworthy, those of a bad character, not. (But he should have added that the influence of social custom as well as personal habit has to be taken into account in estimating who is the good man and the good judge.)

What is true of the dependence of execution of an idea upon habit is true, then, of the formation and quality of the idea. Suppose that by a happy chance a right concrete idea or purpose—concrete, not simply correct in words—has been hit upon: What happens when one with an incorrect habit tries to act in accord with it? Clearly the idea can be carried into execution only with a mechanism already there. If this is defective or perverted, the best intention in the world will yield bad results. In the case of no other engine does one suppose that a defective machine will turn out good goods simply because it is invited to. Everywhere else we recognize that the design and structure of the agency employed tell directly upon the work done. Given a bad habit and the "will" or mental direction to get a good result, and the actual happening is a reverse or looking-glass manifestation of the usual fault—a compensatory twist in the opposite direction. Refusal to recognize this fact only leads to a separation of mind from body, and to supposing that mental or "psychical" mechanisms are different in kind from those of bodily operations and independent of them. So deep seated is this notion that even so "scientific" a theory as modern psycho-analysis thinks that mental habits can be straightened out by some kind of purely psychical manipulation without reference to the distortions of sensation and perception which are due to bad bodily sets. The other side of the error is found in the notion of "scientific" nerve physiologists that it is only necessary to locate a par-

ticular diseased cell or local lesion, independent of the whole complex of organic habits, in order to rectify conduct.

Means are means; they are intermediates, middle terms. To grasp this fact is to have done with the ordinary dualism of means and ends. The "end" is merely a series of acts viewed at a remote stage; and a means is merely the series viewed at an earlier one. The distinction of means and end arises in surveying the *course* of a proposed *line* of action, a connected series in time. The "end" is the last act thought of; the means are the acts to be performed prior to it in time. To *reach* an end we must take our mind off from it and attend to the act which is next to be performed. We must make that the end. The only exception to this statement is in cases where customary habit determines the course of the series. Then all that is wanted is a cue to set it off. But when the proposed end involves any deviation from usual action, or any rectification of it—as in the case of standing straight—then the main thing is to find some act which is different from the usual one. The discovery and performance of this unaccustomed act is the "end" to which we must devote all attention. Otherwise we shall simply do the old thing over again, no matter what is our conscious command. The only way of accomplishing this discovery is through a flank movement. We must stop even thinking of standing up straight. To think of it is fatal, for it commits us to the operation of an established habit of standing wrong. We must find an act within our power which is disconnected from any thought about standing. We must start to do another thing which on one side inhibits our falling into the customary bad position and on the other side is the beginning of a series of acts which may lead into the correct posture.[2] The hard-drinker who keeps thinking of not drinking is doing what he can to initiate the acts which lead to drinking. He is starting with the stimulus to his habit. To succeed he must find some positive interest or line of action which will inhibit the drinking series and which by instituting another course of action will bring him to his desired end. In short, the man's true aim is to discover some course of action, having nothing to do with the habit of drink or standing erect, which will take him where he wants to go. The discovery of this other series is at once his means and his end. Until one takes intermediate acts seriously enough to treat them as ends, one wastes one's time in any effort at change of habits. Of the intermediate acts, the most important is the *next* one. The first or earliest means is the most important *end* to discover.

Means and ends are two names for the same reality. The terms denote not a division in reality but a distinction in judgment. Without understanding this fact we cannot understand the nature of habits nor can we pass beyond the usual separation of the moral and non-moral in conduct. "End" is a name for a series of acts taken collectively—like the term army. "Means" is a name for the same series taken distributively—like this soldier, that officer. To think of the end signifies to extend and enlarge our view of the act to be performed. It means to look at the next act in perspective, not permitting it to occupy the entire field of vision. To bear the end in mind signifies that we should not stop

[2]The technique of this process is stated in the book of Mr. Alexander already referred to, and the theoretical statement given is borrowed from Mr. Alexander's analysis.

thinking about our *next* act until we form some reasonably clear idea of the *course* of action to which it commits us. To attain a remote end means on the other hand to treat the end as a series of means. To say that an end is remote or distant, to say in fact that it is an end at all, is equivalent to saying that obstacles intervene between us and it. If, however, it remains a distant end, it becomes a *mere* end, that is a dream. As soon as we have projected it, we must begin to work backward in thought. We must change *what* is to be done into a *how*, the means whereby. The end thus re-appears as a series of "what nexts," and the what next of chief importance is the one nearest the present state of the one acting. Only as the end is converted into means is it definitely conceived, or intellectually defined, to say nothing of being executable. Just as end, it is vague, cloudy, impressionistic. We do not *know* what we are really after until a *course* of action is mentally worked out. Aladdin with his lamp could dispense with translating ends into means, but no one else can do so.

Now the thing which is closest to us, the means within our power, is a habit. Some habit impeded by circumstances is the source of the projection of the end. It is also the primary means in its realization. The habit is propulsive and moves anyway toward some end, or result, whether it is projected as an end-in-view or not. The man who can walk does walk; the man who can talk does converse—if only with himself. How is this statement to be reconciled with the fact that we are not always walking and talking; that our habits seem so often to be latent, inoperative? Such inactivity holds only of *overt*, visibly obvious operation. In actuality each habit operates all the time of waking life; though like a member of a crew taking his turn at the wheel, its operation becomes the dominantly characteristic trait of an act only occasionally or rarely.

The habit of walking is expressed in what a man sees when he keeps still, even in dreams. The recognition of distances and directions of things from his place at rest is the obvious proof of this statement. The habit of locomotion is latent in the sense that it is covered up, counteracted, by a habit of seeing which is definitely at the fore. But counteraction is not suppression. Locomotion is a potential energy, not in any metaphysical sense, but in the physical sense in which potential energy as well as kinetic has to be taken account of in any scientific description. Everything that a man who has the habit of locomotion does and thinks he does and thinks differently on that account. This fact is recognized in current psychology, but is falsified into an association of sensations. Were it not for the continued operation of all habits in every act, no such thing as character could exist. There would be simply a bundle, an untied bundle at that, of isolated acts. Character is the interpenetration of habits. If each habit existed in an insulated compartment and operated without affecting or being affected by others, character would not exist. That is, conduct would lack unity being only a juxtaposition of disconnected reactions to separated situations. But since environments overlap, since situations are continuous and those remote from one another contain like elements, a continuous modification of habits by one another is constantly going on. A man may give himself away in a look or a gesture. Character can be read through the medium of individual acts.

