

ETHICS

I. DEFINITION AND GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE SUBJECT.—It is not easy to define in a single phrase the subject commonly called Ethics in such a manner as to meet with general acceptance; as its boundaries and relations to cognate subjects are variously conceived by writers of different schools, and rather indefinitely by mankind in general. Nor does the derivation of the term help us much. Ethics (*ἠθικά*) originally meant that which relates to *ἦθος* ("character"); the treatise of Aristotle's, however, to which the term was first applied, is not concerned with character considered simply as character, but with its good and bad qualities. Indeed, the antithesis of "good" and "bad," in some form, is involved in all ethical affirmation; and its presence constitutes a fundamental distinction between the science or study of ethics and any department of physical inquiry. Physics is concerned with what is, has been, or will be; ethics with what is "good," or what "ought to be," and its opposite. We must add, however, that the good that ethics investigates is "good for man," to distinguish it from universal or absolute good, which is the subject-matter of theology or ontology; and again, if we are to separate ethics from politics, we must introduce a further qualification, and define the former as the study of the Good or Wellbeing of men considered as individuals. Neither of these distinctions, however, should be taken to imply a complete division of subjects; and neither, it may be added, was reached at once and without effort in the development of ethical reflection. In Platonism we find Ethics and Ontology indissolubly blended; and, indeed, in almost every philosophical system in which the universe is contemplated as having an ultimate end or Good, the good of human beings is conceived as somehow closely related to this Universal Good. So again the connexion between Ethics and Politics is naturally very intimate. We only know the individual man as a member of some society; what we call his virtues are chiefly exhibited in his dealings with his fellows, and his most prominent pleasures are derived from intercourse with them; thus it is a paradox to maintain that man's highest good is independent of his social relations, or of the constitution and condition of the community of which he forms a part. So, again, it would be generally admitted that a statesman ought to aim at promoting the wellbeing of his fellow citizens considered as individuals; and if so, the investigation of the particulars of such wellbeing must be an integral part of politics. Still it is manifest that the good of an individual man can be separated as an object of study from the good of his community; so that the ethical point of view has to be distinguished from the political, however large a field the two studies may have in common.

When, however, we thus isolate in thought the individual man from his polity, the close connexion of Ethics with Psychology becomes manifest. It is plain that the chief good of man cannot consist in anything external and material, such as wealth; nor even in mere bodily health and wellbeing, which experience shows to be compatible with extreme badness and wretchedness. And though it is perhaps true that goodness is commonly attributed to men from a consideration of the external effects of their conduct; still it is generally held that a certain state of the agent's mind, a certain quality of disposition, motive, intention, or purpose, is essential to the perfect moral goodness of an action. Thus all (or almost all) ethical schools would agree that the main object of their investigation must belong to the psychical side of human life; whether they hold that ultimate good is to be found in psychical existence regarded

as merely sentient and emotional, identifying it with some species of desirable feeling or pleasure, or the genus or sum of such feelings, or whether they rather maintain that wellbeing of the mind must lie solely or chiefly in the quality of its activity. And when we attempt to work out either view into a clear and complete system, we are led inevitably to further psychological study, in order to examine different kinds and degrees of pleasure and pain; determine the nature and mutual relations of the different virtues or good qualities of character, and their opposites. So again, in discussing the fundamental question as to what is ultimately good or desirable, moralists are led to observe carefully what men actually do desire and aim at, and thus to analyse fully the process of voluntary action, as well as the emotional states that precede and prompt to it. In fact it will appear that all important ethical notions are also psychological; except the fundamental antithesis of "good" and "bad," or "right" and "wrong," with which psychology is not primarily concerned, any more than physics.

