

RELIGION
and
THE MORAL LIFE

By
A. CAMPBELL GARNETT
PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY
THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

1955

THE RONALD PRESS COMPANY • NEW YORK

Copyright, 1955, by
THE RONALD PRESS COMPANY

All Rights Reserved

The text of this publication or any part
thereof may not be reproduced in any
manner whatsoever without permission in
writing from the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 55-6085

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

12-10-62 R.O.

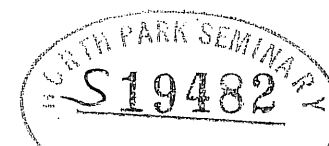
Wesmen Library 125

170
G 1872

To

MY WIFE

in appreciation of loyal cooperation
through the years



PREFACE

This book is a study of the relation between religious faith and the moral life. It agrees with both Catholic and Protestant theology that man's insight into the essential nature of his duty to his fellows is independent of his theological beliefs, but that his practical capacity to hold true to the highest ideals is vitally affected by the possession of a religious faith and by the quality of that faith. By an analysis of the psychology of the moral life the book shows, as against secularism, that man needs an object of religious devotion in his life. As against humanism, it finds that this need can be adequately filled only by a God who is both personal and suprahuman.

To show the need of such a God, however, is not enough. Faith does not grow as a wish fulfillment, nor in response to a simple recognition of one's need of it. Nor can it be induced merely by arguments attempting to prove the existence of God. The inquiry therefore turns to look for the roots of faith in the human soul and to consider the relations of faith and reason. The roots of faith are found to lie deeper than reason, though its branches may be trimmed by reason. In an analysis which depends both on the psychology of personality and the history of morals and religion, it is discovered that faith grows out of an experience which is both moral and mystical. Contrary to the Thomistic position, the order of generation is shown to be not faith, then hope, then love, but first love and hope, then faith. We see that man's love of his fellows precedes his love of God but tends to languish and fail without it. We come to understand how man experiences both the love and the condemnation of a God in whom he may not yet believe and through that experience may

respond with love and hope, and then with faith. We see, too, how man, by seeing the love of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, is won to a faith in the God who first loved him.

Faith is thus seen to be a product of the moral life which both sustains it and is sustained by it. Its foundations are independent of reason, and in particular independent of metaphysics. But faith must live and grow as part of a total life, and its developments are therefore not beyond rational criticism. This inquiry into the relation of religion and the moral life therefore cannot escape the task of a negative critique. A psychological inquiry again shows how very simple is the faith man really needs, and in the light of this understanding it becomes possible to prune the lush growth of tradition which obscures and stifles the essential elements of faith, and then to single out to be cherished those historic facts and insights which have given the Christian form of faith its distinctive power.

From a critique of the form and content of faith the inquiry turns, finally, to an examination of the form and content of the moral life supported by this faith. An attempt is made to clarify the basic concepts of the Christian ethic and show their meaning for some of the major problems of our day, but the book concludes with an insistence that the social gospel, vital and valid as it is, can never be an adequate substitute for personal faith in the living God.

My thanks are due to the University of Wisconsin for a research grant in the summer of 1952 during which the greater part of the first six chapters was written. To my sister Alice I also express appreciation and thanks for the typing of the manuscript.

A. CAMPBELL GARNETT

Madison, Wisconsin
January, 1955

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1 THE QUESTION AT ISSUE	3
Complex Relations of Religion and Morals. The Central Feature of Religion. The Critique of Traditional Religion. The Questions of Ethics. Ethical Theory and Religion. Religion and Moral Discipline.	
2 MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION	19
Ethical Problems from the Secularist Viewpoint. Ethics and the Social Order. Secularist Ethics and Moral Discipline. Secularism in the Eighteenth Century.	
3 MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION (<i>Continued</i>)	38
The Fallacy of Hedonistic Psychology. Extroversion and the Pursuit of Happiness. John Dewey's Analysis of Motivation. Dewey's Theory of Social Progress. Three Flaws in Dewey's Thesis. Criticism of Dewey's Theory of Conscience. The Basic Defect of Secularism.	
4 THE FAITH OF HUMANISM	60
The Humanism of Erich Fromm. Fromm's "Model of Human Nature." Fromm's Conception of Religious Faith. The Source of the Critical Conscience. The Choice of an Object of Devotion. The Motivation of Humanist Religion. The Limitations of Humanism. The Dangers of Humanism.	
5 THE FAITH OF THEISM	91
The God Man Needs. Rationalism and Wishful Thinking. The Mystical and the Emotional in Religious Experience. The Moral and the Mystical in Religious Experience. The Leap of Faith. The Primacy of Love. The Immanence and Concreteness of God. Walking Humbly with God. The Simple Theistic Faith.	

CHAPTER	PAGE
6 FAITH AND REASON	119
The Independence of Faith. Criticism and Justification of Faith. Materialism and Determinism. The Contemporary Critique of Knowledge. Our Bipolar World. The Problem of a World Order. The Destiny of Man.	
7 FAITH AND TRADITION	148
Extraneous Influences upon Faith. The Influence of Magic. Problems Raised by Philosophical Rationalism. The Blight of a Punitive Theology. Legalistic Ethics and Vicarious Punishment. The Meaning and Method of Man's Salvation. Priest, Prophet, and the Idea of Revelation.	
8 THE CHRISTIAN FAITH	169
Christian Theories of Revelation. The Distinction of Historic and General Revelation. The Witness of the Spirit to Historic Revelation. The Personality of Jesus. Jesus as Savior. Jesus as Christ and Lord. The Truth in Trinitarianism. The Old Evangel: A New Understanding.	
9 THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC	196
The Law of Love and Secondary Principles. Relativism and Absolutism in Christian Ethics. The Problem of Collective Action. The Collective Use of Force. The Right of Property. The Uses of Legislation. Fundamental Human Rights. Material Welfare and Spiritual Needs.	
INDEX OF NAMES	219
INDEX OF SUBJECTS	221

RELIGION AND THE MORAL LIFE

Chapter 1

THE QUESTION AT ISSUE

COMPLEX RELATIONS OF RELIGION AND MORALS

What is the relation of religion and morality? Is religion the essential basis of all true morality? Or is it an incubus on the moral life? These are violently contrary alternatives, but both are sincerely affirmed by earnest and intelligent men. In addition, there are many intermediate positions. For each position there are relevant considerations which can be advanced. Protagonists of religion point to the lofty ethical teaching embodied in every religious tradition, to the noble lives of religious teachers and founders of religious movements, to the pronouncements of great and good men concerning the influence of religion in their lives, to the reliance of humble folk on its inspiration and guidance in their troubles and difficulties, and to the leadership of the churches in the organization of institutions for charity and education at home and abroad. Opponents of religion point to its opposition to freedom of inquiry and the advancement of science, to its support of outworn and cruel laws, such as those for the suppression of witchcraft, to the dissemination of superstition, to the intolerance and hatred generated by religious divisions, to the tolerance of evils supposed to be in accord with the will of God, and to the false contentment induced by belief in compensations in the hereafter.

Obviously the question is complex. Both religion and morality are many-sided. The former, in particular, is a com-

posite of many strands, not all of which are essential and some of which are detrimental to those that are essential. No religionist could defend all that is comprised in the multitude of conflicting religious beliefs and practices. Few would attempt to defend all the beliefs and practices of their own sect and tradition. The defense of the believer against the charges of evils he cannot deny or justify is to attribute them to human frailty which departs from the letter or spirit of religion, or to say they are due to false and adventitious elements in the religion concerned. The pure essence of his own religion, he maintains, however elaborate it may be, is entirely good in its influence, or would be so if human beings understood it correctly and responded to it in the appropriate spirit.

The critic of traditional religion, however, will not concede this. Indeed, it is just at this point that he makes his attack. It is the central feature of all traditional religion, he maintains, that is the root of the trouble. It directs man to find his ultimate end, and the ultimate ground or authority for all his actions, in some principle or form of being beyond himself and beyond human society. The result of this, even at best, it is claimed, is a weakening of concern for the problems of man in this world and a rigidity of outlook upon human problems which fails to take full account of the relativity of every ethical question to a multitude of changing conditions and varying values. At its worst, this devotion to some transcendent form of being produces terrible evils. It justifies the condemnation of millions of innocent babes to the torments of hell for the greater glory of God. It requires the keeping of masses of mankind in ignorance and poverty to preserve the rigidity of arbitrarily conceived moral laws, such as those concerning caste and birth control. It endorses the tortures of the inquisition to

prevent the activity of free inquiry, lest it endanger the hope of the soul for eternal life.