Of course interpenetration is never total. It is most marked in what we call

strong characters. Integration is an achievement rather than a datum. A weak, unstable, vacillating character is one in which different habits alternate with one another rather than embody one another. The strength, solidity of a habit is not its own possession but is due to reinforcement by the force of other habits which it absorbs into itself. Routine specialization always works against interpenetration. Men with "pigeon-hole" minds are not infrequent. Their diverse standards and methods of judgment for scientific, religious, political matters testify to isolated compartmental habits of action. Character that is unable to undergo successfully the strain of thought and effort required to bring competing tendencies into a unity, builds up barriers between different systems of likes and dislikes. The emotional stress incident to conflict is avoided not by readjustment but by effort at confinement. Yet the exception proves the rule. Such persons are successful in keeping different ways of reacting apart from one another in consciousness rather than in action. Their character is marked by stigmata resulting from this division.

The mutual modification of habits by one another enables us to define the nature of the moral situation. It is not necessary nor advisable to be always considering the interaction of habits with one another, that is to say the effect of a particular habit upon character—which is a name for the total interaction. Such consideration distracts attention from the problem of building up an effective habit. A man who is learning French, or chess-playing or engineering has his hands full with his particular occupation. He would be confused and hampered by constant inquiry into its effect upon character. He would resemble the centipede who by trying to think of the movement of each leg in relation to all the others was rendered unable to travel. At any given time, certain habits must be taken for granted as a matter of course. Their operation is not a matter of moral judgment. They are treated as technical, recreational, professional, hygienic or economic or esthetic rather than moral. To lug in morals, or ulterior effect on character at every point, is to cultivate moral valetudinarianism or priggish posing. Nevertheless any act, even that one which passes ordinarily as trivial, may entail such consequences for habit and character as upon occasion to require judgment from the standpoint of the whole body of conduct. It then comes under moral scrutiny. To know when to leave acts without distinctive moral judgment and when to subject them to it is itself a large factor in morality. The serious matter is that this relative pragmatic, or intellectual, distinction between the moral and non-moral, has been solidified into a fixed and absolute distinction, so that some acts are popularly regarded as forever within and others forever without the moral domain. From this fatal error recognition of the relations of one habit to others preserves us. For it makes us see that character is the name given to the working interaction of habits, and that the cumulative effect of insensible modifications worked by a particular habit in the body of preferences may at any moment require attention.

The word habit may seem twisted somewhat from its customary use when employed as we have been using it. But we need a word to express that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity and in that sense acquired; which contains within itself a certain ordering or systematization of minor ele-

ments of action; which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation; and which is operative in some subdued subordinate form even when not obviously dominating activity. Habit even in its ordinary usage comes nearer to denoting these facts than any other word. If the facts are recognized we may also use the words attitude and disposition. But unless we have first made clear to ourselves the facts which have been set forth under the name of habit, these words are more likely to be misleading than is the word habit. For the latter conveys explicitly the sense of operativeness, actuality. Attitude and, as ordinarily used, disposition suggest something latent, potential, something which requires a positive stimulus outside themselves to become active. If we perceive that they denote positive forms of action which are released merely through removal of some counteracting "inhibitory" tendency, and then become overt, we may employ them instead of the word habit to denote subdued, non-patent forms of the latter.

In this case, we must bear in mind that the word disposition means predisposition, readiness to act overtly in a specific fashion whenever opportunity is presented, this opportunity consisting in removal of the pressure due to the dominance of some overt habit; and that attitude means some special case of a predisposition, the disposition waiting as it were to spring through an opened door. While it is admitted that the word habit has been used in a somewhat broader sense than is usual, we must protest against the tendency in psychological literature to limit its meaning to repetition. This usage is much less in accord with popular usage than is the wider way in which we have used the word. It assumes from the start the identity of habit with routine. Repetition is in no sense the essence of habit. Tendency to repeat acts is an incident of many habits but not of all. A man with the habit of giving way to anger may show his habit by a murderous attack upon some one who has offended. His act is nonetheless due to habit because it occurs only once in his life. The essence of habit is an acquired predisposition to *ways* or modes of response, not to particular acts except as, under special conditions, these express a way of behaving. Habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts. It means will.

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Part Three: The Place of Intelligence in Conduct

I

In discussing habit and impulse we have repeatedly met topics where reference to the work of thought was imperative. Explicit consideration of the place and office of intelligence in conduct can hardly begin otherwise than by gathering together these incidental references and reaffirming their significance. The stimulation of reflective imagination by impulse, its dependence upon established habits, and its effect in transforming habit and regulating impulse

forms, accordingly, our first theme.

Habits are conditions of intellectual efficiency. They operate in two ways upon intellect. Obviously, they restrict its reach, they fix its boundaries. They are blinders that confine the eyes of mind to the road ahead. They prevent thought from straying away from its imminent occupation to a landscape more varied and picturesque but irrelevant to practice. Outside the scope of habits, thought works gropingly, fumbling in confused uncertainty; and yet habit made complete in routine shuts in thought so effectually that it is no longer needed or possible. The routineer's road is a ditch out of which he cannot get, whose sides enclose him, directing his course so thoroughly that he no longer thinks of his path or his destination. All habit-forming involves the beginning of an intellectual specialization which if unchecked ends in thoughtless action.