The two antitheses just mentioned are frequently regarded as identical. And in fact it does not matter for ordinary purposes whether we speak of "right" or "good" conduct, "wrong" or "bad" motives. The common notion of what is Good for a human being—even if we restrict it to what is "ultimately" good, or "good in itself" and not merely as a means to some further end—includes more than the common notion of what is Right for him, or his Duty. No doubt it is commonly believed that it will be ultimately best for a man to do his duty, and that this will promote his real Interest or Happiness; but it does not follow that the notions of duty and interest are to be identified, or even that the connexion between the two may be scientifically demonstrated. The connexion is often regarded rather as a matter of faith; indeed many would hold that it is not undesirable that it should be somewhat obscure, in order that duty may be done as duty, and not from a mere calculation of self-love. Thus we arrive at another conception of ethics, in which it is viewed as concerned primarily with the principles of duty or the moral code, and only secondarily—or perhaps not at all—with the relation of duty to the agent's private happiness. On this view the study connects itself with theology, if the rules of duty are regarded as a code of divine legislation; and apart from this reference it has a close affinity to rational or abstract jurisprudence. We might distinguish this as the modern view of ethics in contrast with the former, which was that of ancient Greek philosophy generally¹—the transition between the two being due chiefly to the influence of Christianity, but partly also to that of Roman jurisprudence. It is true that the thought of "the gods' unwritten and unaltering law" was not by any means absent from the moral reflection of Greece: still, the idea of Law was not taken as the ultimate and fundamental notion in any of the ancient ethical systems. These all proceed on the assumption that man, as a reasonable being, must seek his own highest good in this earthly life, and therefore that any laws he has to obey must be demonstrated to be means to the attainment of this good; or particulars in which it is realized. On this point the change produced by Christianity is even more striking, if we consider its more general effects rather than its influence on the minds that were most completely penetrated by its religious spirit.

¹ To this statement a partial exception must be made as regards Stoicism, through which, in fact, as will presently appear, the transition was partly made from the ancient to the modern manner of thought.

The true Christian saint lived even on earth, no less than the pagan philosopher, a life which he regarded as intrinsically preferable to all other modes of earthly existence; and, like the Platonic philosopher, a life of which practical virtue was not so much the essence as the outward expression. Still even for the saint this earthly life afforded but an imperfect foretaste of the bliss for which he hoped; and in the view of more ordinary Christians, the ultimate good of man vanished from the scrutiny of mere ethical speculation into the indefinite brightness of a future life of happiness, supernaturally bestowed by God as a reward for obedience to his laws. Or rather, perhaps, by the mass of Christians, the moral code was more commonly regarded, in still closer analogy to human legislation, as supported by penal sanctions; since in all ages of Christianity the fear of the pains of hell has probably been a more powerful motive to draw men from vice than the hope of the pleasures of heaven. On either view the ultimate weal or ill of human beings became something that might be imagined and rhetorically described, but not definitely known or scientifically investigated; and thus the subject-matter of ethics defined itself afresh as Moral Law, a body of rules absolutely prescribed, and supplying a complete guidance for human conduct, though not claiming to contain an exhaustive statement of human good.

Within the Christian church, through the early and middle ages of its history, it naturally fell to theologians to expound, and to priests to administer this code of divine legislation. But when a more philosophical treatment of ethics was introduced by the schoolmen, the combination in the code of two elements, one instinctively Christian, and the other cognizable by natural reason and binding on all men apart from revelation, began to be clearly seen; and an adequate theory of this second element seemed to be supplied by the development of theoretical jurisprudence that followed on the revival, in the 12th century, of the study of Roman law. In the later treatment of legal principles in Rome, the notion of a law of nature had become prominent; and this notion was naturally and easily adapted to represent the element in morality that was independent of revelation. It is true that the natural law of the philosophical jurists did not concern itself primarily with duties, but rather with rights, and so with the relative and negative duties that are involved in the notion of rights; hence it could not properly be identified with more than a portion of the moral code. This portion, however, is of such fundamental importance that the difference we have noticed has been frequently overlooked, and Morality not distinguished from Natural Law, except by the further control that the former claims over the inner springs of voluntary action.

It is chiefly in connexion with this jural view of morality that the inquiry into the origin of the moral faculty has occupied a prominent place in the modern treatment of Ethics. So long as the "moral faculty" is regarded merely as the faculty of knowing our true good, together with its main causes or conditions, it hardly seems important to inquire how this faculty originated, any more than it is for a geometer to investigate the origin of the spatial faculty. But when conscience is conceived as a legislator and governor within the breast, claiming absolute authority over all other impulses, it is natural that the legitimacy of its claim should be investigated; and it is not hard to understand how this legitimacy is thought to depend on the "originality" of the faculty—that is, on its being a part of the plan or type according to which human nature was originally constructed. Hence investigations into the moral condition of children and savages and even animals, and more or less conjectural theories of the soul's growth and development, have been commonly

regarded as necessary appendages or introductions to modern ethical discussion.

So again, it is through the jural conception of ethics that the controversy on free will chiefly becomes important. A man does not naturally inquire whether he is "free" or not to seek his own good, provided only he knows what it is, and that it is attainable by voluntary action. But when his conduct is compared with a code to the violation of which punishments are attached, the question whether he really could obey the rule by which he is judged is obvious and inevitable, since if he could not, it seems contrary to our sense of justice to punish him.