THE CENTRAL FEATURE OF RELIGION

The analysis of religion contained in this indictment may be accepted by religionists. The central feature of all traditional religion certainly is the direction of attention to some principle or form of being beyond the self and human society which is accepted as ultimate ground or authority for decision of questions of human behavior, some form of being or principle supremely worthy of human devotion. In theism this object of devotion is a personal God; in polytheism it is a pantheon and hierarchy of anthropomorphic deities; in certain philosophical religions, such as Taoism, Buddhism, and the Vedanta of Sankara, it is an impersonal cosmic moral principle. There is no particular form of belief about this object of devotion that can be regarded as essential to religion, not even that vaguely described "recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny" referred to in the definition of religion in the *Oxford Dictionary*. The object of devotion may be as visible as the disc of the sun, the Nile river, or the Roman emperor; it may be as impersonal as the "Substance" of Spinoza or the "mana" of a Melanesian tabu; its power may be absolute or as limited as that of an African fetish. The distinctive element in religion is not that of belief, but of attitude, the attitude of devotion to something other than the self. The antithesis of religion is devotion to self and to self alone. The absence of religion is the absence from a person's life of any significant attitude (or volitional tendency) subordinating all other interests of the self to some one object of interest (whether an existence or a principle, whether eternal or temporal) which is regarded as

worthy of such supremacy. Without the attitude of devotion no content of belief can constitute religion. It is aptly said "the devils also believe, and tremble."¹ But to hold any object as worthy of supreme devotion (worthy of the subordination to it of all other interests) is to make a "god" of it; it is to hold toward it a religious attitude.

Religion may therefore be broadly defined as an attitude of devotion to something other than the self which is regarded as worthy of supreme devotion. Traditional religions find their object of devotion not only beyond (or in something other than) the self, but also beyond society. By dropping the requirement that the object of religious devotion should be beyond society, however, we are able to recognize the genuinely and distinctively religious character of certain movements which cannot be classified as traditional religions and do not always claim to be religious, such as communism, fascism, and contemporary humanism. In these cases it is some form of human society that is held to be worthy of supreme devotion. And these earthly gods may call forth a devotion which, for lofty idealism and fanatical zeal, can match even the more remarkable examples produced by any of the traditional religions.

It may be objected that our definition is too broad. A man may regard his country, his profession, his wife, or some political or national leader as worthy of supreme devotion. This is true, but the point should be maintained that in such cases the devotion is religious though the religion is idolatrous. An idolatry is a religion in which the object adopted as worthy of supreme devotion does not merit exaltation into that position. To brand any religion as idolatrous is to pass an adverse value judgment on its conception of God, or upon the object of which it makes a god. To every religious person except a polytheist, every religion

¹ James 2:19.

is idolatrous which adopts a god which he cannot recognize as some form of representation of his own deity. To a democrat, communism and fascism are idolatrous. To a theist, humanism is also idolatrous. To a Humanist, every traditional theism is idolatrous, for it sets up a mythical object of devotion unworthy of such a place in the life of man. Humanists and theists may, and out of humility and politeness should, refrain from flinging the epithet of "idolater" at one another; but the fact remains that to hold any one object as supremely worthy of devotion is to hold every other object as more or less unworthy, and its worship therefore more or less idolatrous.

From another standpoint, it may be objected that our definition is too narrow; and for the purposes of the student of cultures this is probably true. It is more convenient for him to define religion in terms of beliefs and practices than of attitudes. An attitude of devotion is a phase of the subjective life of the individual that perhaps is too elusive to serve in the definition of his terms. In our attempt to understand the relation of religion and the moral life, however, the matter of subjective attitudes is of the utmost importance. What we are concerned to elucidate is, essentially and centrally, the place of the attitude of devotion to a god (an object regarded as sacred, or of supreme worth) among other human attitudes. For convenience and for clarity, we shall confine the term "religion" to this attitude and to beliefs and practices depending upon it in the life of the individual. In this sense the practices and beliefs of magic, mysticism, and supernaturalism are not necessarily religious. If their motivation contains no element of devotion of the self to something other than the self, they are not, whatever their protestations, genuinely religious. On the other hand, a genuinely religious attitude may repudiate all magic, mysticism, and supernaturalism; though a more dis-

cerning judgment may discover that there is involved in it an unrecognized element of the mystical.

Before passing from this analysis of what is essential to the nature of religion, we should guard against another misinterpretation and objection. To define religion as we have done does not mean that a person is not religious unless he consistently maintains at all times the attitude of devotion. No human attitude toward anything is consistently maintained at all times. The religious attitude, like any other, is held with different degrees of strength and consistency. An attitude is a volitional *tendency* involving certain beliefs and evaluations. But the motives springing from one attitude conflict with those from another, and the attitude of devotion to God is in constant conflict with motives from other attitudes and with a host of unorganized impulses.

Broad as our definition is, it does state the essential attributes of religion. In describing it as an attitude of devotion it takes account of the volitional and evaluative elements in religion as well as the cognitive; and it recognizes the potential power and all-absorbing character of religion. In saying that its object is regarded as supremely worthy of devotion it takes account of the claim to ultimate importance characteristic of religion. And in saying that the object of religious devotion must be other than the self it points to that which distinguishes the intensity of the religious life from those introverted intensities which can sometimes take a pseudoreligious form (in that appeal for aid is made to divine and semidivine beings) but which exclude and oppose those motives of self-sacrificing service which are most characteristic of religion at its best. Devotion to self is the antithesis of religion, the extreme which is capable of similar intensities of opposite character even though utilizing similar means. In religion the self is directed outward to something held to be above and beyond it, even

though making itself felt within. And it is an attitude which tends to prepare the self gladly to lose itself in that which it regards as higher and worthier than itself.

THE CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION

With this understanding of the essential nature of religion, we are able to clarify and appreciate the significance of the critique of traditional religion presented by its opponents. This critique comes primarily from a standpoint which may most accurately be described as that of secularism. This term is variously used, but its most essential idea would seem to be the refusal to recognize anything as sacred, i.e., as worthy of a supreme place in the system of values. We shall therefore use the term for the attitude which rejects all forms of religion, humanistic or traditional, by refusing to recognize that any object (ideal, or existent being, or principle) is worthy of the place of supreme importance given to an object of religious devotion.

The critique of traditional religion comes also from the standpoint of humanism. This term, too, is variously used. We shall use it, however, to designate a definitely religious attitude, but one finding its supremely worthy object of devotion in human society or in some principle or set of principles concerned with human society, such as the principles of democracy. Communism and fascism are thus types of humanism. Traditional religions find their supremely worthy object of devotion, not *in*, but *beyond* and *above* human society.

Both secularism and humanism assert that this essential feature of traditional religion exercises an influence which is bad. Any recognition that man's ultimate end, the ultimate ground or authority for his choice of values, lies in something beyond human society must, they say, even at its best,

weaken his concern for earthly human values and impose an undue rigidity upon his judgments of right and wrong; and in its historical and institutional forms devotion to such a superhuman object must create those vested interests, dogmatisms, and insensitivities which have led to the commission, in the name of religion, of so many crimes against the freedom and expansion of the human spirit.

Here, then, is the crux of the question. Is this charge true? Are these evils necessarily associated with devotion to a suprahuman object, even at its best? Or can that object of devotion—the God of traditional religion—be so understood that true devotion to Him will not only avoid the obvious errors and evils of historic religions, but also those subtler evils said to be inherent in such devotion even in its most enlightened and sensitive forms? On the other hand, can the enlightened forms of traditional religion develop a counterattack against the charges of secularist and Humanist, as well as the more obvious counterattack against communism and fascism? Can it be shown that man has need of an object of high devotion beyond any form of human society? Can human life and society be shown to suffer where such devotion is lacking? Can the faith in such an object of devotion be shown to be justifiable at the bar of human reason at its clearest, and human conscience at its best? If so, what must be the form of that suprahuman object of devotion which can fill this high function in human life and yet not injure, cramp, or misdirect the growth and aspirations of the human spirit? And by what process of reasoning can faith in such a God, or cosmic principle, be justified? These are the questions concerning religion, in its relation to morality, which take shape as a result of this initial analysis of the essential nature of religion.

