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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 keen 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
and trends of Scholastic Eth-
ic, 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
teology, of the most ultra-
mundane character, whose
cornerstone was faith, and
practical outcome lives of
the purest and deepest cast;
than, 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 a
suffocation of reason to dogma;
finally, the emancipation of the
reason from a degrading sub-
dom. While reason and dogma
were thus involved, an attem-
ted science of ethics was formu-
lated, based on dogma instead
d 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. Greek
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 Origen; they attempted a
reconciliation of Reason
and faith which resulted in the subjection of reason to dogma. Then beginning with Ougena 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 enshrine in its four walls the
the whole universe of tele-logic 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 interested, now wise, now foolish, now soaring to a God, now groping after a devil. In it mysticism and anthropomorphism were strangely blended with a theism that touched the strangest and deepest 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 reach 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 glance at its chief outlines: Ethics is the science of the nature and laws of morality. It is divided into Ethics,
(general), and laeving the first treating of the nature of morality, the second of its application in practice.

Taking up the first part we turn to the analysis of goods. There are two kinds of goods: subjective and objective; 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 perfection, the great end of life, to which all other goods are subservient; the subjective highest good is the subject-
ive 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, created and temporal, viz.: (1) Goods of Fortune, (2) Goods of Body, (3) Goods of Soul. Some place the Highest Good among these latter, but it cannot be among the Goods of Fortune, because the 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 utilis, 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, but the fear of losing it impairs 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, as, 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 differ-
ence of good and bad in
men's actions for (a) reason
makes certain demands on
the will and its makes a
realt difference whether they
are fulfilled or not, (b) all peo-
ple have made this distinction, (c) even materialists rec-
ognize 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 Exegetic Subnatural (direct command of God), the Subjective Rational (Kants), and the Malevolent (Utilitars). 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.
Let 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 worse possible? If the difference between these two possible Universes is the dif-
Pleasure 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 is generally 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 Infirimum Malum; in other words: How much better is the best that can be than the worst? It is plain I evidently 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 ethical Ethics; having implicit faith in 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 those data. And what have
Modern ethics done by way of improvement? Let us trace more carefully the advance of thought for a thousand years.

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 twins, but how? Certainly not on the medical 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 at least seen and 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 unenviable than scholastic science from Aelard to William of Ockam; 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 on to triumph, where 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-perception, and the authority of conscience, it shall systematically study the facts accumulated and accumulating by it wonder-
ful manifestations for half a century of 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 this Baconian division of thought; two divergent lines of development have ensued, almost antagonistic.

The physicist, making all the advances made anywhere, not unnaturally concluded that the science of matter was all the world, and consequently began to evolve the world ethics and all the from. On the other hand Christian
Ethics remained practically untouched, except a necessary retreat from dogma to faith. Science however was not satisfied — there must be found a “scientific” basis for duty, and pleasure, life, and chance, were, at different times, called into requisition; so far so 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 bound together in Metaphysics, Science of Mind and
telyology of the Universe. "Act"
says Martineau and his school
"in accordance with the high-
best motive," which is but a
subjective statement of the
Scholastic "Seek the Highest
Good," a rule which, to anyone
having faith in a certain
telyology, is as ultimate as
possible. Lately however, with
Professors James and Royce,
a valuation of this comes in:
an attempt to base ethics
upon fact— to make it a sci-
ence. This theory may be so
re-stated: the attempt to uni-
ify goods and find a com-
mum 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 Marxist's proposition as may be thus shown:

\[ \text{Brain} \rightarrow \text{World} \rightarrow \text{Hell} \]

Origenes

\[ \text{Pleasure} \rightarrow \text{Pain} \]

World

Hellenus

Goethe

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; Hellenus; that will lead to his own pleasure; Goethe, what is; now Professor James asks, either that
Helvétius act so as to realize Heaven in which he desires and calls visionary, and Origen to unite with Goethe in worshipping jibbly-Nabir and assenting 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 Martineau's rule. As a more "universal" mind than this latter, is to ask a man to believe all possible teleologies are true—a manifest absurdity.