To sum up, the subject of Ethics, most comprehensively understood, includes (1) an investigation of the constituents and conditions of the Good or Wellbeing of men considered individually, which chiefly takes the form of an examination into the general nature and particular species of (a) Virtue or (b) Pleasure, and the chief means of realizing these ends; (2) an investigation of the principles and most important details of Duty or the Moral Law (so far as this is distinguished from Virtue); (3) some inquiry into the nature and origin of the Faculty by which duty is recognized; (4) some examination of the question of human Free Will. It is connected with Ontology or Theology, in so far as a Universal Good is recognized, inclusive of Human Good, or analogous to it; with Theology again, so far as morality is regarded as a Code of Divine appointment. It is connected with Politics, so far as the wellbeing of any individual man is bound up with the wellbeing of his society; and again with Jurisprudence (or Politics), so far as morality is identified with Natural Law. Finally, almost every branch of Ethical discussion belongs at least in part to Psychology; and the inquiries into the origin of the moral faculty and the freedom of the Will are purely psychological.

We will now proceed to trace briefly the course of ethical speculation from its origin in Europe to the present day; confining our attention, during the latter part of this period, to such modes of thought as have been developed in England, or have exercised an important influence there.

II. GREEK AND GRECO-ROMAN ETHICS.—The ethical speculation of Greece, and therefore of Europe, has not, any more than other elements of European civilization, an abrupt and absolute commencement. The naïve and fragmentary utterances of sage precepts for conduct, in which nascent moral reflection everywhere first manifests itself, supply a noteworthy element of Greek literature in the "gnomic" poetry of the 7th and 6th centuries before Christ; their importance in the development of Greek civilization is strikingly characterized by the traditional enumeration of the "seven sages" of the 6th century; and their influence on ethical thought is sufficiently shown in the references that Plato and even Aristotle make to the definitions and maxims of poets and sages. But from such utterances as these to moral philosophy there was still a long step; for though Thales (circ. 640-560 B.C.), one of the seven, was also the first physical philosopher of Greece, we have no ground for supposing that his practical wisdom had anything of a philosophical character. There seems to have been more connexion between moral teaching and metaphysical speculation in the case of Pythagoras (circ. 580-500 B.C.), who is conspicuous among pre-Socratic philosophers as the founder not merely of a school, but rather of a sect or order, bound by a common rule of life. Certainly the doctrine of the Pythagoreans, that the essence of justice (conceived as equal retribution) was a square number, indicates a serious attempt to extend to the region of conduct that mathematical view of the universe which was the fundamental characteristic of Pythagoreanism; and the same may be said of their classification of good with unity, limit,

straightness, light, &c. and of evil with the opposite qualities. Still, on the whole, the moral precepts of Pythagoras appear to have been announced much more in a dogmatic, or even prophetic, than in a philosophic manner; and, whether sound or arbitrary, to have been accepted by his disciples with a decidedly unphilosophic reverence for the "ipse dixit" of the master. Hence, whatever influence the Pythagorean blending of ethical and mathematical notions may have had on Plato, and, through him, on later thought, we cannot regard the school as having really forestalled the Socratic inquiry after a completely reasoned theory of conduct. The ethical element in the "dark" philosophizing of Heraclitus (circ. 530-470 B.C.) shows more profundity of view but still less approximation to a system; in spite of the partial anticipation of Stoicism which we find in his conceptions of a law of the universe, to which the wise man will carefully conform, and a divine harmony, in the recognition of which he will find his truest satisfaction. It is only when we come to Democritus, a contemporary of Socrates, the last of the series of original thinkers whom we distinguish as pre-Socratic, that we find anything which we can call an ethical system. The fragments that remain of the moral treatises of Democritus are sufficient, perhaps, to convince us that the turn of Greek philosophy in the direction of conduct, which was actually due to Socrates, would have taken place without him, though in a less decided manner; but when we compare the Democritean ethics with the post-Socratic system to which it has most affinity, Epicureanism, we find that it exhibits a very rudimentary apprehension of the formal conditions which moral teaching must fulfil before it can lay claim to be treated as scientific.