THE QUESTIONS OF ETHICS

Before proceeding further, however, it will be well to have clearly in mind the several different sorts of question which can be asked concerning morality. The central questions of ethics, or questions of *ethics proper*, are questions of what is right or wrong in matters of conduct. These divide into questions of *principle* and questions of *casuistry*. Questions of principle concern the framing of general rules for conduct, questions of the validity of moral codes and customs, of the value of laws and institutions. Questions of casuistry concern the right and wrong of particular cases, including questions of the limitations of and possible exceptions to the general rules.

Logically following these central questions come the *disciplinary* problems of education, training, and persuasion to enable the individual to know, and to induce him to do, what is right. These problems subdivide into those of the *intellectual* discipline required to develop the capacity of the individual to recognize distinctions of right and wrong, and those of the *practical* discipline required to develop in him a character which will respond to his judgment of right and wrong by cleaving to what he believes to be right. The intellectual problem, it should be noted, is much more complex than the learning of a set of moral rules. It includes the problems of applying the general rule to the particular case, of weighing the complex relations of means and ends, of critically examining traditional rules, and of forming independent judgments both as to the rules and as to their limitations and exceptions.

Logically prior to questions of ethics proper come certain distinctively *philosophical* problems. Most basic of these are the *semantic* problems of the meaning of ethical terms. The question of definition is not arbitrary or merely a mat-

ter of convenience. It concerns the referents in experience, or the linguistic functions, of ethical terms in ordinary language. There is certainly much confusion in the use of these terms, but it also appears that in the use of them actual communication takes place, that large numbers of people use them in the same way and understand each other's meaning through them. What then is thus communicated? Is it logical content or mere feeling or attitude? If the former, then can ethical terms all be defined in terms that refer to psychological, social, and material facts? Or is there something ultimately unique in the ethical which is not further analyzable, something logically simple and indefinable? These are the semantic problems of ethics discussed by philosophers. The former type of answer is called naturalistic, the latter, nonnaturalistic.

Closely related to these semantic problems are certain *epistemological* questions. How do we know the distinctions of good and bad, right and wrong? If ethical terms refer to phenomena constituted by psychological, social, and physical facts, then ethical questions must be decided by inductive procedures, resting ultimately on perception and introspective and reflective analysis of our experience of such facts. If, on the other hand, ethical terms refer to something unique, then this must be grasped by direct intuition, either of some general principle or of some particular quality or relation.

Following on the semantic and epistemological questions come problems of *ontology*, for the answers given to the first two types of question carry implications for the theory of being, the theory of the nature of reality, of existence, of what *is*. Nonnaturalistic and intuitionist answers to the semantic and epistemological problems lend themselves readily to the more spiritual interpretations of the universe. Naturalistic and empirical answers, however, do not neces-

sarily exclude spiritualistic ontologies, though some such answers lend themselves more readily than others to the minimization or exclusion of the spiritual in the theory of being.

ETHICAL THEORY AND RELIGION

What, then, is the bearing of religion, as we have defined it, on these questions, and of these questions on religion? In particular, what is the relation of these questions to the choice between (a) traditional religion, with its devotion to an object beyond society, and (b) the humanistic types of religion (including fascism and communism as well as democratic humanism) with their object of devotion in some form of society, and (c) secularism, which recognizes no object as worthy of supreme devotion?

One point at least is clear. The semantic and epistemological questions of moral philosophy and the more fundamental questions of ethics proper are logically prior to the question of the adoption of an object of religious devotion. For the religious object is, by definition, an object held to be supremely worthy. Its adoption (the act of religious faith) therefore involves a moral judgment. We must have a fairly full and clear idea of what it is to be a moral being or to follow a moral principle before we can decide that any particular form of moral being or moral principle is supremely worthy of devotion. It is therefore a mistake to think that man's understanding of his duty requires a prior adoption of a belief in God or in some moral law of the universe. Critics of traditional religion sometimes assume that the traditionalist makes this mistake because he often proclaims ethical principles as supported by the authority of revelation. But the claim to revelation in matters of morals is understood by the traditionalist (if he represents

a clearly thought out tradition) as either reinforcing or specifically pointing out a duty which is knowable independently of revelation, or as adding to the general moral law some special duty, depending upon man's religious relationships. This, for example, is the significance of the Thomist doctrine of natural law and of Joseph Butler's theory of conscience.

The major and basic part of ethical knowledge must therefore be recognized as independent of any particular view of religion. So, too, will be the definitions of ethical terms and the solution of epistemological problems of ethics. For we cannot decide what "god," if any, we should serve until we have decided what, if anything, is supremely worthy of devotion. And we cannot make this decision except on the basis of the assumption of a body of ethical ideas. These accepted ideas form the basis for the semantic and epistemological inquiries as to what they mean, how we have obtained them, and how we may test their validity. These inquiries may lead to the revision of the accepted ideas, and this in turn to a revision of religious views. Thus we see that the religious views are logically dependent on the ethical ideas held, and on their semantic and epistemological implications and presuppositions, not vice versa. Either we have nothing at all that can be called ethical knowledge, or we have the major part of it independently of our views on religion.

The relation of our religious and ontological views to each other and to ethics proper is somewhat more interwoven. The acceptance or rejection of a belief in a traditional religious object is itself an element in an ontology. In so far, therefore, as the religious belief is logically determined by ethical ideas, ontology is dependent on ethics proper. And ontology, as we have already seen, is also logically affected by the solutions of the semantic and epis-

temological questions which stem from ethics proper. But ontology has other roots besides ethics. It is the theory of being, both physical and psychological and also logical. It has its roots, therefore, in every phase of experience. The idea of God, or of a moral law of the universe, or the rejection of such ideas, must therefore be integrated with ontological conceptions derived from other phases of experience; and such integration is apt to modify, enrich, or distort the ontological conceptions derived directly from ethical considerations.

In so far as nonethical ontological considerations play a part in shaping the idea of the religious object, this religious view may produce a reciprocal reaction in the ethical ideas primarily concerned with shaping that object and developing the religious attitude toward it. This reciprocal reaction is usually harmful, simply because it is a nonethical concept interfering with the form taken by ethical concepts as a result of reflection on distinctively ethical experience. One example of this is the influence on moral judgment of a theological determinism introduced into the idea of God by logical metaphysical and physical considerations. As a result of this determinism, God may be made responsible for many evils, which then have to be explained as introduced or allowed by Him as measures of discipline. From the resultant conceptions of a rigid and harsh divine discipline the believer then easily passes to the justification of a harshness in human discipline which his natural human sympathies would otherwise lead him to condemn. Another example, and one on the other side, is the influence of ontological views derived from the natural sciences upon the rejection or minimization of the spiritual element in ontology, leaving human progress to be interpreted as the result of the constant clash of blind, unfeeling forces. From this point the implications for ethics have been variously

worked out by Nietzsche, Marx, the Neo-Darwinians and others, but in each case in ways more or less destructive of the finer human qualities.

It must therefore be recognized that ontological ideas (whether in rejection of traditional religious concepts, or by their modification under the influence of ontological considerations from nonethical sources) can modify ethical ideas, and that their influence is usually harmful. Ethical ideas are logically independent of either the belief in God or in a moral law of the universe, or the rejection of such beliefs, and yet these ontological ideas can and do exercise this distorting influence upon them. This is not a reason for condemning the study of ontology, for we cannot think without some assumptions concerning the nature of being, and it is better that those assumptions should be critically examined. It does, however, suggest that we should apply very close critical examination to such ontological theories as are found to have ethical implications which may reasonably be judged to be evil. And this must be applied both to the ideas of God or an impersonal cosmic moral principle in traditional religious ontologies, and to ontologies which reject the traditional religious views.

