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The Renaissance of Ethics: a critical comparison of Scholastic and Modern Ethics.

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The Renaissance of Ethics

Having always in accordance with the modern fashion entertained a hearty contempt for anything Scholastic, a skeptical distrust of opinion has led me to think and read a little upon Scholastic Ethics, with the result that my recent thesis is: that the Renaissance of Ethics has not yet wholly passed, i.e., that modern systematic ethical study has practically made but little advance upon the Scholastic method. I will first briefly
set forth the development
andUntitledofScholasticEth-
ics, and critically compare
it with Modern Ethics.

Scholastic Ethics.
The rise and develop-
ment of Scholastic Ethics
is a wonderful phenomenon
in the world's history. First
we have the rise in a theistic
teleology, of the most ultra-
mundane character, whose
corner-stone was faith, and
practical outcome lives of
the purest and deepest cast;
then, by natural sequence, a
disregard of this world as
a further revelation of the
End, of Truth as a supporter
of faith, and a pernicious substitution of dogma for faith, resulting necessarily in 
subjection of reason to dogma; finally, the emancipation of the 
reason from a degrading sub-
dom. While reason and dogma 
were thus involved, an attemp-
ted science of ethics was formu-
lated, based on dogma instead 
of fact, and resulting in a 
system of words, beautiful as 
a structure, but useless as a 
science. The following diagram 
may roughly explain the 
movement, leaving out 
for the present minor com-
lications of thought. Quik 
teleology, as represented by
Aristotle and Plato, was wholly deduced from, and
subservient to, Reason. The
early Christian Fathers are
divided into the apologists
and dogmatists, the first of
whom are represented by
Justin Martyr, the second by
Origine; they attempted a
reconciliation of Reason.
and faith which resulted in the submission of reason to dogma. Then beginning
with Oigena came a counter movement, assuming bolder proportions with Abelard,
and with Aquinas coming to the recognition of reason to
an equal place with dogma, until finally with Francis
Bacon entered the modern era.
Founded on dogma, Scholastic Ethics quarried its building
material from the same source, and, hindered by no
internal difficulties, built an
edifice, imposing, but fallaciously simple. It sought to en-
close in its four walls the
the whole universe of teleologic truth; it knew not doubt, everything was so because it said so, and authority was all in all. This vast structure did not grow up in a day or a century, nor was it the work of one man or a thousand; from Justin to Oecumen, from 103 A.D. to 1347 A.D. it was building, directed by zeal, now honest, now intrenched, now wise, now foolish, now relying on a God, now groping after a devil. In its mysticism and anthropomorphism well strangely blinded with a chasm of that touched the strongest and dearest motives of the human
Human soul. Upon such a system it all becomes us to look with contempt—it did a great work in the world; it is a wonderful example of that force which impels the mind to the Unity of Truth, and though it sought to grasp that Unity without reach and usurp the place of Science, yet its mistakes were mistakes of method, not of aim, and its soul will ever live in the human heart. Let us seek a glance at its chief outlines: Ethics is the science of the nature and laws of morality. It is divided into Ethics,
(general), and consequently, the
first treating of the nature of
morality, the second of its ap-
plication in practice.