The fact is that a moral system could not satisfactorily be constructed until attention had been strongly directed to the vagueness and inconsistency of the common moral opinions of mankind; until this was done, the moral counsels of the philosopher, however supreme his contempt for the common herd, inevitably shared these defects. For this purpose was needed the concentration of a philosophic intellect of the first order on the problems of practice. In Socrates, for the first time, we find the required combination of a genuine ardour for knowledge, and a paramount interest in conduct. The pre-Socratic thinkers, from Thales downwards, were all primarily devoted to ontological research; but by the middle of the 5th century B.C. the clash and conflict of their dogmatic systems had led some of the keenest minds to doubt the possibility of penetrating the secret of the universe. This doubt found expression in the reasoned scepticism of Gorgias, and produced the famous doctrine of Protagoras, that the human apprehension is the only standard of what is and what is not. A similar view of the natural limits of the human intellect repelled the philosophic ardour of Socrates from physico-metaphysical inquiries. In his case, moreover, such a view found support in a naïve piety that indisposed him to search into things of which the gods seemed to have reserved the knowledge to themselves. The regulation of human action, on the other hand (except on occasions of special difficulty, for which omens and oracles might be vouchsafed), they had left to human reason; on this accordingly Socrates concentrated his efforts.

The demand for an art of conduct was not, however, original in Socrates, though his conception of the requisite knowledge was so in the highest degree. The thought of the most independent thinker is conditioned by that of his age; and we cannot disconnect the work of Socrates from the professional instruction in conduct which is so striking

¹ This well-known phrase was originally attributed to the Pythagoreans.

a phenomenon of this period of Greek civilization. The origination of this kind of teaching seems to have been due to the genius of Protagoras; whom we may suppose to have been turned, like Socrates, to the study of human affairs in consequence of his negative attitude towards current ontological speculation. This instruction, conveyed in well-thronged lectures, does not seem to have been based on any philosophical system, and was in fact of too popular a quality to be of much philosophical importance. It seems to have combined somewhat loosely the art of getting on in the world with the art of managing public affairs, and to have mingled encomiastic expositions of different virtues with prudential justifications of virtue, as a means of obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain. But however commonplace the teaching of the "sophists" may have been, the general fact of the appearance of this new profession to meet a new social need is sufficiently remarkable. How came it that after so many centuries, in which Greeks had used their moral notions with the confidence of perfect knowledge, and attributed to any cause rather than ignorance the extensive failure of men to realize virtue, they should suddenly become persuaded that good conduct was something that could be learnt from lectures? It must be borne in mind that in the Greek conception of virtue the moral view of life was not separated from the prudential; the *ἀρετή* which the sophists professed to communicate was not strictly virtue, as distinguished from other skills and gifts that sustain and enrich life. Thus while in this age, as in more modern times, most men would suppose that they had sufficient knowledge of justice and temperance, they would not be equally confident that they possessed the art of making the best of life generally. We must remember, too, the importance of the civic or public side of life, to a free-born leisured Greek in the small town communities of this age. The art of conduct as professed and taught to him would mean to a great extent the art of public life; indeed, Plato's *Protagoras* defines his function to be that of teaching "civic excellence" in distinction from other skills (as that of flute-playing), which might also be included under the notion of *ἀρετή*. It is more natural that a plain man should think scientific training necessary in dealing with affairs of state than in his own private concerns.

Still this emergence of an art of conduct with professional teachers cannot thoroughly be understood, unless it is viewed as a crowning result of a general tendency at this stage of Greek civilization to substitute technical skill for traditional procedure and empirically developed faculty. In the age of the sophists we find, wherever we turn, the same eager pursuit of knowledge, and the same eager effort to apply it directly to practice. The method of earth-measurement was rapidly becoming a science; the astronomy of Meton was introducing precision into the computation of time; Hippodamus was revolutionizing architecture by building towns with straight broad streets; old-fashioned soldiers were grumbling at the new pedantries of "tactics" and "hoplitics"; the art of music had recently received a great technical development; and a still greater change had been effected in that training of the body which constituted the other half of ordinary Greek education. If bodily vigour was no longer to be left to nature and spontaneous exercise, but was to be attained by the systematic observance of rules laid down by professional trainers, it was natural to think that the same might be the case with mental excellences. The art of rhetoric, again, which was developed in Sicily in the second half of the fifth century, is a specially striking example of the general tendency we are here considering; and it is important to observe that the profession of rhetorician was commonly blended with that of sophist. Indeed throughout the age of Socrates

sophists and philosophers were commonly regarded, by those who refused to recognize their higher claims, as teaching an "art of words." It is easy to see how this came about; when the demand of an art of conduct made itself felt, it was natural that the rhetoricians, skilled as they were in handling the accepted notions and principles of practice, should come forward to furnish the supply. Nor is there any reason to regard them as conscious charlatans for so doing, any more than the professional journalist of our own day, whose position as a political instructor of mankind is commonly earned rather by a knack of merely writing than by any special depth of political wisdom. As Plato's *Protagoras* says, the sophists in professing to teach virtue only claimed to do somewhat better than others what all men are continually doing; and similarly we may say that, when tried by the touchstone of Socrates, they only exhibited somewhat more conspicuously than others the deficiencies which the great questioner found everywhere.