In the case of a traditional religious ontology, however, it is ethical rather than nonethical considerations that have played the major part in shaping it. Its reciprocal influence on ethical ideas can only be harmful, therefore, if it has been influenced in some unpropitious way by nonethical ideas. The ontologies which reject traditional religious views, on the other hand, have usually been shaped chiefly by nonethical considerations. It is not surprising, therefore, that they tend to give little aid or comfort to the moral life. The ethical stand of the humanistic types of religion, or such ethical views as are held by secularists, are maintained by attention to human considerations despite the implica-

tions suggested by their ontology. This situation is very clearly shown in two notable essays, both of which are modern philosophical classics, the Romanes lecture of Thomas Henry Huxley on "Evolution and Ethics" and Bertrand Russell's almost equally famous essay on "A Free Man's Worship."

Thus far we have seen that there is a very decisive influence of ethical ideas on religious ideas, but comparatively little reverse influence of religious ideas on the shaping of ethical ideas, and what little there is is mostly harmful, by reason of nonethical elements involved in ontology. At the same time, we have seen that some ontology is inevitable and that an ontology which rejects traditional religious views, if shaped, as is usually the case, chiefly by nonethical considerations, is likely to be still more alien to the highest moral ideals. However, in spite of the fact that nonethical considerations inevitably enter into the shaping of an ontology, they need not necessarily shape it in ways inimical to the ethical outlook. This is true both of ontologies which accept and those which reject traditional religious concepts. The influence of an ontology upon ethical ideas therefore depends upon other features in the particular form of ontology and not merely on whether it contains or does not contain traditional religious concepts.

RELIGION AND MORAL DISCIPLINE

When we turn from the problems of ethics proper, and its logically prior or related philosophical questions, to the problems of ethical *discipline*, however, we find that the influence of religion, both in its traditional and nontraditional forms, looms large. Simply because religion is an attitude of *devotion* to some object other than the self, which is regarded as supremely worthy of devotion, its influence

may be enormous. It is measured only by the strength of the devotion. Its value, however, is another question. The secularist would say it is better to recognize no object as worthy of supreme devotion, to judge the changing worth of various objects from time to time and act accordingly. The religious attitude at its best, he says, makes for a certain narrowness and rigidity, and at its worst for all the evils of fanaticism. The Humanist would say that this is only true if the religious object is found beyond society, that to develop a devotion to some form of human society gives a necessary vigor and direction to the moral life with little or no tendency to undue narrowness or rigidity, still less to fanaticism. Both criticize the traditionalist as adopting an intellectually insupportable supernaturalism, and as subject to an ethically debilitating otherworldliness. The traditionalist rejects these charges. In counterattack he points to nazism and communism as indicating that fanaticism is also possible in devotion to a form of human society. He charges that, even in their wholesome forms, neither humanism nor secularism has an adequate goal and dynamic. In his own devotion, on the other hand, he believes he finds the only adequate answer to man's need of a moral discipline.

This is the issue, therefore, which we have to examine. The question is not one of the content of moral ideas or of the grounds for that content. It is one of the *motivation of ethical behavior*, the *discipline of the moral life*. And this discipline relates both to the intellectual activity of free and honest ethical inquiry and to the practical problems of the moral will. Our approach to the problem will be to inquire first how the moral life may function without a religious attitude, either traditional or humanistic. This is the standpoint of secularism.

Chapter 2

MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION

ETHICAL PROBLEMS FROM THE SECULARIST VIEWPOINT

If there is a satisfactory secularistic interpretation of the moral life it must do three things: (1) It must give an intellectually satisfactory interpretation of the moral experience of mankind without invoking or implying a superhuman moral being or cosmic moral principle which would constitute an object supremely worthy of devotion, such as is found in traditional religions. (2) It must, under similar limitations, formulate and win acceptance of a set of ethical ideas capable of supporting and guiding the development of a satisfactory social order. (3) Without creating or relying on a religious devotion, it must relate these ethical ideas to the sources of human motivation, so that they may draw out the appropriate moral response from those who accept the secularist point of view; i.e., it must show that a consistent adherence to the ethical ideas requisite for a satisfactory social order also constitutes a satisfactory way of life for the individual.

All three of these problems are difficult. The first involves the philosophical problems logically prior to ethics proper, the second is involved in the problems of ethics proper, and the third is the problem of moral discipline from the secularist point of view. It is, as we have seen, the solution to the third problem that is the chief point at issue

between secularist and religious points of view, but the problem of the satisfactory solution to this problem is not independent of the solutions to the first two; so we must consider what sorts of solution secularism may offer to those. We turn, therefore, to the central questions of ethics proper, as seen from the secularist viewpoint.

Logically, it might be thought that these questions should follow on the prior solution of the philosophical issues of semantics, epistemology, and ontology, but, in practice, it is impossible to work this way. The subject matter with which all ethical studies must begin is the actual body of moral judgments made by human beings, unsystematic and frequently inconsistent as they are. These judgments involve philosophical assumptions (semantic, epistemological, and ontological) which at first are confused and unformulated. The philosophical task is to render them explicit, examine their consistency, and work out their implications. This process also constitutes a critique of the judgments themselves, and may lead to the reformulation or abandonment of some of them as inconsistent with one another, or as having implications inconsistent with ethical experience. Always the court of last resort is ethical experience—the experience of value and obligation. The moral judgments express and formulate this experience. And though the expression and formulation of the experience react upon that experience to modify it, so that there is reciprocal interaction between ethical thinking and what we call our “feeling”¹ of value and obligation, yet there is a stubborn mass of this “feeling” which thinking cannot

¹ We use “feeling” here, in quotation marks, for lack of any better term. It is a broad term used for any form of immediate awareness. It must not be understood as suggesting that the “sense” (another vague and unsatisfactory term) of obligation and of value is purely emotional. The use of the term does not presuppose any particular semantic or epistemological theory concerning moral judgments.

change. Thus, ultimately, ethical thought must conform to what we cannot help but “feel” is right and good.

The question as to what constitutes a satisfactory set of moral judgments is therefore the question as to what set of moral judgments satisfactorily expresses what we “feel” is of value or is obligatory. These “feelings,” and the consequent judgments, vary from person to person, but there must be a large common element of moral “feeling” among human beings or there could be no mutual understanding of moral ideas, no sharing of ideals, and no moral cooperation. Among civilized peoples the needs and disciplines of social organization have brought a large body of this vague “feeling” of value and obligation to explicit expression in the moral codes of the great religions, and these show a remarkable degree of unanimity on fundamental principles. Differences of opinion have been greater concerning the applications of moral judgments to institutions—political, economic, familial, and so forth—but even here agreement is growing. In spite of the tensions of the modern world, it was found possible to specify a very large area of agreement in the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.

These facts of agreement, however, merely show that in their basic moral nature human beings are much the same. The fact of a consensus of opinion, however large, cannot prove to an individual that a certain moral judgment is right if he himself “feels” it is wrong. To every man his own intimate experience of value and obligation is the ultimate court of appeal. Discussion of a moral judgment only serves to clarify the facts of the situation concerned, including its consequences and its relevance to accepted ethical principles. When all the facts are in, the individual still forms his own judgment as an expression of his own intimate “feeling” for the values and obligations involved.

ETHICS AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

However, although the individual must formulate his moral judgment as an expression of his own moral "feeling," this "feeling" is not the only check upon it. Indeed the "feeling" is itself subject to social influences and checks. Man cannot live apart from society, society cannot exist without a social order; a social order requires a general recognition and enforcement of a body of laws or customs; and these must be approved of as right by at least that section of society which wields the power to make and enforce laws. It is, of course, possible that a ruling class or group should make and enforce laws, in its own selfish interests, that it believes to be morally wrong. But it is not psychologically possible for any class or group to maintain for long a whole social order which its own moral conscience condemns. A group of amoral egoists would have no social cohesion. If a ruling class or group does things that are against its conscience, it must either rationalize and excuse them to the satisfaction of its conscience, or mend them, or its cohesion and power disintegrate.