Taking up the first part
we turn to the analysis of
goods. There are two kinds of
goods: subjective and objec-
tive; therefore there must be
a subjective and objective
highest good: the difference
is that the objective highest
good is that through the
possession of which we have
the highest happiness and per-
fection, the great end of life, to
which all other goods are
subservient; the subjective
highest good is the subject-
We happiness, perfection and contentment attendant upon the possession of the objective Highest Good. Man therefore seeks the objective Highest Good. We therefore ask what is this? There are two kinds of goods, the uncreated and eternal - God, and the created and temporal, viz.: (1) Good of Fortune, (2) Goods of Body, (3) Goods of Soul. Some place the Highest Good among these latter, but it cannot be among the Good of Fortune, because this leaves out Health, Reason, and Virtue; nor among the Goods of Body because the body is lower than the soul, and the Highest
Good can be lower than nothing, nor among the goods of soul because they can be attained only by a few and then imperfectly, and abstract nature is impossible; therefore the highest good is God, who is perfect, comprehends all goods, and only in him is man perfect. Man may strive after God implicitly, i.e., after happiness, or explicitly, through free will. All other goods in the world are bona utilia, means to the highest good. The subjective highest good is, consequently, the knowledge and love of God. If man seeks the
Highest Good he will make his life like God's. This depends on action and this action must be the highest and noblest, and on the highest object, i.e., knowing God; this, according to the definition of Highest good, should make man perfect, which it does, but not in this world—only in the higher life, which must be eternal, lest the fear of losing it impair the happiness: this life then is only relative to the next. In this life however a man must have a life-work, on the fulfilling of which depends his hope of the life to come; in doing
this there is a temporal happiness, say, the goods of body and of fortune, and especially the goods of soul, which give us knowledge of truth, i.e. God, who is Eternal Truth. Without freedom of Will, ethical conduct is impossible. There is a difference of good and bad in men's actions for (a) reason makes certain demands on the will and it makes a vast difference whether they are fulfilled or not, (b) all people have made this distinction, (c) even materialists recognize it in practical life. We need a moral rule to point out this difference. This rule
must not only direct but compel, and thus we have it divided into the norma directive and norma imperata; we ask what is the norma imperata? There are three false theories: the Exegeitic, the Natural (direct command of God), the Subjective, the Rational (Kant's), and the Moralistic (Utilitarian). The real rule is the moral hierarchy of inner motives, supplemented by Divine intelligence as far as revealed in man. The norma imperata is the Reason. A law implies a law-giver—a moral law a legitimate law giver, a universal law, and one for the high.
Yet good of all. God is the author of all the laws underlying the natural moral order. The obligation to obey these laws lies not in the reason, but in the will of God. It does not however depend on his free-will because having made a free choice he must carry it out.

This is in main the general structure - The scientific basis - of Scholastic Ethics: its dogmatic character, careful distinctions, and the vacillating treatment of reason will be especially noticed - yet it was a whole so simple and beautiful as to gain respect.
not allegiance

Critical

The fundamental question of the Universe, for ages past, present, and to come, is Duty. Given a universe with two possible futures and the question becomes to each individual, How much difference will it make if This be tomorrow's universe rather than That? In other words, the great question the world asks is How much better is the best possible universe I can help make, than the worst possible? If the difference between these two possible universes is the dif-
between Heaven and Hell, my duty is a vastly different thing than as though the difference were that of Pleasure and Pain; in one case it would be a question of Right and Wrong, in the other of Like and Dislike. Contrary to general opinion then, the question of duty is not What is the Summum Bonum? as Scholastic and most Modern ethical philosophers would say, but how much better is the Summum Bonum than the Infirnum Malum; in other words: How much better is the best that can be than the worst? It is plainly evident that this takes hold up
On teleology - that the whole question of duty hangs upon the Cause and Purpose of this great drama we call life; in fine, to understand duty, we must know Ends. We can now see the real position of utilitarian Ethics: having implicit faith in a revealed teleology, the question of duty was settled, but there came a natural reaction, they repudiated the reason which should have justified the alleged revelation and substituted dogma for faith, and then attempted the logical impossibility of building a science upon these data. And what have
modern ethics done by way of improvement? let us trace more carefully the advance of thought for a thousand years.

SCIENCE—Tyndal

METAPHYSICS—Kant, Royce.

WHAT?

Why?