The charge that Socrates brought against the sophists and his fellow-men generally may be viewed in two aspects. On one side it looks quite artless and simple; on the other it is seen to herald a revolution in scientific method, and to contain the germ of a metaphysical system. Simply stated, the charge was that they talked about justice, temperance, law, &c., and yet could not tell what these things were; the accounts of them which they gave when pressed were, as Socrates forced them to admit, inconsistent with their own judgments on particular instances of justice, legality, &c. This "ignorance" of the real meaning of their terms was not, indeed, the only lack of knowledge that Socrates discovered in his contemporaries, but it was the chief, and it was in the exposure of this that the philosophic importance of his work lay. For the famous "dialectic," by which he brought this ignorance home to his interlocutors, at once exhibited the scientific need of exact definitions of general notions, and suggested that these definitions were to be attained by a careful comparison of particulars. Thus, we can understand how, in Aristotle's view, the main service of Socrates to philosophy consisted in "introducing induction and definitions." This description, however, is both too technical and too positive to represent the naïve and negative character of the Socratic dialectic. For that the results of these resistless arguments were mainly negative is plain from those (earlier) Platonic dialogues in which the impression of the real Socrates is to be found least modified. The pre-eminent "wisdom" which the Delphic oracle attributed to him was held by himself to consist in a unique consciousness of ignorance. And yet it is equally plain, even from Plato, that there was a most important positive element in the teaching of Socrates; had it been otherwise, the attempt of Xenophon to represent his discourses as directly edifying, and the veneration felt for him by the most dogmatic among subsequent schools of philosophy, would be quite inexplicable.

The union of these two elements in the work of Socrates has caused historians no little perplexity; and certainly we cannot quite save the philosopher's consistency, unless we regard some of the doctrines attributed to him by Xenophon as merely tentative and provisional. Still the positions of Socrates that are most important in the history of ethical thought are not only easy to harmonize with his conviction of ignorance, but even render it easier to understand his unwearied cross-examination of common opinion. For the radical and most impressive article of his creed was constituted by his exalted estimate of this knowledge that was so hard to find, his conviction that ignorance of the good and evil in human life was the source of all practical error. If his habitual inquiries were met by the reply,

"We do know what justice and holiness are though we cannot say," he would rejoin, "Whence, then, these perpetual disputes about what is just and holy?" True knowledge, he urged, would settle these quarrels, and produce uniformity in men's moral judgments and conduct. To us, no doubt, it seems an extravagant paradox to treat men's ignorance of justice as the sole cause of unjust acts; and to the Greek mind also the view was paradoxical; but if we would understand the position, not of Socrates only, but of ancient ethical philosophy generally, we must try to realize that this paradox was also a nearly unanswerable deduction from a pair of truisms. That "every one wishes for his own good, and would get it if he could," an arguer would hardly venture to question; and he would equally shrink from denying that justice and virtue generally were goods, and of all goods the finest. How then could he refuse to admit that "those who knew how to do just and righteous acts would prefer nothing else, while those who did not know could not do them if they would," which would land him at once in the conclusion of Socrates that "all virtues were summed up in wisdom or knowledge of Good." Observe that we are not to understand this "knowledge of good" as if it were knowledge of duty as distinct from interest. The force of the above argument depends upon a blending of duty and interest in the single notion of good. This blending Socrates did not, of course, invent—he found it in the common thought of his age; but it was the primary moral function of his dialectic to educe and exhibit it, to drive it home and trace its practical consequences. A resolute assertion of the coincidence of different elements of good, as commonly recognized, forms the kernel of the positive moral teaching that Xenophon attributes to him. He could give no account that satisfied him of good in the abstract; when pressed for one he evaded the questioners by saying that "he knew no good that was not good for something in particular;" but that good is consistent with itself, that the beautiful is also profitable, the virtuous also pleasant, he was always ready to prove in concrete cases. If he prized the wisdom that is virtue, the "good of the soul," above all other goods, if in his unreserved devotion to the task of producing it in himself and others he endured the hardest penury, he steadily maintained that such life was richer in enjoyment than a life of luxury; if he faced death rather than violate the laws of his country, he was prepared with a complete proof that it was probably his interest to die.

