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on
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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 and units of Scholastic Ethics, and critically compare it with Modern Ethics.

Scholastic Ethics.

The rise and development 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 faith. 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 suffocation 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. Greek teleology, as represented by
Aristotle and Plato, was wholly deduced from, and subordinated 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 Oigina came a counter movement, assuming bolder proportions with Hobblard, 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 teleological 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 varying to a God, now groping after a devil. In it mysticism and anthropomorphism were strangely blinded with a theory that touched the strongest 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 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 accordingly, 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-
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, 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 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, but 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
there is a temporal happiness, e.g., the good of body and of fortune, and especially the good 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 its 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 Exegetical Sub-
Natural (direct command of God), the Subjective Rational (Kant), and the Malesculum (Utilitarian). The real rule is the moral hierarchy of inner motives, supplemented by Divine intelli-
gence 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 this high
let good of all. God is the au-
thor of all the laws under-
lying the natural moral order.
The obligation to obey these laws
lies not in the reason, but in
the will of God. It does not how-
ever depend on his free-will
because having made a free
choice he must carry it out.

This is in main the gen-
eral structure - The scientic
basis - of Scholastic Ethics:
it dogmatic character, care-
ful 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-
plence 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 Donum? as Scholastic and most Modern ethical philosophers would say, but how much better is the Summum Donum than the Infimimum 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 ethical 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 thus 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.

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 twain, 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 be-
tween Christian theology, on
the one hand, and science
and a part of teleology, on
the other. What was the re-
sult? Scholasticism. The
second division took place
at the time of Descartes and
D'Arçon: the mischief of Schol-
asticism was now seen and
for the first time since the ad-
vent 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 wider 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 unravelling than scholastic science from St. Anselm to William of Occam; both labor under the same mistake; to both unity seemed impossible; with
each science and teleology, fact and ultimate cause, were indissolubly bound and knotted together in a manner positively forbidding advance; the science of matter was emancipated and sent out to triumph when teleological 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 the mind.
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 therefrom. 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; 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 bound together in Metaphysics, Science of Mind and...
You fail to show the method of your alleged truths.

You fail to show the method of your alleged truths.

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 Professors James and Royce, a question of this comes in: an attempt to base ethics upon fact - to make it a science. This theory may be so stated: the attempt to unify goods and find a sum maximum common is fruitless and impossible; there is therefore
maximum bone and one must strive to realize all that anyone any where calls Good. This is really Martianis proposition as may be thus shown:

Let the intervals between the best and worst possible worlds which these men believe in respectively be co mapped. What now is a Good to Origen? That which will lead to Heaven; Helvetius, that will lead to his own pleasure; Goethe, what is; now Professor James asks, either that.
Helvetius act as to realize Heaven which he desires and calls visionary, and Origin to unite with Goethe in worshipping sable nature and asserting that what is in fact, which of course means a renunciation 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 this 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 Renaissance of Ethics and differ-
modern from scholastic ethics? It is, I take it, that thought re-unite and separate as below:

Science, WHAT?—TRUTH
Teleology, 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 quee
is this, why is it such as it is.
There are methods he may pursue, 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 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 inquiry into the Why—this was indeed the very gist 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 miss them, explains an isolated fact by a wild unbridled guess instead of tidling the hypothesis by multitudinous systematized facts; speculates 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 universe, 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 case 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
swered, has always answered, the world!" Nay Truth is not
our End, we worship not a phant of bare fact; the very
situation of not knowing the Why of a mockingly-
mysteries survive, 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 tho 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: 2) By this theory Ethics will not become a science until the mystery of teleology is solved. If this is your friend, conclusion it ought to the more full part. As it stands it is too oracular.
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 discern that either God, Pleasure, Praise, 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 e-
ev a human being ever conceived. But what is the
world to do? Here comes the burn-
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 va-
riety 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 expe-
ting multitude" may, as Profe-
sor James says, "working out
the great ethical problems," yet
this should not blind us to the
fact that for these problems
there are scientific facts,
though they may now be

All becomes obscure here.
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, this would answer - but I object: there's the doubt which creeping through my life stirs, God and my Right; in other words - what are the Ends? Shall I be St. Paul, Jeremy Bentham, or Walt Whitman? Then 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 hereaf
fter, 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, how-
ever, future science must
not forget: Christian tele-
ology is the only one yet
presented which appears wor-
thly of a man. This is the
ture status of ethics and
this status it will only at
tain when, ceasing to be a depart
ment of metaphysics, it becomes the aim of teleologic search, and metaphysics ceases to occupy the place of science. Above and beyond it 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-
truly been the verdict of man-
kind that what has not been
done cannot be done: accord-
ingly it is a generally ac-
ted axiom that a scientific
treatment of the phenomena
of mind is impossible; the
Scottish school attempted it
and landed in the stiffest net
aphysiciss 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 monstrosi-
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 any-thing; it has no mystic mar-
riage 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 we the study of mind (metaphysics), science and teleology are strictly separated. Upon a field so broad, so wonderful as the phenomena of mind the scientist need have
No difficulty in gaining the
appropriate 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
monopolized this field and
—talked. The world demands
such a science; nothing so
so well attests the fact as the
phenomenal rise and develop-
ment of the modern novel,
synchronous with empirical
science—it has in some mea-
sure balanced our rapid tenden-
cy toward the Huxlean autom-
aton. 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 itself in two parts:

3. The relativity of human knowledge. This objection is urged in two forms: the positivist 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 contradiction 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 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 law works 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 scientifically 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-
facc that if matter is an illusion of mind it is a re-
makably 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 
this remain in a negative position, but seeking advance in know-
lege, 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 you search; postulating
a known and known, through
Science Carefully find out What
you perceive and on that Scien-
tence build your reply. On the
other hand to guess out, with Prof-
essor Royce, a logical converse,
is interesting as a piece of correla-
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 assert is his own mind; all the remaining world (if world there is) is his
private illusion; B however knows another fact, viz. B's mind; and
C, C's mind; now it is found that
A performs certain preliminary actions he perceives a house;
if B performs the same preliminaries, he perceives a house iden-
tical in all minutest particulars; such is the case with C, D,
E - the world. It is then conclus-
ive, if a common objective cause
called the universe that for
thousands of years individual
minds have agreed upon mi-
nutest particulars and never

Absolute
idealism, as I
understand
it, is really
an attempt
to account
ralisall
for just
this fact.
It says
A, B, C, D,
and other
objects
only through
themselves,
and minds.
have despaired as to whether this is a house or a cat without seriously questioning the sanity 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 anaissance of ethics completed by taking it from a subordination to metaphysics, and contrast in science, to be the head and arm 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 realm -
Chance, in fine, it is the con-
eer-stone of a world struc-
ture - first the What, then the
Why - underneath the everlasting Ought.

This is a very original thesis, full of inde-
sent thought and vigorous expression; but as
it seems to me, it is the work of a man who
has yet failed his way into清晰ness and
has a great deal of intuicion still to
perform on his ideas. You need especially
to define how, supposing the facts of the
world known, its end could be "scientifically"
made certain. To me, that is impossible -
we can only trust in it, and be what we
sympathize with. The last stage judges
so especially new thinking. On the whole
however, I regard it as an exceptionally promising production. Wm.