Theology

10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18

ETHICS—Martineau

We notice here that the knowledge of the What and Why of the universe, science and theology, have divided twice but in neither case from each other. When in the 13th century Thomas Aquinas acknowledged two parallel sources of knowledge, reason and revelation he divided the stream
of thought in two, but how? Certainly, not on the mental line between Facts and Ends, for the revelation he believed in was at best but a partial answer to the Why, and the division was in reality between Christian theology, on the one hand, and science and a part of teleology, on the other. What was the result? Scholasticism. The second division took place at the time of Descartes and Bacon: the mischief of Scholasticism was reenacted for the first time since the advent of Christianity a branch of science was separated from
teleology, but here again the Scholastic spirit prevented the separation on the medical line: the method of far-fetched distinction was here to blame, for, having with some reason divided the world into mind and matter, they came to the conclusion, by a strange analogy, that only matter was capable of scientific treatment, and consequently science has in these days strictly confined itself to matter, while in metaphysics and ethics the science and teleology have remained blended; and the result? In material, advance in metaphysics, Scholasticism,
Today science discusses what is, metaphysics what may be; science is daily narrowing the field for available hypotheses, metaphysics is widening here; science sees everywhere a gradual convergence to the Unity of Truth, metaphysics a wide divergence, new and bewildering theories, nice hair-splitting and words, words, words. The history of modern metaphysics from Kant to Royce is not a whit less unraveling than scholastic science from Averard to William of Occam; both labor under the same mistake; to both unity seemed impossible; with
each science and teleology, fact and ultimate cause, are indissolubly bound and knit up together in a manner positively forbidding advance. The science of matter was emancipated and sent out to triumph when teleologic guess and dogma, whether true or false, were banished from her domain; and metaphysics will gain an equal place, when instead of inquiring into the categories of the reason, space-reception, and the authority of conscience, it shall systematically study the facts accumulated and accumulating by it wonder-
ful manifestations for half a century or centuries, as the physicist studies heat not by its inner consciousness, but by what it does. But Scholasticism in metaphysics is not all that has followed the Baconian division of thought; two divergent lines of development have ensued, almost antagonistic. The Physicist, making all the advance made anywhere, not unnaturally concluded that the science of matter was all the world, and consequently began to evolve the world ethics and all there from. On the other hand Christia
ethics remained practically untouched, except a necessary retreat from dogma to faith. Science however was not satisfied—they must be found a "scientific" basis for duty, and pleasure, life, and chance, were, at different times, called into requisition; as far as good: for either stand had the questionable advantage of not being "disprovable" (to come a word): but they went one step further and demanded either that man should follow pleasure or life with the same deep moral sense as he follows God, i.e. that like and dislike be right and wrong, or that man
have no moral nature at all. This was demanding an impossibility; for the very idea of duty depends entirely on what is the teleologic base, the End of existence; consequently the deep moral faith of the world found no resting place here, but clung to the scholastic God. The Christian ethical philosophers, on the other hand, in formulating their moral philosophy, approximated the truth more nearly, indeed were only kept from it by the strange oversight which in these days has found together in Metaphysics, Science of Mind, and
telesology of the Universe. "Act" says Martineau and his school "in accordance with the highest motive," which is but a subjective statement of the Scholastics "Seek the Highest Good," a rule which, to anyone having faith in a certain teleology, is as ultimate as possible. Lately however, with Professor James and Roya, a variation of this comes in: an attempt to face ethics upon fact—to make it a science. This theory may be re-stated: the attempt to unify goods and find a common bonum is fruitless and impossible: there is therefore...
No maximum bound and one must strive to realize all that anyone anywhere calls good. This is really leibniz's proposition as may be thus shown:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Happ} \quad \text{World} \quad \text{Hell} \\
\text{Pleasure} \quad \text{Pain} \\
\text{World} \quad \text{World} \\
\text{Origen} \quad \text{Helvetius} \quad \text{Goethe}
\end{array}
\]

Let the intervals between the best and worst possible worlds which these men believe in respectively be so marked. What now is a good to Origen? That which will lead to Heaven; Helvetius, that which will lead to his own pleasure; Goethe, what is; now Professor James asks, either that
Helvetius act so as to realize Heaven which he desires and calls visionary, and Origen to unite with Goethe in worshipping fickle Nature and accepting that what is is best, which of course means a surrender of his Christianity, or that each act as each thinks best, which is nothing more than a broad way of stating Monteneau's rule. To ask a more "universal" mind than the latter, is to ask a man to believe all possible teleologies are true— a manifest absurdity.

What then is the step needed to complete the renais-

sance of ethics and differ-
modern from scholastic ethics? It is, I take it, that thought re-unite and separate as below:

Thus the question is then what would the real change be in such case and what the relation between science and teleology. It is difficult, not to say dangerous, to seek analogy when discussing the ultimate, yet I will venture: suppose a man has before him a piece of finely woven and intricately wrought lace; he asks two qua...
tions: What, and Why?—what
is this, why is it such as it is.
There are methods he may per-
sume: he may guess at why it is, or he may systematically and carefully find out what it is in order that facts may guide his guesses and ultimately lead him to the truth. Manifestly if his work is any way intricate, and if it is of any moment wheth-