This many-sidedness in his view of good is strikingly illustrated by the curious blending of elevated and vulgar sentiment which his utterances about friendship show. If goodness of soul is the "finest of goods," a good friend must be the most valuable of external possessions; no effort is too great to keep or win such. Still, the good of friendship must be shown in its utility; a friend who can be of no service is valueless; and this "service" Socrates on occasion interpreted in the most homely and practical sense. Still, the highest of services that friend can render to friend is moral improvement.

To sum up, then, we may describe the relation of Socrates to the common sense of his age as that of perpetual particular scepticism, combined with permanent general faith. He is always attacking common opinion, and showing it, from its inconsistencies, not to be knowledge; but the premises of his arguments are always taken from common opinion, and the knowledge which he seeks is something that will harmonize, not overthrow it. This knowledge is not merely knowledge of Good, though that is the chief and crown of it; he is continually inquiring for

¹ Cf. Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, ix. 4, where Xenophon fully confirms what Plato's dialogues abundantly illustrate.

definitions of all the notions that enter into practical reasoning, whether for the regulation of public or private conduct, and is unwearied in studying the *rationale* of even the most subordinate acts of life. In fact, he required of all men, whatever their special business might be, that they should know what they were doing and why,—should act on some clear and consistent theory; the requirement was startling to many, but to all philosophic souls it was not the less irresistible, because it was usually indirect. The necessity, indeed, for firmness of purpose¹ as well as clearness of insight he did not expressly recognize, but this quality was all the more conspicuously manifested in his life. Indeed, it was the very perfection in which he possessed this virtue that led him to the paradox of ignoring it. Of himself at least it was true, that whatever he believed to be "fair and good" he must necessarily do; when another acted apparently against knowledge, the easiest explanation seemed to him to be that true knowledge was not really there.

These, then, seem the historically important characteristics of the great founder of moral philosophy, if we take (as we must) his teaching and character together:—(1) an ardent inquiry for knowledge nowhere to be found, but which, if found, would perfect human conduct; (2) a demand meanwhile that men should act as far as possible on some consistent theory; (3) a provisional adhesion to the commonly received view of good, in all its incoherent complexity, and a perpetual readiness to maintain the unity of its different elements, and demonstrate the superiority of virtue by applying the commonest standard of self interest; (4) personal firmness, as apparently easy as it was actually invincible, in carrying out such practical convictions as he had attained. It is only when we keep all these points in view that we can understand how from the spring of Socratic conversation flowed the branching rivers of Greek ethical thought.

Four distinct philosophical schools trace their immediate origin to the circle that gathered round Socrates—the Megarian, the Platonic, the Cynic, and the Cyrenaic. The impress of the master is manifest on all, in spite of the wide differences that divided them; and they all agree in holding the most important possession of man to be wisdom or knowledge, and the most important knowledge to be knowledge of Good. Here, however, the agreement ends. The more philosophic part of the circle, forming a group in which Euclides of Megara seems at first to have taken the lead, regarded this Good as the object of a still unfulfilled quest; and setting out afresh in search of it, with a profound sense of its mystery, were led to identify it with the hidden secret of the universe, and thus to pass from ethics to metaphysics. Others again, whose demand for knowledge was more easily satisfied, and who were more impressed with the positive and practical side of the master's teaching, made the quest a much simpler affair; in fact, they took the Good as already known, and held philosophy to consist in the steady application of this knowledge to conduct. Among these were Antisthenes the Cynic and Aristippus of Cyrene. It is by their unreserved recognition of the duty of living consistently by theory, their sense of the new value given to life through this rationalization, and their effort to maintain the easy, calm, unwavering firmness of the Socratic temper, that we recognize both Antisthenes and Aristippus as "Socratic

¹ Xenophon, it is true, describes him as exalting "self-control," *ἐγκράτεια*; and Mr Grote (*Hist. of Greece*, vol. viii. c. 68) finds this inconsistent with his fundamental principle. But there appears no reason for supposing that Socrates (or Xenophon) formally distinguished *ἐγκράτεια* from *σωφροσύνη* as Aristotle does; and it is quite easy to interpret the ordinary notion of "self-control" Socratically, as essentially consisting in knowledge of the comparatively small value of gratification of vicious appetite.

men," in spite of the completeness with which they divided their master's positive doctrine into systems diametrically opposed. Of their contrasted principles we may perhaps say that, while Aristippus took the most obvious logical step for reducing the teaching of Socrates to clear dogmatic unity, Antisthenes certainly drew the most natural inference from the Socratic life.