What there is the step need
ed to complete the renai-

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

\[ \text{Science} \quad \text{WHAT? TRUTH} \]

\[ \text{Teleology} \quad \text{WHY? THE ETHICS} \]

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 who asks two ques-
tions: What? and Why?—what is this, why is it such as it is. There are methods he may pursue: he may gnaw 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 anyway intricate, and if it is of any moment whether he arrives at the truth or not, he should take the latter 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 inquiring into the Why — this was indeed the very first of his method. He reaches the What for the Why, and cannot, consequently, see the Why to reach with; if however by strange oversight or ignorance he does meet there, explains an isolated fact by a wild unbridled guess instead of tracing the hypothesis by multitudinous systematized facts; speculates when he should reach; what happens? Scholasticism. Now he separates his piece of bread into two parts; on one part still places his mongrel method.
on the other confines himself to a strict search for the
What — what then? On one side, advance: on the other, scholas-
ticism. 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 conclu-
sion: 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 face this was the method "if it was of any moment whether we arrive at the Truth or not." In the world then — to us, is it of any moment whether we arrive at the Truth or not? Yes answers the philosopher "we want Truth for its own sake" — not as an answer, but always answered, the world: "May Truth is not our End; we worship not a fetish of face 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 Best and the Worst that universe can be by our own efforts, makes the two question What is the End? A question that touches the deepest depths of our souls, that overshadows the awfulness 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 three main objections may be raised: 1 By this theory Ethics will not become a science until the mystery of teleology is solved.

if this is your friend conclusion, it goes to the next full line, as it stands it is

tooacular p

ambrose
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 thus we can never do until it is as certain as yonder sun that either God, Pleasure, fickle 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-
ne a human being ever
conceived. But what is the
world to do? Here comes the bef-
ing question of practical ethics;
not scientific facts is now ask-
ed, but What ought I to do in
this case? The fact that a
sense 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 and
tiny multitude" may, as Profe-
sor 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 best 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 best be realized." In thus acting Re- man 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 false 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 claiming to be a part—
ment of metaphysics, it became
the aim of teleologic search,
and metaphysics ceased to
occupy 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 dis-
covered the word “impossible”
and until it does I’ll know
not impossible
2. That a science of mind
is impossible
The world over it has gen-
really been the verdict of mankind that what has not been done cannot be done; accordingly it is a generally accepted axiom that no scientific treatment of the phenomena of mind is possible; the Scottish school attempted it and landed in the stifler et aphorieus of introspection; the "new" psychology and the modern effort at psychical research are tentatives 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 anomalies.
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 its 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 we the study of mind (metaphysics), science and teleology are strictly separated. On a field so broad, so 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 Millor's Science of Thought, etc., but never boldly, for the reason that a scholastic metaphysics has nominally held this field and talked. The 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 automation. The Metaphysics of today
must take its proper place along
side scholastic disputations
as a mental gymnastic,
and science, 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-
ing. This objection is urged in
two forms: the phycocet says
from the very nature of the case
the knower cannot directly
know that which knows. The
idealists 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 an 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; or in the science of mind, 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 scientifically treated to yield fruit in great laws.

The objection of the idealist is far more subtle, and in strict logic cannot be disproved: although the world may with some truth of-
from that if matter is an illusion of mind it is a remarkably well-behaved illusion, yet the bare truth remains that the only fact we can absolutely postulate is the existence of our own minds. Yet in practice the idealist does not remain in a negative position, but seeking advance in knowledge, postulates a knower and a known. Since then to do anything beside 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 theory. On the
other hand to guess out, with Prof-
essor Royce, a logical concrete,
is interesting as a piece of celebra-
tion, but the patent fact remains
that is it is guesswork not science,
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 world there is) is his pocket 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 receives a house; if B performs the same prelminaries, he receives 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 decreed us to whether
this is a house or a cat with-
out seriously questioning the
vastity of the defender of the cat.

With, then, objective reality thus
proved we may proceed to science.

Along these lines I conceive
the advance of the future will
be made, and the anaesthetic
ethics completed by taking
it from a subordination to meta-
physics, 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 know-
edge of the Infinite, to know
whether life is pleasure
or duty. In such a renaiss
dance, in fine, it is the cor-
ner-stone of a world struc-
ture — first the What, then the
Why — underneath the everlast-
ing Ought.

This is a very original thesis, full of inde-
sit thought and vigorous expression; but as
it seems to me, the work of a man who
has yet fealed his way into clearer and
tier a great deal of confusion with to
reform in his ideas. You need especially
to define how, supposing the facts of the
world known, its end could be scientifically
more certain. To me, that is impossible —
we can only trust in it, and by what we
sympathize with. The last doge rules or
so especially need more thinking. On the whole
however, I regard it as an exceptionally promising production.