Significantly enough this fullblown result is called absentmindedness. Stimulus and response are mechanically linked together in an unbroken chain. Each successive act facilely evoked by its predecessor pushes us automatically into the next act of a predetermined series. Only a signal flag of distress recalls consciousness to the task of carrying on. Fortunately nature which beckons us to this path of least resistance also puts obstacles in the way of our complete acceptance of its invitation. Success in achieving a ruthless and dull efficiency of action is thwarted by untoward circumstance. The most skilful aptitude bumps at times into the unexpected, and so gets into trouble from which only observation and invention extricate it. Efficiency in following a beaten path has then to be converted into breaking a new road through strange lands.

Nevertheless what in effect is love of ease has masqueraded morally as love of perfection. A goal of finished accomplishment has been set up which if it were attained would mean only mindless action. It has been called complete and free activity when in truth it is only a treadmill activity or marching in one place. The practical impossibility of reaching, in an all around way and all at once such a "perfection" has been recognized. But such a goal has nevertheless been conceived as the ideal, and progress has been defined as approximation to it. Under diverse intellectual skies the ideal has assumed diverse forms and colors. But all of them have involved the conception of a completed activity, a static perfection. Desire and need have been treated as signs of deficiency, and endeavor as proof not of power but of incompletion.

In Aristotle this conception of an end which exhausts all realization and excludes all potentiality appears as a definition of the highest excellence. It of necessity excludes all want and struggle and all dependencies. It is neither practical nor social. Nothing is left but a self-revolving, self-sufficing thought engaged in contemplating its own sufficiency. Some forms of Oriental morals have united this logic with a profounder psychology, and have seen that the final terminus on this road is Nirvana, an obliteration of all thought and desire. In medieval science, the ideal reappeared as a definition of heavenly bliss accessible only to a redeemed immortal soul. Herbert Spencer is far enough away from Aristotle, medieval Christianity and Buddhism; but the idea re-emerges in his conception of a goal of evolution in which adaptation of organism to environment is complete and final. In popular thought, the conception lives in the vague

thought of a remote state of attainment in which we shall be beyond "temptation," and in which virtue by its own inertia will persist as a triumphant consummation. Even Kant who begins with a complete scorn for happiness ends with an "ideal" of the eternal and undisturbed union of virtue and joy, though in his case nothing but a symbolic approximation is admitted to be feasible.

The fallacy in these versions of the same idea is perhaps the most pervasive of all fallacies in philosophy. So common is it that one questions whether it might not be called *the* philosophical fallacy. It consists in the supposition that whatever is found true under certain conditions may forthwith be asserted universally or without limits and conditions. Because a thirsty man gets satisfaction in drinking water, bliss consists in being drowned. Because the success of any particular struggle is measured by reaching a point of frictionless action, therefore there is such a thing as an all-inclusive end of effortless smooth activity endlessly maintained. It is forgotten that success is success *of* a specific effort, and satisfaction the fulfilment *of* a specific demand, so that success and satisfaction become meaningless when severed from the wants and struggles whose consummations they are, or when taken universally. The philosophy of Nirvana comes the closest to admission of this fact, but even it holds Nirvana to be desirable.

Habit is however more than a restriction of thought. Habits become negative limits because they are first positive agencies. The more numerous our habits the wider the field of possible observation and foretelling. The more flexible they are, the more refined is perception in its discrimination and the more delicate the presentation evoked by imagination. The sailor is intellectually at home on the sea, the hunter in the forest, the painter in his studio, the man of science in his laboratory. These commonplaces are universally recognized in the concrete; but their significance is obscured and their truth denied in the current general theory of mind. For they mean nothing more or less than that habits formed in process of exercising biological aptitudes are the sole agents of observation, recollection, foresight and judgment: a mind or consciousness or soul in general which performs these operations is a myth.

The doctrine of a single, simple and indissoluble soul was the cause and the effect of failure to recognize that concrete habits are the means of knowledge and thought. Many who think themselves scientifically emancipated and who freely advertise the soul for a superstition, perpetuate a false notion of what knows, that is, of a separate knower. Nowadays they usually fix upon consciousness in general, as a stream or process or entity; or else, more specifically upon sensations and images as the tools of intellect. Or sometimes they think they have scaled the last heights of realism by adverting grandiosely to a formal knower in general who serves as one term in the knowing relation; by dismissing psychology as irrelevant to knowledge and logic, they think to conceal the psychological monster they have conjured up.

Now it is dogmatically stated that no such conceptions of the seat, agent or vehicle will go psychologically at the present time. Concrete habits do all the perceiving, recognizing, imagining, recalling, judging, conceiving and reasoning that is done. "Consciousness," whether as a stream or as special sensations

and images, expresses functions of habits, phenomena of their formation, operation, their interruption and reorganization.

Yet habit does not, of itself, know, for it does not of itself stop to think, observe or remember. Neither does impulse of itself engage in reflection or contemplation. It just lets go. Habits by themselves are too organized, too insistent and determinate to need to indulge in inquiry or imagination. And impulses are too chaotic, tumultuous and confused to be able to know even if they wanted to. Habit as such is too definitely adapted to an environment to survey or analyze it, and impulse is too indeterminately related to the environment to be capable of reporting anything about it. Habit incorporates, enacts or overrides objects, but it doesn't know them. Impulse scatters and obliterates them with its restless stir. A certain delicate combination of habit and impulse is requisite for observation, memory and judgment. Knowledge which is not projected against the black unknown lives in the muscles, not in consciousness.

We may, indeed, be said to *know how* by means of our habits. And a sensible intimation of the practical function of knowledge has led men to identify all acquired practical skill, or even the instinct of animals, with knowledge. We walk and read aloud, we get off and on street cars, we dress and undress, and do a thousand useful acts without thinking of them. We know something, namely, how to do them. Bergson's philosophy of intuition is hardly more than an elaborately documented commentary on the popular conception that by instinct a bird knows how to build a nest and a spider to weave a web. But after all, this practical work done by habit and instinct in securing prompt and exact adjustment to the environment is not knowledge, except by courtesy. Or, if we choose to call it knowledge—and no one has the right to issue an ukase to the contrary—then other things also called knowledge, knowledge *of* and *about* things, knowledge *that* things are thus and so, knowledge that involves reflection and conscious appreciation, remains of a different sort, unaccounted for and undescribed.