Social order therefore requires the endorsement of the moral conscience, i.e., of the moral "feelings," of those who support it. No individual, therefore, can logically regard his moral ideas as satisfactory unless they would tend to support a social order which he would regard as satisfactory. To do that they must have the general support of those who maintain the social order. They must therefore be ideas which would tend to support a social order of a kind generally satisfactory to those who maintain it. Here then we have a basic criterion for a satisfactory system of ethics. No individual can logically feel satisfied with the system of ethical ideas endorsed by his own moral "feeling," or conscience, unless he can believe that the endorsement of those

ideas by those required to maintain the social order in which he participates would tend to shape and maintain that social order in ways satisfactory both to them and to him.

The criterion, however, is not yet quite adequate, for it only goes so far as to say that the social order supported by the ethical system must be satisfactory to the group required to maintain it. This may be a narrow ruling class or race, or a dominant and imperialist nation. Such a group may maintain indefinitely a social order satisfactory to itself but oppressive to others provided it maintains a system of ethical ideas and a discipline appropriate to the maintenance of its position. Is such a social order right or wrong? Is the system of ethical ideas that support it right or wrong? Is there any moral reason why those who have the power should not maintain the system they find satisfactory as long as they can do so with security? These questions our criterion does not answer, and the only place where an answer can be sought is in the moral "feelings" of the individual. The prior question which the moral "feelings," or conscience, must answer, therefore, is this: What sort of community do we find ethically satisfactory—an arbitrarily limited one, or one that rejects all arbitrary limits and distinctions in its concern for values and its concepts of obligation? This question each individual must answer for himself. It is only after he has answered it that he can apply to his ethical ideas a criticism based upon their application to the social order.

If this question is to be submitted to moral discussion the only basis to which such discussion can appeal, therefore, is to the actual elements of moral experience, or "feelings" of value and obligation, which are *common* to those participating. If people differ as to the sort of community they find ethically satisfactory, they can only go

back to some still more fundamental moral "feelings," such as are expressed in judgments concerning cases of violence, oppression, impartiality, mutual aid, and so forth. From agreements concerning these they can proceed to test judgments concerning the ethical satisfactoriness of different forms of community.

For the purposes of our further discussion we shall assume that this question is already answered in its broad outlines. We shall assume that the only sort of community which is really ethically satisfactory is a world community in which all people shall live at peace under governments of their own choosing, and those governments shall, so far as the means allow, assure to all people the opportunity to live a life of full and satisfying activity, with a minimum of interference and a maximum of mutual aid from each other, individually and collectively. This sort of community does not exist, but it is evidently the sort of community envisioned in the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, which shows the very wide extent to which it appeals as satisfactory to the moral "feelings" of mankind. It can be taken, therefore, as the kind of community to which we need to refer when the criterion of "fitting the social order" is applied in the criticism of moral judgments. However, since this kind of social order does not yet exist, the criterion is not that of what would be fitting *in* such a social order if it did exist. The question is what, in the existing circumstances, is best calculated to promote the development of such a social order.

If secularism (or any other point of view) is to form a satisfactory philosophy for the people of our day, it must, therefore, accept this concept of an ethically satisfactory community in the solutions it offers to the three problems stated at the beginning of this chapter. The central problem of these three is, as was seen, to formulate and win

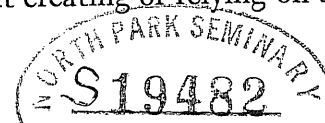
acceptance of a set of ethical ideas capable of supporting and guiding the development of a satisfactory social order, and to do this without presupposing or implying a traditional religious ontology. We now see the sort of social order which must be supported and promoted by the ethical ideas formulated by secularism if those ideas are to be satisfactory to the people of our civilization. We have also seen how moral ideas are formulated and critically reformulated. This process, however, involves no reliance upon any assumptions of a traditional religious ontology, nor does it of itself imply any such assumptions. Secularism, therefore, need have no greater difficulty than its rival philosophies in formulating and winning acceptance of a satisfactory set of ethical ideas. In this task moralists of every school can do no more than appeal to the moral "feelings" of themselves and the community, elucidate those "feelings" and work out their expression and implications. It is not with regard to the questions of ethics proper, therefore, that secularism can be said to have any peculiar difficulty.

SECULARIST ETHICS AND MORAL DISCIPLINE

With regard to the first problem, the situation is not as clear. This concerns the problem of whether secularism can give an intellectually satisfactory interpretation of the moral experience of mankind without invoking or implying some distinctive feature of a traditional religious ontology. The answer to this will require a careful analysis of the essential features of the moral experience of mankind and must wait for a later chapter.²

It is, however, chiefly with the third problem that secularism has its difficulties. This raises the question of whether it is possible, without creating or relying on a religious devo-

² See Chapter 5.



tion, to relate a satisfactory set of moral ideas to the sources of human motivation so as to secure a positive and sufficient response. This question presses hard when we see that a satisfactory set of moral ideas involves the requirement of behavior calculated to support and promote a world society of the kind described above. It is true that this requirement is, in general, endorsed by the moral "feelings" of the people of our time, when these are made explicit and their implications understood; that is the basis of the requirement. But our moral "feelings" are not our only feelings; and the desire to behave consistently with what they require is by no means always our strongest motive. The moral motive must be somehow reinforced if it is to be able to direct our conduct with any high degree of constancy.

Religious teaching seeks to secure this reinforcement by cultivating a habit of attachment, commitment, devotion to some object regarded as of supreme worth, the service of which (or Whom) entails the practice of whatever is implied by the accepted set of moral ideas. For theism this object is a superhuman personal Being. For a humanistic religion it is some form of human society. In our culture humanism takes the form of devotion to the ideal of the sort of society involved in its accepted ethical criterion. Thus the ethical attitude becomes a religious attitude by giving supreme value to the objective indicated by ethical "feeling." That objective becomes sacred to the Humanist.

To secularism, however, nothing is sacred, no object of supreme value. It calls for no high and constant devotion to any particular object. It conceives life as a continuum of means and ends in which no end has absolute value, none is of such importance that it may not sometimes be set aside for some other. It demands freedom for the individual to choose and change his objective at any time in accordance with his changing "feeling" for values and his

changing judgments concerning them. To the consistent and confirmed secularist³ humanism is an unsavoury, unnecessary, and ineffective emphasis on moral ideals or some particular type of social order, and theism is an expurgated but anachronistic survival of hoary superstitions. Both of them, particularly the latter, are a gratuitous interference with the freedom of the individual in the choice of his own way for the attainment of happiness. Man needs no object of supreme devotion and nothing requires it of him.

Yet man does need to conform his behavior to the requirements of a satisfactory social order, and to make peace with his own "feeling" for moral values. And today the secularist is usually prepared to accept the same broad outlines of what constitutes a satisfactory social order as we have sketched above. He does not reject its universalism, its humanitarianism, or its emphasis on impartiality. He usually insists upon them. And in particular he insists upon the freedom of the individual to choose his own way of life unhindered by the restrictions of any arbitrary traditionalism. The "feeling" for *moral* values, however, while admitted as one of the factors to be reckoned with in the ordering of a satisfactory life, is not given a place of supreme importance.

The secularist emphasizes the relativity of all our values and the fact that the sense of duty, or conscience, is largely (or, as he often says, entirely) a product of social conditioning, an echo of the moral judgments and demands of the previous generation. What concerns him most in his "feeling" for moral values is the opportunity freely to make up his own mind on ethical questions and act accordingly, without subjection to external pressures, whether compul-

³ In practice one finds that many nontheists inconsistently waver, in thought and conduct, between the standpoints we have here distinguished as the secularist and humanist.

sive or persuasive. In his detailed concept of the ideal moral order he therefore emphasizes chiefly the desirability of freedom from personal restraint.

The freest of social orders, however, requires some restraints. Even anarchy requires restraints morally self-imposed. The secularist, therefore, cannot escape the problem of showing how a sufficient measure of moral self-restraint may be developed in the individual to keep his conduct in conformity with the minimum requirements of the ideal social order; and the more he emphasizes the desirability of removal of external, collectively imposed restraints, the more emphasis must be laid on developing the capacity for self-restraint and canalizing energies into useful, or at least innocuous, channels. Furthermore, since the ideal social order does not yet exist, ethical conduct must involve doing that which will tend to bring it into existence. This often requires tenacious moral determination, capable of great personal sacrifice. Secularism must also show how this can be developed without the development of a religious attitude, an attitude of devotion to some object regarded as supremely worthy. The problem faced by the secularist is to show how the individual, in the free pursuit of the values that appeal to him most, may be led by his own intelligence to exercise such restraints upon his desires and such preferences among the objectives open to him as to direct his behavior in ways calculated to promote that social order most desirable from the standpoint of all concerned. In brief, the secularist must show that true private welfare, and true public welfare, are so nearly one and indivisible that the latter is most likely to be obtained by letting the individual feel morally free to maintain at all times an intelligent pursuit of his own interests, with their mingled concern for himself and others, so long as the pursuit be really intelligent.