er he arrives at the Truth or not, he should take the bet-
ter method: true it may never lead him to the Truth, but it will lead him nearer than any other path. He will in pursuing this meth-
od strictly separate inquiry into the What from inquiry into the Why—this was indeed the very jist of his method. He reaches the What for the Why, and cannot, consequently, see the Why to reach with; if how ever by strange oversight or ignorance he does mis take some isolated fact by a wild unbridled guess instead of fiddling the hypotheses by multitudinous systematized facts; speculatively when he should reach; what happens? Scholasticism. How he separates his piece of lace into two parts; on one part still preserves his mongrel method.
on the other confines himself to a strict search for the what - what then? On one side, advance, on the other, scholasticism. Now apply this to the world: science on one part of the lace, metaphysics on the other. Since it first saw the sun rise the world has wondered - has asked what and why. First it wondered, then it guessed a thousand years, and finally began a systematic search for truth - on half the lace. It has partially come to the conclusion - it must fully come to the conclusion, that the only way to find why the world is
is to find what it is — the only path to teleology is science. But, we remind ourselves that in the example of the louse this was the method: "Is it at any moment whether we arrive at the Truth or not?" In the world then — or, is it at any moment whether we arrive at the Truth or not? Yes answers the philosopher: "We want Truth for its own sake" — not as answers, has always answered, the world: "May Truth is not our End, we worship not a cliché of bare fact, the very situation of not knowing the Why of a mockingly-mysterious existence, of
not knowing how vast or how slight is the difference between the Beast and the Woe* that unwise can be by our own efforts, makes the the question What is the End? a question that touches the deepest depths of our souls, that overshadow the awful misery of life and death itself in the greater question of Heaven and Hell. The object then of science is Truth; Truth is the one path to teleology, teleology is ethics. Is this view these main objections may be raised: 1 By this theory Ethics will not become a science until the mystery of teleology is solved.

*unwise
2. A science of mind is impossible. 3. The relativity of human knowledge precludes any hope of ultimate success. I. This is perfectly true; indeed how could it ever be supposed that the science of duty could be perfected until we know what duty is; and this we can never do until it is as certain as you can learn that either God, Pleasure, Principle Nature or blind Chance, holds the keys of the Universe — for duty varies in direct ratio to the change of teleologic base, and the attempt to make duty to Pleasure the same thing as duty to God.
is as wild a venture as ev-

er a human being ever

conceived. But what is the

world to do? Here comes the big

question of practical ethics;

not scientific facts as now ask-
ed, but What ought I to do in

this case? The fact that a

ance of ethics to-day is not pos-

sible for lack of facts upon which
to base it ought not to hinder

ethical conduct: the "great work-
ing multitude" may, as Profes-
or James says, be "working out

the great ethical problems," yet

this should not blind us to the

fact that for those problems

there are scientific facts,

though they may now be
far from us in teleology is truth. What then is my duty in this case? "So act that the Ends of the Universe may be realized"; thus practically, the world answers — but I object: there's the doubt which creeping through my life reflects God and my Right; in other words — what are the Ends? Shall I be St. Paul, Jeremy Bentham, or Walt Whitman? Thus the world answers — further, than which it cannot go: "So act that the Ends of the best Universe of which you can conceive the world a part, may be realized." I'm thus acting Rennan may call you a fool.
— you may be a fool, but in the great hereafter, be it Elysian fields, or deepest oblivion, you will be a moral hero, who, if the World is the Kingdom of God, shall see the King in his beauty, and if it is a mere face shall have been infinitely above it. One momentous fact, however, future science must not forget: Christian theology is the only one yet presented which seems worthy of a man. This is the true status of ethics and this status it will only attain when, ceasing to be a sect...
ment of metaphysics, it became the aim of teleologic search, and metaphysics ceases to

evade the place of science. Above and beyond is this beacon-light: that gradually, year by
year, science will narrow the field, more and more will our thoughts converge upon
eternal truth. If you say this is impossible—a dream of youth, I only answer that
the world has not yet discovered the word “impossible”
and until it does I’ll know not impossible