For it is a commonplace that the more suavely efficient a habit the more unconsciously it operates. Only a hitch in its workings occasions emotion and provokes thought. Carlyle and Rousseau, hostile in temperament and outlook, yet agree in looking at consciousness as a kind of disease, since we have no consciousness of bodily or mental organs as long as they work at ease in perfect health. The idea of disease is, however, aside from the point, unless we are pessimistic enough to regard every slip in total adjustment of a person to its surroundings as something abnormal—a point of view which once more would identify well-being with perfect automatism. The truth is that in every waking moment, the complete balance of the organism and its environment is constantly interfered with and as constantly restored. Hence the "stream of consciousness" in general, and in particular that phase of it celebrated by William James as alternation of flights and perchings. Life is interruptions and recoveries. Continuous interruption is not possible in the activities of an individual. Absence of perfect equilibrium is not equivalent to a complete crushing of organized activity. When the disturbance amounts to such a pitch as that, the self goes to pieces. It is like shell-shock. Normally, the environment remains sufficiently in

harmony with the body of organized activities to sustain most of them in active function. But a novel factor in the surroundings releases some impulse which tends to initiate a different and incompatible activity, to bring about a redistribution of the elements of organized activity between those have been respectively central and subsidiary. Thus the hand guided by the eye moves toward a surface. Visual quality is the dominant element. The hand comes in contact with an object. The eye does not cease to operate but some unexpected quality of touch, a voluptuous smoothness or annoying heat, compels a readjustment in which the touching, handling activity strives to dominate the action. Now at these moments of a shifting in activity conscious feeling and thought arise and are accentuated. The disturbed adjustment of organism and environment is reflected in a temporary strife which concludes in a coming to terms of the old habit and the new impulse.

In this period of redistribution impulse determines the direction of movement. It furnishes the focus about which reorganization swirls. Our attention in short is always directed forward to bring to notice something which is imminent but which as yet escapes us. Impulse defines the peering, the search, the inquiry. It is, in logical language, the movement into the unknown, not into the immense inane of the unknown at large, but into that special unknown which when it is hit upon restores an ordered, unified action. During this search, old habit supplies content, filling, definite, recognizable, subject-matter. It begins as vague presentiment of what we are going towards. As organized habits are definitely deployed and focused, the confused situation takes on form, it is "cleared up"—the essential function of intelligence. Processes become objects. Without habit there is only irritation and confused hesitation. With habit alone there is a machine-like repetition, a duplicating recurrence of old acts. With conflict of habits and release of impulse there is conscious search.

II

We are going far afield from any direct moral issue. But the problem of the place of knowledge and judgment in conduct depends upon getting the fundamental psychology of thought straightened out. So the excursion must be continued. We compare life to a traveler faring forth. We may consider him first at a moment where his activity is confident, straightforward, organized. He marches on giving no direct attention to his path, nor thinking of his destination. Abruptly he is pulled up, arrested. Something is going wrong in his activity. From the standpoint of an onlooker, he has met an obstacle which must be overcome before his behavior can be unified into a successful ongoing. From his own standpoint, there is shock, confusion, perturbation, uncertainty. For the moment he doesn't know what hit him, as we say, nor where he is going. But a new impulse is stirred which becomes the starting point of an investigation, a looking into things, a trying to see them, to find out what is going on. Habits which were interfered with begin to get a new direction as they cluster about the impulse to look and see. The blocked habits of locomotion give him a sense of where he *was* going, of what he had set out to do, and of the ground already traversed.

As he looks, he sees definite things which are not just things at large but which are related to his course of action. The momentum of the activity entered upon persists as a sense of direction, of aim; it is an anticipatory project. In short, he recollects, observes and plans.

The trinity of these forecasts, perceptions and remembrances form a subject-matter of discriminated and identified objects. These objects represent habits turned inside out. They exhibit both the onward tendency of habit and the objective conditions which have been incorporated within it. Sensations in immediate consciousness are elements of action dislocated through the shock of interruption. They never, however, completely monopolize the scene; for there is a body of residual undisturbed habits which is reflected in remembered and perceived objects having a meaning. Thus out of shock and puzzlement there gradually emerges a figured framework of objects, past, present, future. These shade off variously into a vast penumbra of vague, unfigured things, a setting which is taken for granted and not at all explicitly presented. The complexity of the figured scene in its scope and refinement of contents depends wholly upon prior habits and their organization. The reason a baby can know little and an experienced adult know much when confronting the same things is not because the latter has a "mind" which the former has not, but because one has already formed habits which the other has still to acquire. The scientific man and the philosopher like the carpenter, the physician and politician know with their habits not with their "consciousness." The latter is eventual, not a source. Its occurrence marks a peculiarly delicate connection between highly organized habits and unorganized impulses. Its contents or objects, observed, recollected, projected and generalized into principles, represent the incorporated material of habits coming to the surface, because habits are disintegrating at the touch of conflicting impulses. But they also gather themselves together to comprehend impulse and make it effective.

This account is more or less strange as psychology but certain aspects of it are commonplaces in a static logical formulation. It is, for example, almost a truism that knowledge is both synthetic and analytic; a set of discriminated elements connected by relations. This combination of opposite factors of unity and difference, elements and relations, has been a standing paradox and mystery of the theory of knowledge. It will remain so until we connect the theory of knowledge with an empirically verifiable theory of behavior. The steps of this connection have been sketched and we may enumerate them. We know at such times as habits are impeded, when a conflict is set up in which impulse is released. So far as this impulse sets up a definite forward tendency it constitutes the forward, prospective character of knowledge. In this phase unity or synthesis is found. We are striving to unify our responses, to achieve a consistent environment which will restore unity of conduct. Unity, relations, are prospective; they mark out lines converging to a focus. They are "ideal." But *what* we know, the objects that present themselves with definiteness and assurance, are retrospective; they are the conditions which have been mastered, incorporated in the past. They are elements, discriminated, analytic just because old habits so far as they are checked are also broken into objects which define the obstruction

of ongoing activity. They are "real," not ideal. Unity is something sought; split, division is something given, at hand. Were we to carry the same psychology into detail we should come upon the explanation of perceived particulars and conceived universals, of the relation of discovery and proof, induction and deduction, the discrete and the continuous. Anything approaching an adequate discussion is too technical to be here in place. But the main point, however technical and abstract it may be in statement, is of far reaching importance for everything concerned with moral beliefs, conscience and judgments of right and wrong.