SECULARISM IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The heyday of secularism was the period of the Enlightenment when the assumption was very generally held that enlightened self-interest (usually spoken of as "self-love") is not incompatible with public welfare. The first prominent thinker to present a reasoned empirical argument for this view was John Locke's pupil, the Earl of Shaftesbury. In his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit* (1699) he presents a careful analysis of human motivation in which he does full justice to the social, disinterested and benevolent impulses of human nature. He divides human impulses into (a) the "Natural Affections," which lead to the good of the public, such as love and sympathy, (b) the "Self-affections," which lead only to private good, such as the appetites, love of praise, and the impulse to self-preservation, (c) the "Unnatural Affections," which lead neither to public nor private good, such as malice, selfishness, jealousy, and vice. He then argues, quite cogently, that to have the first class of impulses strongly developed is the best assurance of happiness, for they are the source of most of our joys and consort well with most of our interests. On the other hand, the second class of impulses, if very strong, are apt to lead us into more trouble than satisfaction; and the third class are always sources of unhappiness. Furthermore, Shaftesbury argues, man has a "moral sense" which responds with emotions of approval upon discerning actions intending the public good, and with disapproval toward those which neglect the public good or intend public injury. To be able to feel moral approval of oneself is among our highest sources of happiness, and to disapprove of oneself is an acute distress. From these considerations he draws the conclusion that there can never be any real conflict

between an enlightened interest in one's own happiness and an interest in the happiness of the community as a whole.

Shaftesbury's assumption that tendencies to approval and disapproval are due to an innate "moral sense" and that this "moral sense" always approves of actions intending the public good and disapproves of selfishness are a part of his argument that needs modification and restatement, but, as Sidgwick points out, Shaftesbury did not consider the doctrine of a moral sense essential to his argument. "Even a man who had no moral sense would, in Shaftesbury's view, always find it his interest to maintain in himself precisely that balance of social and self-regarding affections that is most conducive to the good of the human species."⁴ The secularism of the eighteenth century also, in general, found the doctrine of a moral sense unnecessary. The laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith added to the conviction of the sufficiency of enlightened self-interest for social welfare. It assumed that enlightened self-interest would direct attention to the accumulation of wealth, that in a system of competitive free enterprise this would require a man to produce the best possible goods and services and sell them at a price which would be kept low by competition. Thus the needs of the public would best be cared for by individuals pursuing the motive of private gain.

Finally, the reliance on enlightened self-interest attained its culmination in the psychological hedonism of Jeremy Bentham which argued not merely that it is not ethically necessary for anyone to pursue any other end than attainment of his own pleasure and avoidance of his own pain, but that it is not even psychologically possible for him to do so. Pleasure is the only possible goal of human action, and a wise society, recognizing this fact, will legislate so as to

⁴ Henry Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics* (6th ed.; London: The Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 189.

canalize the seeking of pleasure and avoiding of pain into socially useful and innocuous channels. This Bentham proceeded to show Englishmen how to do in his famous work on the principles of morals and legislation.⁵ In papers published after his death⁶ we also find him addressing the persuasive argument to the individual that it is *always* most conducive to private happiness to do that which is best for the public welfare, so that vice may be regarded as simply a "miscalculation of chances."

Thus Bentham's psychology and his theory of legislation, added to Adam Smith's economics and Shaftesbury's teaching on the social conditions of human happiness, completed the eighteenth-century argument that human selfishness and pride are not fundamentally moral problems but legislative and educational ones, that egoism is only an evil when unintelligently directed, that to encourage the intelligently directed pursuit of happiness (purely private happiness) is the surest way to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Secularism was triumphant. Religion was unnecessary in any form, and its magical and superstitious elements positively evil.

There is no need to trace in detail the downfall of secularist philosophy in this form. Laissez-faire economics developed all the evils of the industrial revolution and justified them as unavoidable until, in spite of its "dismal science," humanitarian motives and working class pressure combined to force government intervention in the system. Bentham's theory of legislation produced useful reforms in English law but, with the growing tensions of the late nineteenth century and the tragedies of the twentieth, the need for further changes in the social system, based on a different

⁵ *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London, 1780).

⁶ *The Deontology*, ed. John Bowring (London, 1834).

philosophy, became increasingly evident. Psychological hedonism was subjected to penetrating criticism. The soundest part of the whole system, Shaftesbury's insistence on the importance of love, sympathy, and other social motives for human happiness, gained increasing recognition, but it has become clear that it does not, of itself, carry the implications he drew from it, particularly when combined with the hedonistic psychology, as was usually done by Shaftesbury and always by Bentham.

THE UTILITARIANISM OF J. S. MILL

A significant attempt to amend and improve the theory was introduced in the *Utilitarianism* of John Stuart Mill, in 1863. Mill retained psychological hedonism but introduced a modification which was really inconsistent with it. In calculating his chances for pleasure, he said, an intelligent person will not only consider the intensity, duration and other quantitative measurements of pleasure, but also its differences of quality. The pleasures experienced in the exercise of the higher faculties of mind and personality are so much finer that those who know them would never sacrifice certain of these pleasures for any quantity of other pleasures; "no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be ignorant, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base . . . for the most complete satisfaction of all the desires which they have in common with the 'fool' or the 'rascal'." The explanation of this unwillingness, says Mill, may perhaps be attributed to the better form of pride, or to love of liberty and independence, or to love of power or excitement, "but its most appropriate appellation is a sense of dignity, . . . which is so essential a part of the happiness of those in whom it is strong, that nothing which conflicts with it could

be, otherwise than momentarily, an object of desire to them."⁷

Mill does not say that this valuation of the dignity of one's own intellectual and moral integrity is so strong in all people that to indulge in any selfishness or vice, or to give way to pressure and do something regarded as base, would, for any person, be a miscalculation of the chances for happiness. He believed, however, that it would nearly always be so for any person in whom the "sense of dignity" is strong; and he believed that there are many such people. Their numbers, he argued, can be multiplied by training. He admitted that it is possible to doubt "whether a noble character is always the happier for its nobleness,"⁸ but pointed out that it certainly made others happier and that therefore a wise society will seek to cultivate nobleness of character in its members. It will not only shape legislation so that it will, in general, be in the interests of each person's happiness (even if his "sense of dignity" is not strong) to do that which is conducive to the general happiness, but it will also educate people to think of their own happiness as indissolubly associated with the good of the whole. In particular, he emphasizes the importance of cultivating the "internal sanction of duty," a "feeling" which "is the essence of conscience,"⁹ and of directing this to the acceptance of the utilitarian principle of the common good. This, he says, should "be taught as a religion, and the whole force of education, of institutions and of opinion, directed . . . to make every person grow up from infancy surrounded on all sides by the profession and the practice of it," and then, he says, we need feel no misgiving about "the sufficiency of the ultimate sanction for the Happiness morality."¹⁰

⁷ J. S. Mill, "Utilitarianism," *Utilitarianism, "Liberty," and "Representative Government"* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1910), pp. 8-9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

In this argument Mill departs both from psychological hedonism and from secularism. He departs from the former in his assertion of differences of quality among pleasures, for the admission that one may prefer the exercise of his higher faculties and maintenance of the "sense of dignity," even though the pleasure is less, involves the recognition that the motive is not merely a desire for pleasure. The distinction of kind is not a distinction of kind of pleasure but of the kind of activity, attitude, or object in which the pleasure is found. When a "person of feeling and conscience" insists on maintaining his moral integrity and an "intelligent human being" refuses to sacrifice his intellectual integrity, in spite of temptations to prostitute themselves for high monetary rewards, it is the integrity of the moral and intellectual life itself that is valued, not a pleasure of some peculiar quality. A bad conscience may be distressing, but a good conscience is not a peculiar pleasure to gloat over; and the distress of the bad conscience is due to the fact that something valued has been destroyed, namely, integrity of character. Mill's argument does not point to higher kinds of pleasure, but it does point to the fact that there are states of mind and activity that a man may value more than pleasure, and it urges that these states of mind should be held as the supreme values.