2. That a science of mind is impossible

The world once it has gen-
really been the verdict of man-
kind that what has not been
done cannot be done: accord-
ingly it is a generally ac-
tented axiom that a scientific
treatment of the phenomena 
of mind is impossible; the
Scottish school attempted it
and landed in the stiffest met
aphysicus of introspection; the
"new" psychology and the mod-
ern effort at psychical re-
search are tentatively in that
direction, but the one is more a
science of brain, the other very
analogous to a study of the
human body which should
begin with the investigation
of the most glaring manner.
ities: of great use no doubt but never declined to reveal its true value until the type of which it is a caricature is more thoroughly known. Even in modern anthropology, the avowed science of man, mind as mind has received little notice in theory, none in practice; a philosophy of history has long been a cherished scheme but has scarcely arisen above a study of man's environments. So then, a science of mind possible? let us see: a science is a systematization of what we know about anything; it has no mystic marriage with induction—de-
Deduction is just as scientific, provided it is deduction from what we know and not from what we think may be. Bacon's work was not the substitution of induction for deduction; it was the total separation of search for facts from speculation as to final ends—of science from teleology. If then we have knowledge of mind it is possible to systematize that knowledge, to have a science of mind, provided that the study of mind (metaphysics), science and teleology are strictly separated. On a field as broad, as wonderful as the phenomena of mind the scientist need have
No difficulty in gaining the requisite knowledge! Indeed already here and there the field has been invaded: in social science, statistics, Max Miller’s Science of Thought, etc., but never boldly, for the reason that a scholastic metaphysics has nominally held this field and talked. Their world demands such a science; nothing so well attests the fact as the phenomenal rise and development of the modern novel, synchronous with empirical science—it has in some measure balanced our rapid tendency toward the Huxleyan automaton. The Metaphysics of today...
must take its proper place along
side scholastic disputations
as a mental gymnastic, and
discourse, not of this or of
that, but of the World must be
left untravelled to solve the
eternal What. The third objection
here comes in, and divides it-
self in two parts:
3. The relativity of human know-
ledge. This objection is urged in
two forms: the physiocrat says
from the very nature of the case
the knower cannot directly
know that which knows. The
idealist says there are no
facts of mind in contradic-
tion to those of matter—
minds itself is the one ultimate
fact. To the objection of the physicist I answer that I acknowledge that introspection as a method and inner consciousness as a field of search will never alone yield a science of mind, for the very fact that we know not how much individual minds differ, nor how much they are alike. We could not study chemistry by a single reaction, though the same laws work in all reactions, nor physics from an electric spark, though perhaps all forces are correlative; so in the science of mind, we must study, not my mind, but the great universal mind, in its millions.
of manifestations past and present, using introspection, not as a hindrance to science, but as an additional help; this largely invalidates the objection of the scientist, for in the wonderful panorama of history, in the throbbing world of today are multitudinous facts as to the working of the most wonderful of forces, mind, they only need to be scientitically treated to the yield fruit in great laws.

The objection of the idealist is far more subtle, and in strict logic can not be disproved: although the world may with some truth of-
firm that if matter is an illusion of mind it is a re-\nmarkably well-behaved illusion, yet the bare truth remains
that the only fact we can absolutely postulate is the exis-
tence of our own minds. Yet in practice the idealist does not
remain in a negative position, but seeking advance in know-
ledge postulates a knower and a known. Since then to do any-
thing decide idly wonder it is necessary to make this postulate
the only question is as to procedure. Here then we can apply the
rule urged throughout the thesis: miss not the What and
Why in your search; postulating
a known and known, through
Science carefully find out what
you perceive and on that scien-
tence build your why. On the
other hand to guess out, with Pro-
fessor Hooye a logical converse,
is interesting as a piece of cerebra-
tion, but the patent fact remains
that is it is guesswork not reason,
and the latter is the only system-
atic advance to truth. Before
leaving this however, at the
risk of being illogical, I can-
not forbear to present one in-
ternal logical difficulty in
absolute idealism which in my
limited philosophical reading
I have not met, and for which
I have never found a satis-

factory answer. The only fact that idealist A can affirm is his own mind; all the remaining world (if there were some) is his percept, an illusion; B however knows another fact, viz: B's mind; and C, C's mind; now it is found that if A performs certain preliminary actions he perceives a house; if B performs the same preliminaries, he perceives a house identical in all minutest particulars; such is the case with C, D, E, the world. It is then conclusive, if a common objective cause called the universe that for thousands of years individual minds have agreed upon minutest particulars and never
have debouched us to whether this is a house or a cat without seriouslyquestioning the vacancy of the defender of the cat. With, then, objective reality thus proved, we may proceed to examine.

Along these lines I conceive the advance of the future will be made, and the Renaissance, if thus completed by taking it from a subordination to metaphysics, and contrast in science, to be the end and aim of an all-embracing science—the beacon light of a struggling humanity to guide to knowledge of the Infinite, to know whether life is pleasure or duty. In such a remain—
Chance, in fine, it is the cornerstone of a world structure—just the What, then the Why—underneath the everlasting Ought.

This is a very original thesis, full of independent thought and vigorous expression; but, as it seems to me, it is the work of a man who has not yet found his way into clearness and has a great deal of entanglement still to perform on his ideas. You need especially to define how, supposing the facts of the world know, its end could be scientifically and positively certain. To me, that is impossible—"we can only trust in it, and be what we are," so especially need more thinking. On the whole, however, I regard it as an exceptionally promising production.