The most general, if vaguest issue, concerns the nature of the organ of moral knowledge. As long as knowledge in general is thought to be the work of a special agent, whether soul, consciousness, intellect or a knower in general, there is a logical propulsion towards postulating a special agent for knowledge of moral distinctions. Consciousness and conscience have more than a verbal connection. If the former is something in itself, a seat or power which antecedes intellectual functions, why should not the latter be also a unique faculty with its own separate jurisdiction? If reason in general is independent of empirically verifiable realities of human nature, such as instincts and organized habits, why should there not also exist a moral or practical reason independent of natural operations? On the other hand if it is recognized that knowing is carried on through the medium of natural factors, the assumption of special agencies for moral knowing becomes outlawed and incredible. Now the matter of the existence or non-existence of such special agencies is no technically remote matter. The belief in a separate organ involves belief in a separate and independent subject-matter. The question fundamentally at issue is nothing more or less than whether moral values, regulations, principles and objects form a separate and independent domain or whether they are part and parcel of a normal development of a life process.

These considerations explain why the denial of a separate organ of knowledge, of a separate instinct or impulse toward knowing, is not the wilful philistinism it is sometimes alleged to be. There is of course a sense in which there is a distinctive impulse, or rather habitual disposition, to know. But in the same sense there is an impulse to aviate, to run a typewriter or write stories for magazines. Some activities result in knowledge, as others result in these other things. The result may be so important as to induce distinctive attention to the activities in order to foster them. From an incident, almost a by-product, attainment of truth, physical, social, moral, may become the leading characteristic of some activities. Under such circumstances, they become transformed. Knowing is then a distinctive activity, with its own ends and its peculiarly adapted processes. All this is a matter of course. Having hit upon knowledge accidentally, as it were, and the product being liked and its importance noted, knowledge-getting becomes, upon occasion, a definite occupation. And education confirms the disposition, as it may confirm that of a musician or carpenter or tennis-player. But there is no more an original separate impulse or power in one case than in the other. Every habit is impulsive, that is projective, urgent, and the habit of knowing is no exception.

The reason for insisting on this fact is not failure to appreciate the distinctive value of knowledge when once it comes into existence. This value is so immense it may be called unique. The aim of the discussion is not to subordinate knowing to some hard, prosaic utilitarian end. The reason for insistence upon the derivative position of knowing in activity, roots in a sense for fact, and in a realization that the doctrine of a separate original power and impulse of knowledge cuts knowledge off from other phases of human nature, and results in its non-natural treatment. The isolation of intellectual disposition from concrete empirical facts of biological impulse and habit-formation entails a denial of the continuity of mind with nature. Aristotle asserted that the faculty of pure knowing enters a man from without as through a door. Many since his day have asserted that knowing and doing have no intrinsic connection with each other. Reason is asserted to have no responsibility to experience; conscience is said to be a sublime oracle independent of education and social influences. All of these views follow naturally from a failure to recognize that all knowing, judgment, belief represent an acquired result of the workings of natural impulses in connection with environment.

Upon the ethical side, as has been intimated, the matter at issue concerns the nature of conscience. Conscience has been asserted by orthodox moralists to be unique in origin and subject-matter. The same view is embodied by implication in all those popular methods of moral training which attempt to fix rigid authoritative notions of right and wrong by disconnecting moral judgments from the aids and tests which are used in other forms of knowledge. Thus it has been asserted that conscience is an original faculty of illumination which (if it has not been dimmed by indulgence in sin) shines upon moral truths and objects and reveals them without effort for precisely what they are. Those who hold this view differ enormously among themselves as to the nature of the objects of conscience. Some hold them to be general principles, others individual acts, others the order of worth among motives, others the sense of duty in general, others the unqualified authority of right. Still others carry the implied logic of authority to conclusion, and identify knowledge of moral truths with a divine supernatural revelation of a code of commandments.

But among these diversities there is agreement about one fundamental. There must be a separate non-natural faculty of moral knowledge because the things to be known, the matters of right and wrong, good and evil, obligation and responsibility, form a separate domain, separate that is from that of ordinary action in its usual human and social significance. The latter activities may be prudential, political, scientific, economic. But, from the standpoint of these theories, they have no moral meaning until they are brought under the purview of this separate unique department of our nature. It thus turns out that the so-called intuitional theories of moral knowledge concentrate in themselves all the ideas which are subject to criticism in these pages: Namely, the assertion that morality is distinct in origin, working and destiny from the natural structure and career of human nature. This fact is the excuse, if excuse be desired, for a seemingly technical excursion that links intellectual activity with the conjoint operation of habit and impulse.

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Part Four: Conclusion

Conduct when distributed under heads like habit, impulse and intelligence gets artificially shredded. In discussing each of these topics we have run into the others. We conclude, then, with an attempt to gather together some outstanding considerations about conduct as a whole.

I

The foremost conclusion is that morals has to do with all activity into which alternative possibilities enter. For wherever they enter a difference between better and worse arises. Reflection upon action means uncertainty and consequent need of decision as to which course is better. The better is the good; the best is not better than the good but is simply the discovered good. Comparative and superlative degrees are only paths to the positive degree of action. The worse or evil is a rejected good. In deliberation and before choice no evil presents itself as evil. Until it is rejected, it is a competing good. After rejection, it figures not as a lesser good, but as the bad of that situation.