MILL'S DEPARTURE FROM SECULARISM

In setting forth intellectual and moral integrity as objects of supreme value Mill also definitely departs from the standpoint of secularism. Secularism recognizes nothing as sacred. To Mill a man's own moral and intellectual integrity is sacred. This is not secularism. Nor is it religion. It is not devotion to something other than the self, but to a form of the self. It is not selfishness, for it may require a

great deal of self-sacrifice in the sense of sacrificing every other form of desire. But it is self-regarding. It is an introverted rather than an extroverted motive.¹¹ It is a devotion in the opposite direction from religious devotion, which is extroverted, directed to a God or moral law transcendent to oneself. As an opposite devotion to that of religion it is irreligious. Mill himself suggested that its motive may be said to be a form of pride, "a name which is given indiscriminately to some of the most and to some of the least estimable feelings of which mankind are capable."¹² It is pride in the form which usually wins the respect, but never the affection of other men. This cherishing of one's own "sense of dignity" as an "intelligent human being" and a "person of feeling and conscience" is *spiritual* pride.

Spiritual pride is the pitfall most likely to entrap the morally and intellectually strong. More basically than ambition it is "the last infirmity of noble minds." It is, however, more than an infirmity. It is an evil which distorts the work of the strongest, and its effects may be titanic. In a grim metaphor contemporary religious thought has rightly designated it "demonic." Mill himself suggests that it is akin to "the love of power."¹³ Here, without realizing it, he puts his finger on the root of the evil. The man who sets a supreme value on his own intellectual and moral integrity inevitably begins to see himself as morally superior to others. He tends to become convinced that he can manage the lives of others better than they themselves can. He then feels himself justified, indeed "called upon," to interfere in the lives of others. He enjoys this "doing good," not merely out of a sympathetic interest in bringing joy into the lives of others, but for the more intense satisfaction he has in its contribution to his "sense of dignity" as a "person of

¹¹ For definition of these terms as used here see Chapter 3, page 40.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

feeling and conscience." To attain this satisfaction the good done must be of his own selection, done in his own way, with himself as the principal figure in its execution. The power motive becomes the dominant drive and creates a ruthlessness in the ruling of other people's lives and the pressing of pet programs of "reform" that are often more destructive than the evils they attack.

This tragedy of the moral life, whereby a concern for the best in oneself becomes the very root of evil, is unavoidable if the goal of the moral life is the cultivation of virtue in the self. It can be averted only if attention is turned outward from the moral and intellectual properties of the self to goals beyond the self. If there is to be an object of supreme devotion it must be something other than self, other than one's own "salvation," other than one's own virtue, or "dignity," or integrity, or perfection, or holiness. The moral salvation of a man lies in his having objectives beyond himself in pursuit of which he can forget himself, objectives which will keep the inner structure of the self wholesome without making inner wholesomeness itself the goal. Holiness is not found in the pursuit of holiness, nor happiness in the pursuit of happiness. Both are incidental products of the pursuit of something else, beyond the self, which is really worth pursuing, and in the pursuit of which a man can safely forget himself—and his holiness and happiness.

This, therefore, brings us back to the alternatives of religion and secularism, of devotion to some supremely valued object other than the self or any particular form of self, or of having no object of supreme devotion. The religious alternative, however, as we have seen, may be either traditional or humanistic. And Mill's departure from secularism is not unequivocally irreligious. He suggests the adoption of the humanism of Auguste Comte coupled with

the utilitarian ethic.¹⁴ He would have a devotion to the greatest happiness of the greatest number "taught as a religion." But there is an ambiguity in his position here of a kind which often besets the religious thinker and turns his religion into irreligion. The *motive* which he thinks must be appealed to in order to direct human activity to pursue the good of the whole is not that of a direct interest in human welfare, but an interest in maintaining one's own precious "sense of dignity" as a person of intellectual and moral integrity. Thus humanity is to be served, not for the sake of humanity, but for the sake of one's own precious moral being. In the same way, traditional religion is often (more often in practice than in express statement) misinterpreted to mean that God should be served, not for the sake of the love of God, but for the sake of the moral perfection and salvation of one's own soul. In both cases the motive is introverted, the ultimate goal is not a good external to the self but one's own good. What is cultivated is self-love, not love of God or of humanity. It is not religion, but irreligion, and its tendency is "demonic." To escape this tragic frustration the devotion to the religious object, if any, must be direct and unequivocal; the only other alternative is secularism.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Chapter 3

MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION

(Continued)

THE FALLACY OF HEDONISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

Mill's ambiguous statement of the idea of a humanistic religion is due to his untenable psychological position. He still accepts the hedonistic view that all desire is desire for pleasure. He therefore cannot conceive of a direct interest in the welfare of other people which is not an indirect way of pursuing one's own pleasure. A genuine humanistic religious devotion is therefore out of the question for him. Yet he recognizes that a self-sacrificing devotion to a human cause or a moral ideal is, at times, both psychologically possible and ethically necessary. He knows that such conduct cannot always be advocated (or explained, when it occurs) as an indirect means of pursuing pleasures, if we measure pleasure in terms of intensity and duration. Plainly, men must value something other than quantities of pleasure. So he tries to interpret it as a valuing of a pleasure of a higher quality. This leaves the interpretation of human motivation still egoistic and closes the door against any genuine humanism, or any other form of religious devotion.

We have seen that Mill's suggestion that pleasures differ in quality is really a recognition that human beings desire other things besides pleasure, and is thus an abandonment of hedonism. It would be well, however, at this point, to state briefly and clearly where the hedonistic

MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION

39

psychology goes wrong. To discover this, we need to distinguish two sources of pleasure, the pleasures of sensation, such as tastes and smells, and pleasures of interested activity, such as reading, playing games, and doing interesting work. The most important part of our pleasure is of the latter sort. Interested activity, however, is only possible when there is a desire to achieve some goal, e.g., win the game, learn what the book has to tell us, or produce the objective of our work. The desire therefore is not directly a desire for pleasure but for these objectives. The pleasure is incidental to the process of fulfilling a desire for something other than pleasure, e.g., victory, knowledge, or the product of the work. It may be the case that the objective has been chosen because its pursuit has on a previous occasion been found pleasant, but that pursuit will only be found pleasant on the new occasion if the desire for the objective can be reinstated. A man may desire to play golf because in the past he has found it pleasant. However, he has only found it pleasant in the past because it interested him; it stimulated his desire to play. Furthermore, he will continue to find it pleasant only so long as this particular type of goal-directed activity continues to interest him. It is the interest in the activity and its goal, therefore, not the pleasure of the activity, that is primary. Pleasure is not the basic or ultimate motive. The pleasure of satisfaction, or interested activity, is only possible so long as there are desires for something other than such pleasure to be satisfied.

Pursuit of pleasure is, therefore, not the basic motive. Furthermore, it is self-defeating to allow it to become the predominant motive. Even if an activity is engaged in for pleasure, during the course of the activity the pleasure itself must be ignored, for attention to the pleasantness or unpleasantness of one's feeling states during an interested activity is a distraction which impedes the activity and

causes failure. Activity is most enjoyable, and its results most prized, when it is such as to absorb attention so that we forget ourselves and our feeling states by becoming absorbed in what we are doing. The habit of attending to oneself and one's feeling states is therefore a frustrating one. The more we can forget ourselves, and forget the pursuit of pleasure (or happiness) in our interest in absorbing objects, the more we enjoy ourselves.