Aristippus argued that, if all that is beautiful or admirable in conduct has this quality as being useful, *i.e.*, productive of some further good; if virtuous action is essentially action done with insight, or rational apprehension of the act as a means to this good; then surely this good can be but pleasure, which all living things with unperverted impulses seek, while they shun its opposite, pain. He further found a metaphysical basis for this conclusion in the doctrine to which the relativism of Protagoras led him, that we can know nothing of things without our impressions on ourselves. An immediate inference from this is the "smooth motion" of sense which we call pleasure, from whatever source it came, as the only cognizable good; no kind of pleasure being in itself better than any other, though some kinds were to be rejected for their painful consequences. Bodily pleasures and pains Aristippus held to be the keenest; though he does not seem to have maintained this on any materialistic theory, as he admitted the existence of purely mental pleasures, such as joy in the prosperity of our fatherland. He fully recognized that his good was transient, and only capable of being realized in successive parts; giving even exaggerated emphasis to the rule of seeking the pleasure of the moment, and not troubling oneself about a dubious future. It was in the calm, resolute, skilful culling of such pleasures as circumstances afforded from moment to moment, undisturbed by passion, prejudices, or superstition, that he conceived the quality of wisdom to be exhibited; and tradition represents him as realizing this ideal to an impressive degree. Among the prejudices from which the wise man was free he included all regard to customary morality beyond what was due to the actual penalties attached to its violation; though he held, with Socrates, that these penalties actually render conformity reasonable.

Far otherwise was the Socratic spirit understood by the Antisthenes and the Cynics. They equally held that no speculative research was needed for the discovery and definition of Good and Virtue; but they maintained that the Socratic wisdom, on the exercise of which man's wellbeing depended, was exhibited, not in the skilful pursuit, but in the rational disregard of pleasure,—in the clear apprehension of the intrinsic worthlessness of this and most other objects of men's common aims. Antisthenes, indeed, did not overlook the need of supplementing merely intellectual insight by "Socratic force of soul;" but it seemed to him that, by insight and invincible self-mastery combined, an absolute spiritual independence might be attained which left nothing wanting for perfect wellbeing. What, indeed, could be wanting to the free rational soul, when imaginary needs, illusory desires, and idle prejudices were all discarded. For as for poverty, painful toil, disrepute, and such evils as men dread most, these, he argued, were positively useful as means of progress in spiritual freedom and virtue. The eccentricities with which his disciple Diogenes flaunted and revelled in this freedom have made him one of the most familiar figures of ancient social history, and one which in its very extravagance gives a vivid impression of that element in the Socratic pattern which it involuntarily caricatures. Vainly, however, do we seek a definite positive import for the Cynic notion of wisdom or moral insight, beside the mere negation of irrational desires and prejudices. We saw that Socrates, while not claiming to have found the abstract theory of Good or Wise conduct, practically

understood it to consist in the faithful performance of customary duties, maintaining always that his own happiness was therewith bound up. The Cynics more boldly discarded both pleasure and mere custom as alike irrational; but in so doing they left the freed reason with no definite aim but its own freedom. It is absurd, as Plato urged, to say that knowledge is the good, and then when asked "knowledge of what?" to have nothing positive to reply but "of the good;" but the Cynics do not seem to have made any serious effort to escape from this absurdity.

The ultimate views of these two one-sided Socraticisms we shall have to notice presently when we come to the post-Aristotelian schools. We must now proceed to the more complicated task of tracing the fuller development of the Socratic germ to its Platonic blossom and Aristotelian fruit. We can see that the influence of more than one of the earlier metaphysical schools combined with that of Socrates to produce the famous idealism which subsequent generations have learnt from Plato's dialogues; but the precise extent and manner in which each element co-operated is difficult even to conjecture.¹ Here, however, we may consider Plato's views merely in their relation to the teaching of Socrates, since to the latter is certainly due the ethical aspect of idealism with which we are at present concerned.