Actually then only deliberate action, conduct into which reflective choice enters, is distinctively moral, for only then does there enter the question of better and worse. Yet it is a perilous error to draw a hard and fast line between action into which deliberation and choice enter and activity due to impulse and matter-of-fact habit. One of the consequences of action is to involve us in predicaments where we have to reflect upon things formerly done as matter of course. One of the chief problems of our dealings with others is to induce them to reflect upon affairs which they usually perform from unreflective habit. On the other hand, every reflective choice tends to relegate some conscious issue into a deed or habit henceforth taken for granted and not thought upon. Potentially therefore every and any act is within the scope of morals, being a candidate for possible judgment with respect to its better-or-worse quality. It thus becomes one of the most perplexing problems of reflection to discover just how far to carry it, what to bring under examination and what to leave to unscrutinized habit. Because there is no final recipe by which to decide this question all moral judgment is experimental and subject to revision by its issue.

The recognition that conduct covers every act that is judged with reference to better and worse and that the need of this judgment is potentially coextensive with all portions of conduct, saves us from the mistake which makes morality a separate department of life. Potentially conduct is one hundred per cent of our acts. Hence we must decline to admit theories which identify morals with the purification of motives, edifying character, pursuing remote and elusive perfection, obeying supernatural command, acknowledging the authority of duty. Such notions have a dual bad effect. First they get in the way of observation of conditions and consequences. They divert thought into side issues. Secondly,

while they confer a morbid exaggerated quality upon things which are viewed under the aspect of morality, they release the larger part of the acts of life from serious, that is moral, survey. Anxious solicitude for the few acts which are deemed moral is accompanied by edicts of exemption and baths of immunity for most acts. A moral moratorium prevails for everyday affairs.

When we observe that morals is at home wherever considerations of the worse and better are involved, we are committed to noting that morality is a continuing process not a fixed achievement. Morals means growth of conduct in meaning; at least it means that kind of expansion in meaning which is consequent upon observations of the conditions and outcome of conduct. It is all one with growing. Growing and growth are the same fact expanded in actuality or telescoped in thought. In the largest sense of the word, morals is education. It is learning the meaning of what we are about and employing that meaning in action. The good, satisfaction, "end," of growth of present action in shades and scope of meaning is the only good within our control, and the only one, accordingly, for which responsibility exists. The rest is luck, fortune. And the tragedy of the moral notions most insisted upon by the morally self-conscious is the relegation of the only good which can fully engage thought, namely present meaning of action, to the rank of an incident of a remote good, whether that future good be defined as pleasure, or perfection, or salvation, or attainment of virtuous character.

"Present" activity is not a sharp narrow knife-blade in time. The present is complex, containing within itself a multitude of habits and impulses. It is enduring, a course of action, a process including memory, observation and foresight, a pressure forward, a glance backward and a look outward. It is of *moral* moment because it marks a transition in the direction of breadth and clarity of action or in that of triviality and confusion. Progress is present reconstruction adding fullness and distinctness of meaning, and retrogression is a present slipping away of significance, determinations, grasp. Those who hold that progress can be perceived and measured only by reference to a remote goal, first confuse meaning with space, and then treat spatial position as absolute, as limiting movement instead of being bounded in and by movement. There are plenty of negative elements, due to conflict, entanglement and obscurity, in most of the situations of life, and we do not require a revelation of some supreme perfection to inform us whether or no we are making headway in present rectification. We move on from the worse and into, not just towards, the better, which is authenticated not by comparison with the foreign but in what is indigenous. Unless progress is a present reconstructing, it is nothing; if it cannot be told by qualities belonging to the movement of transition it can never be judged.

Men have constructed a strange dream-world when they have supposed that without a fixed ideal of a remote good to inspire them, they have no inducement to get relief from present troubles, no desires for liberation from what oppresses and for clearing-up what confuses present action. The world in which we could get enlightenment and instruction about the direction in which we are moving only from a vague conception of an unattainable perfection would be totally unlike our present world. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Sufficient

it is to stimulate us to remedial action, to endeavor in order to convert strife into harmony, monotony into a variegated scene, and limitation into expansion. The converting is progress, the only progress conceivable or attainable by man. Hence every situation has its own measure and quality of progress, and the need for progress is recurrent, constant. If it is better to travel than to arrive, it is because traveling is a constant arriving, while arrival that precludes further traveling is most easily attained by going to sleep or dying. We find our clews to direction in the projected recollections of definite experienced goods not in vague anticipations, even when we label the vagueness perfection, the Ideal, and proceed to manipulate its definition with dry dialectic logic. Progress means increase of present meaning, which involves multiplication of sensed distinctions as well as harmony, unification. This statement may, perhaps, be made generally, in application to the experience of humanity. If history shows progress it can hardly be found elsewhere than in this complication and extension of the significance found within experience. It is clear that such progress brings no surcease, no immunity from perplexity and trouble. If we wished to transmute this generalization into a categorical imperative we should say: "So act as to increase the meaning of present experience." But even then in order to get instruction about the concrete quality of such increased meaning we should have to run away from the law and study the needs and alternative possibilities lying within a unique and localized situation. The imperative, like everything absolute, is sterile. Till men give up the search for a general formula of progress they will not know where to look to find it.

A business man proceeds by comparing today's liabilities and assets with yesterday's, and projects plans for tomorrow by a study of the movement thus indicated in conjunction with study of the conditions of the environment now existing. It is not otherwise with the business of living. The future is a projection of the subject-matter of the present, a projection which is not arbitrary in the extent in which it divines the movement of the moving present. The physician is lost who would guide his activities of healing by building up a picture of perfect health, the same for all and in its nature complete and self-enclosed once for all. He employs what he has discovered about actual cases of good health and ill health and their causes to investigate the present ailing individual, so as to further his recovering; recovering, an intrinsic and living process rather than recovery, which is comparative and static. Moral theories, which however have not remained mere theories but which have found their way into the opinions of the common man, have reversed the situation and made the present subservient to a rigid yet abstract future.

The ethical import of the doctrine of evolution is enormous. But its import has been misconstrued because the doctrine has been appropriated by the very traditional notions which in truth it subverts. It has been thought that the doctrine of evolution means the complete subordination of present change to a future goal. It has been constrained to teach a futile dogma of approximation, instead of a gospel of present growth. The usufruct of the new science has been seized upon by the old tradition of fixed and external ends. In fact evolution means continuity of change; and the fact that change may take the form of present

growth of complexity and interaction. Significant stages in change are found not in access of fixity of attainment but in those crises in which a seeming fixity of habits gives way to a release of capacities that have not previously functioned: in times that is of readjustment and redirection.

No matter what the present success in straightening out difficulties and harmonizing conflicts, it is certain that problems will recur in the future in a new form or on a different plane. Indeed every genuine accomplishment instead of winding up an affair and enclosing it as a jewel in a casket for future contemplation, complicates the practical situation. It effects a new distribution of energies which have henceforth to be employed in ways for which past experience gives no exact instruction. Every important satisfaction of an old want creates a new one; and this new one has to enter upon an experimental adventure to find its satisfaction. From the side of what has gone before achievement settles something. From the side of what comes after, it complicates, introducing new problems, unsettling factors. There is something pitifully juvenile in the idea that "evolution," progress, means a definite sum of accomplishment which will forever stay done, and which by an exact amount lessens the amount still to be done, disposing once and for all of just so many perplexities and advancing us just so far on our road to a final stable and unperplexed goal. Yet the typical nineteenth century, mid-victorian conception of evolution was precisely a formulation of such a consummate juvenilism.

If the true ideal is that of a stable condition free from conflict and disturbance, then there are a number of theories whose claims are superior to those of the popular doctrine of evolution. Logic points rather in the direction of Rousseau and Tolstoi who would recur to some primitive simplicity, who would return from complicated and troubled civilization to a state of nature. For certainly progress in civilization has not only meant increase in the scope and intricacy of problems to be dealt with, but it entails increasing instability. For in multiplying wants, instruments and possibilities, it increases the variety of forces which enter into relations with one another and which have to be intelligently directed. Or again, Stoic indifference or Buddhist calm have greater claims. For, it may be argued, since all objective achievement only complicates the situation, the victory of a final stability can be secured only by renunciation of desire. Since every satisfaction of desire increases force, and this in turn creates new desires, withdrawal into an inner passionless state, indifference to action and attainment, is the sole road to possession of the eternal, stable and final reality.

Again, from the standpoint of definite approximation to an ultimate goal, the balance falls heavily on the side of pessimism. The more striving the more attainments, perhaps; but also assuredly the more needs and the more disappointments. The more we do and the more we accomplish, the more the end is vanity and vexation. From the standpoint of attainment of good that stays put, that constitutes a definite sum performed which lessens the amount of effort required in order to reach the ultimate goal of final good, progress *is* an illusion. But we are looking for it in the wrong place. The world war is a bitter commentary on the nineteenth century misconception of moral achievement—a miscon-

ception however which it only inherited from the traditional theory of fixed ends, attempting to bolster up that doctrine with aid from the "scientific" theory of evolution. The doctrine of progress is not yet bankrupt. The bankruptcy of the notion of fixed goods to be attained and stably possessed may possibly be the means of turning the mind of man to a tenable theory of progress—to attention to present troubles and possibilities.

Adherents of the idea that betterment, growth in goodness, consists in approximation to an exhaustive, stable, immutable end or good, have been compelled to recognize the truth that in fact we envisage the good in specific terms that are relative to existing needs, and that the attainment of every specific good merges insensibly into a new condition of maladjustment with its need of a new end and a renewed effort. But they have elaborated an ingenious dialectical theory to account for the facts while maintaining their theory intact. The goal, the ideal, is infinite; man is finite, subject to conditions imposed by space and time. The specific character of the ends which man entertains and of the satisfaction he achieves is due therefore precisely to his empirical and finite nature in its contrast with the infinite and complete character of the true reality, the end. Consequently when man reaches what he had taken to be the destination of his journey he finds that he has only gone a piece on the road. Infinite vistas still stretch before him. Again he sets his mark a little way further ahead, and again when he reaches the station set, he finds the road opening before him in unexpected ways, and sees new distant objects beckoning him forward. Such is the popular doctrine.

By some strange perversion this theory passes for moral idealism. An office of inspiration and guidance is attributed to the thought of the goal of ultimate completeness or perfection. As matter of fact, the idea sincerely held brings discouragement and despair not inspiration or hopefulness. There is something either ludicrous or tragic in the notion that inspiration to continued progress is had in telling man that no matter what he does or what he achieves, the outcome is negligible in comparison with what he set out to achieve, that every endeavor he makes is bound to turn out a failure compared with what should be done, that every attained satisfaction is only forever bound to be only a disappointment. The honest conclusion is pessimism. All is vexation, and the greater the effort the greater the vexation. But the fact is that it is not the negative aspect of an outcome, its failure to reach infinity, which renews courage and hope. Positive attainment, actual enrichment of meaning and powers opens new vistas and sets new tasks, creates new aims and stimulates new efforts. The facts are not such as to yield unthinking optimism and consolation; for they render it impossible to rest upon attained goods. New struggles and failures are inevitable. The total scene of action remains as before, only for us more complex, and more subtly unstable. But this very situation is a consequence of expansion, not of failures of power, and when grasped and admitted it is a challenge to intelligence. Instruction in what to do next can never come from an infinite goal, which for us is bound to be empty. It can be derived only from study of the deficiencies, irregularities and possibilities of the actual situation.