The ethics of Plato cannot properly be treated as a finished result, but rather as a continual movement from the position of Socrates towards the more complete and articulate system of Aristotle; except that there is a mystical element at the core of Plato's teaching which finds no counterpart in Aristotle, and in fact disappears from Greek philosophy soon after Plato's death until it finds a partial revival and fantastic development in Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neo-Platonism. The first stage at which we can distinguish Plato's ethical view from that of Socrates is presented in the *Protagoras*, where he makes a serious, though clearly tentative, effort to define the object of that knowledge which he regards, with his master, as the essence of all virtue. This science, he here maintains, is really mensuration of pleasures and pains, by which the wise man avoids those mistaken under-estimates of the value of future feelings in comparison with present which we commonly call "yielding to fear or desire." This thorough-going hedonism has somewhat perplexed Plato's readers; but (as was said in speaking of the similar view of the Cyrenaics), when a disciple sought to make clear and definite the essentially Socratic doctrine that the different common notions of good,—the beautiful, the pleasant, and the useful,—were to be somehow identified and interpreted by each other, hedonism presented itself as the most obvious conclusion. By Plato, however, this conclusion could only have been held before he had accomplished the movement of thought by which he carried the Socratic method beyond the range of human conduct, and developed it into a metaphysical system.

This movement may be briefly expressed thus. "It we know," said Socrates, "what justice is, we can give an account or definition of it;" true knowledge—to put it more technically—must be knowledge of the general fact, common to all the individual cases to which we apply our general notion. But why should we restrict this notion within the range of human conduct? The same relation of general notions to particular examples extends through the whole physical universe; we can only think and talk of it by means of such notions. It must be equally true every-

¹ The difficulty arises thus:—(1) Aristotle represents Platonism as having sprung from Socratic teaching combined with Heraclitus's doctrine of the flux of sensible things, and the Pythagorean theory that numbers were the real; but (2) in the Megarian doctrine the non-Socratic element is clearly the one changeless being of Parmenides; while (3) the original connexion of Plato and Euclides is equally evident.

where that true or scientific knowledge is general knowledge, relating, not to individuals primarily, but to the general facts or qualities which individuals exemplify; in fact, our notion of an individual, when examined, is found to be an aggregate of such general qualities. But, again, the object of true knowledge must be what really exists; hence the most real reality, the essence of the universe, must lie in these general facts, and not in the individuals that exemplify them.

So far the steps are plain enough; but we do not yet see how this logical Realism (as it was afterwards called) comes to have the essentially ethical character that especially interests us in Platonism. For though Plato's philosophy is now concerned with the whole universe of being, the ultimate object of his philosophic contemplation is still "the good," now conceived as the ultimate ground of all being and knowledge. That is, the essence of the universe is identified with its end,—the "formal" with the "final" cause of things, to use the later Aristotelian phraseology. How comes this about?

Perhaps we may best explain this by recurring to the original application of the Socratic method to human affairs. Since all rational activity is for some end, the different arts or functions into which human industry is divided are naturally defined by a statement of their ends or uses; and similarly, in giving an account of the different artists and functionaries, we necessarily state their end, "what they are good for." It is only so far as they realize this end that they are what we call them. A painter who cannot paint is, as we say, "no painter;" or, to take a favourite Socratic illustration, a ruler is essentially one who realizes the wellbeing of the ruled; if he fails to do this, he is not, properly speaking, a ruler at all. And in a society well-ordered on Socratic principles, every human being would be put to some use; the essence of his life would consist in doing what he was good for. But again, it is easy to extend this view throughout the whole region of organized life; an eye that does not attain its end by seeing is without the essence of an eye. In short, we may say of all organs and instruments that they are what we think them in proportion as they fulfil their function and attain their end: if, then, we conceive the whole universe organically, as a complex arrangement of means to ends, we shall understand how Plato might hold that all things really *were*, or (as we say) "realized their idea," in proportion as they accomplished the special end or good for which they were adapted. Even Socrates, in spite of his aversion to physics, was led by pious reflection to expound a teleological view of the physical world, as subservient in all its parts to divine ends; and in the metaphysical turn which Plato gave to this view, he was probably anticipated by Euclides of Megara, who held that the one real being is "that which we call by many names, Good, Wisdom, Reason, or God;" to which Plato, raising to a loftier significance the Socratic identification of the beautiful with the useful, added the further name of absolute Beauty.

Let us conceive, then, that Plato has taken this vast stride of thought, and identified the ultimate notions of ethics and ontology. We have now to see what attitude this will lead him to adopt towards the practical inquiries from which he started. What will now be his view of wisdom, virtue, pleasure, and their relation to human wellbeing?

The answer to this question is inevitably somewhat complicated. In the first place we have to observe that philosophy has now passed definitely from the marketplace into the study or lecture-room. The quest of Socrates was for the true art of conduct for an ordinary member of the human society, a man living a practical life among his fellows. But if the objects of abstract thought constitute the real world, of which this world of individual