In any case, however, arguments about pessimism and optimism based upon

considerations regarding fixed attainment of good and evil are mainly literary in quality. Man continues to live because he is a living creature not because reason convinces him of the certainty or probability of future satisfactions and achievements. He is instinct with activities that carry him on. Individuals here and there cave in, and most individuals sag, withdraw and seek refuge at this and that point. But man as man still has the dumb pluck of the animal. He has endurance, hope, curiosity, eagerness, love of action. These traits belong to him by structure, not by taking thought. Memory of past and foresight of future convert dumbness to some degree of articulateness. They illumine curiosity and steady courage. Then when the future arrives with its inevitable disappointments as well as fulfilments, and with new sources of trouble, failure loses something of its fatality, and suffering yields fruit of instruction not of bitterness. Humility is more demanded at our moments of triumph than at those of failure. For humility is not a caddish self-depreciation. It is the sense of our slight inability even with our best intelligence and effort to command events; a sense of our dependence upon forces that go their way without our wish and plan. Its purport is not to relax effort but to make us prize every opportunity of present growth. In morals, the infinitive and the imperative develop from the participle, present tense. Perfection means perfecting, fulfilment, fulfilling, and the good is now or never.

Idealistic philosophies, those of Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, like the hypothesis now offered, have found the good in meanings belonging to a conscious life, a life of reason, not in external achievement. Like it, they have exalted the place of intelligence in securing fulfilment of conscious life. These theories have at least not subordinated conscious life to external obedience, not thought of virtue as something different from excellence of life. But they set up a transcendental meaning and reason, remote from present experience and opposed to it; or they insist upon a special form of meaning and consciousness to be attained by peculiar modes of knowledge inaccessible to the common man, involving not continuous reconstruction of ordinary experience, but its wholesale reversal. They have treated regeneration, change of heart, as wholesale and self-enclosed, not as continuous.

The utilitarians also made good and evil, right and wrong, matters of conscious experience. In addition they brought them down to earth, to everyday experience. They strove to humanize other-worldly goods. But they retained the notion that the good is future, and hence outside the meaning of present activity. In so far it is sporadic, exceptional, subject to accident, passive, an enjoyment not a joy, something hit upon, not a fulfilling. The future end is for them not *so* remote from present action as the Platonic realm of ideals, or as the Aristotelian rational thought, or the Christian heaven, or Spinoza's conception of the universal whole. But still it is separate in principle and in fact from present activity. The next step is to identify the sought for good with the meaning of our impulses and our habits, and the specific *moral* good or virtue with *learning* this meaning, a learning that takes us back not into an isolated self but out into the open-air world of objects and social ties, terminating in an increment of present significance.

Doubtless there are those who will think that we thus escape from remote and external ends only to fall into an Epicureanism which teaches us to subordinate everything else to present satisfactions. The hypothesis preferred may seem to some to advise a subjective, self-centered life of intensified consciousness, an esthetically dilettante type of egoism. For is not its lesson that we should concentrate attention, each upon the consciousness accompanying his action so as to refine and develop it? Is not this, like all subjective morals, an anti-social doctrine, instructing us to subordinate the objective consequences of our acts, those which promote the welfare of others, to an enrichment of our private conscious lives?

It can hardly be denied that as compared with the dogmas against which it reacted there is an element of truth in Epicureanism. It strove to center attention upon what is actually within control and to find the good in the present instead of in a contingent uncertain future. The trouble with it lies in its account of present good. It failed to connect this good with the full reach of activities. It contemplated good of withdrawal rather than of active participation. That is to say, the objection to Epicureanism lies in its conception of what constitutes present good, not in its emphasis upon satisfaction as at present. The same remark may be made about every theory which recognizes the individual self. If any such theory is objectionable, the objection is against the character or quality assigned to the self. Of course an individual is the bearer or carrier of experience. What of that? Everything depends upon the kind of experience that centers in him. Not the residence of experience counts, but its contents, what's in the house. The center is not in the abstract amenable to our control, but what gathers about it is our affair. We can't help being individual selves, each one of us. If selfhood as such is a bad thing, the blame lies not with the self but with the universe, with providence. But in fact the distinction between a selfishness with which we find fault and an unselfishness which we esteem is found in the quality of the activities which proceed from and enter into the self, according as they are contractive, exclusive, or expansive, outreaching. Meaning exists for some self, but this truistic fact doesn't fix the quality of any particular meaning. It may be such as to make the self small, or such as to exalt and dignify the self. It is as impertinent to decry the worth of experience because it is connected with a self as it is fantastic to idealize personality just as personality aside from the question what sort of a person one is.

Other persons are selves too. If one's own present experience is to be depreciated in its meaning because it centers in a self, why act for the welfare of others? Selfishness for selfishness, one is as good as another; our own is worth as much as another's. But the recognition that good is always found in a present growth of significance in activity protects us from thinking that welfare can consist in a soup-kitchen happiness, in pleasures we can confer upon others from without. It shows that good is the same in quality wherever it is found, whether in some other self or in one's own. An activity has meaning in the degree in which it establishes and acknowledges variety and intimacy of connections. As long as any social impulse endures, so long an activity that shuts itself off will bring inward dissatisfaction and entail a struggle for compensatory goods, no matter

what pleasures or external successes acclaim its course.

To say that the welfare of others, like our own, consists in a widening and deepening of the perceptions that give activity its meaning, in an educative growth, is to set forth a proposition of political import. To "make others happy" except through liberating their powers and engaging them in activities that enlarge the meaning of life is to harm them and to indulge ourselves under cover of exercising a special virtue. Our moral measure for estimating any existing arrangement or any proposed reform is its effect upon impulse and habits. Does it liberate or suppress, ossify or render flexible, divide or unify interest? Is perception quickened or dulled? Is memory made apt and extensive or narrow and diffusely irrelevant? Is imagination diverted to fantasy and compensatory dreams, or does it add fertility to life? Is thought creative or pushed one side into pedantic specialisms? There is a sense in which to set up social welfare as an end of action only promotes an offensive condescension, a harsh interference, or an oleaginous display of complacent kindliness. It always tends in this direction when it is aimed at giving happiness to others directly, that is, as we can hand a physical thing to another. To foster conditions that widen the horizon of others and give them command of their own powers, so that they can find their own happiness in their own fashion, is the way of "social" action. Otherwise the prayer of a freeman would be to be left alone, and to be delivered, above all, from "reformers" and "kind" people.

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