EXTROVERSION AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Modern abnormal psychology has found that, for personality to be wholesome, it must be extroverted rather than introverted. An extroverted interest is one that finds its end, or objective, in maintaining or changing some state of affairs outside the self. An introverted interest is one that finds its end, or objective, in maintaining or changing some state of affairs within the self, such as the balance of pleasure and pain or the prestige status of the idea of the self.¹ A person whose *predominant* set of interests are of the introverted type may be said to be "egoistic." If his predominant interests are in his pleasure and comfort his character is "selfish." If it is the prestige status of the self that constitutes his chief concern, and if he believes in his own prestige, his case is one of "pride." If he does not believe in his own possession of a reasonable prestige, but feels constantly impelled to seek it, his case is not one of pride, but of affliction by an "inferiority complex," which is a third type of egoism, distressing to its possessor as well as annoying or dangerous to others.

It is generally recognized that an inferiority complex is psychologically unwholesome, but it is not always realized

¹ These definitions conform to a very wide range of psychological usage though there is no complete unanimity of definition among psychologists.

that the same is true of selfishness and pride. This is so because they tend to frustrate a person's success and spoil his enjoyment. The secret of success is the capacity to concentrate attention upon the object one must deal with; the secret of enjoyment is to become absorbed in that object and in the dealing with it. But a strong habit of attending to one's own feeling states, or giving thought to one's prestige, diverts attention from the object, often at crucial moments, and all too often to allow the individual really to do his best. The work, play, and social activities of the introverted egoist are thus always below his real capacities; and his egoism, being obvious to others, also induces opposition. He thus finds himself frustrated, never satisfied, insecure; and frequently the result is the development of a more or less neurotic personality.

There is a fourth type of egoism, however, which is characteristic of the extrovert rather than the introvert. It is not psychologically unwholesome, and as a moral fault it consists in "thoughtlessness" as far as other people are concerned, rather than selfishness. It is the egoism of the extrovert who is interested in a variety (more or less extensive) of objects, and readily becomes happily absorbed in his interest in them, but the welfare of other people plays only a small part among his objects of interest. He therefore often ignores their welfare in pursuit of these other interests. An "altruist," on the other hand, is a person predominantly extroverted, who has a wide range of strong interests concerned with the welfare of other people and is commonly happily absorbed in the pursuit of those interests.

Happiness is found in the successful pursuit of one's interests, be they extroverted or introverted, concerned with the welfare of other people or concerned with other objects and tending to an ignoring of the welfare of other people.

The introverted person, however, pursuing his own happiness as an end, tends to frustrate himself in the way we have seen, and finds little happiness. The egoistic extrovert, if his objectives are sufficiently absorbing, varied, non-conflicting, and within his powers, may find a great deal of happiness. But his thoughtlessness for others is apt to arouse opposition and win him little cooperation. He is therefore likely to find himself unsuccessful in his social relations and frequently frustrated. The altruist, on the other hand, has the best chance of happiness. Being predominantly extroverted he does not often frustrate himself, like the introvert, by the direct pursuit of happiness or prestige. Being habitually thoughtful of others' welfare, he wins cooperation rather than opposition and attains more frequent success. Further, the objects of his interest are of the sort most naturally and spontaneously interesting to human beings of all objects outside the self, namely, other human beings. Therefore, the interest in the object easily tends to become absorbing. The spontaneous and direct interest in other human beings is also, normally, an interest which prefers their well-being to their ill-being. An interest in injuring other human beings is usually an indirect interest, the injury of others being seen, not as the most ultimate end in view, but as a means to some other end, such as power, prestige, or revenge.

This analysis of human motivation and of the way in which happiness arises in human experience therefore tends, in a very important respect, to bear out Shaftesbury's argument for the general coincidence of public and private happiness or welfare. It rejects the egoistic form of the argument—that the pursuit of private happiness will always tend to produce public welfare. Indeed, it shows that this has a tendency not even to produce private welfare. However, it supports the slightly modified converse proposition

that the pursuit of public welfare is, in general, the most likely way for the individual to promote his own happiness.

It shows, nevertheless, that this is not a simple matter of making a decision to adopt the right means to an end. It requires that one's own happiness, as an end, be largely ignored and forgotten in the development of an interest in the means to the general happiness. Here the program of enlightened self-interest finds itself faced with an impasse. To pursue an end successfully we must keep that end in sight and carefully choose the means to it. But in the pursuit of happiness the choice of the correct means requires that we must, in general, cease to pursue the end, indeed ignore it. The program of enlightened self-interest is therefore self-defeating. It is not the way to the true well-being of the individual; still less does it contain the promise of being the best way to obtain the public good. The defense of secularism as a program requiring only the general cultivation of enlightened self-interest therefore breaks down.

JOHN DEWEY'S ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATION

In the philosophy of John Dewey, however, secularism can find a much more promising, because a much more nearly correct, interpretation of human motivation. Dewey's philosophy is many-sided. He does not hold rigidly to either a secularistic or humanistic viewpoint. His analysis of human motivation, however, as found in his principal work² on the subject, is distinctively secularistic and has been very influential. We shall examine it as an example of secularism at its best.

Dewey interprets human behavior as neither a pursuit of

² *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1922). Quotations in this chapter with pages indicated in parentheses are from this work.

pleasure nor as a set of more or less coordinated instinctive responses to specific stimuli which drive toward specific ends. With true insight, he lays primary emphasis, instead, on the essentially active nature of the living organism. Man cannot help acting. He does not need specific motives or stimuli to make him act. He acts anyway. "To a healthy man inaction is the greatest of woes" (p. 119). In the infant this activity is almost entirely unorganized; it is simply "impulsive." It tends to become canalized by interaction with the environment, which becomes effective through the organism's susceptibility to pleasure and pain and its biological needs. The ways in which native appetites and "instincts" can be satisfied, however, are so multifarious that it is not the native endowment that gives rigidity to conduct, but habits created under the influence of the particular form of environment. The environment inhibits certain forms of activity by making them painful, unsatisfying, or simply impossible. To other forms of activity it gives free play and full occupation. These forms of activity are found pleasant and tend to be repeated. They become established habits, fixed forms of interest. Such habits must include ways of satisfying biological needs, appetites, and "instincts," but there are multifarious ways in which this can be done.

In the formation of habit, Dewey also rightly insists, it is the social environment, rather than the physical, that is usually of most importance. The physical environment is generally sufficient for the needs of life and civilization if the habits of society are adequate to utilization and distribution of its resources.

Habits are arts. They involve skill of sensory and motor organs, cunning or craft, and objective materials. They assimilate objective energies and eventuate in command of environment (p. 15).

Habit is

that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity and in that sense acquired; . . . which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation (pp. 40-41).

The influence of the social environment in the formation of habit is seen in the learning of the language and adoption of the customs of the group into which the child is born. Individuals form their personal habits under conditions set by the prior habits, or customs, of their social group. Even his morality an individual acquires, in the first place, from his society, as he acquires his language (p. 58).

Habits, Dewey points out, are the inert factor in human behavior. Impulse is highly malleable.

It is precisely custom which has greatest inertia, . . . while instincts are most readily modifiable through use, most subject to educative direction (p. 107).

While it is possible to develop a habit of inquiry yet, of habits in general, he correctly says that by themselves they are "too organized, too insistent and determinate to need to indulge in inquiry or imagination" (p. 177). Deliberate inquiry and the acquirement of new knowledge therefore only occur when habit is unable to find smooth expression.

We know at such times as habits are impeded, when a conflict is set up in which impulse is released (p. 183).

Deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing, possible lines of action (p. 190).

Choice is simply

hitting in imagination upon an object which furnishes an adequate stimulus to the recovery of overt action. Choice is made as soon as some habit, or some combination of elements of habits and impulse, finds a way fully open. . . . It is the

emergence of a unified preference out of competing preferences. . . . All deliberation is a search for a way to act, not for a final terminus (pp. 192-93).

It will be seen that, in Dewey's analysis, normal human motivation is presented as distinctly extroverted from the beginning. Choice is made not by attention to inner feelings, but by attention to objects and by finding that way of attending to them in which impulse and habit find release in action. Pain and pleasure play their role in deliberation, he says,

not . . . by way of a calculated estimate of future delights and miseries, but by way of experiencing present ones (p. 200).

We think of future objects and actions, and we are *now* pleased or pained by the thought and act accordingly. The goal is then not a future pleasure, but a future objective state of affairs the thought of which now pleases us. He does not say that it is impossible to make a goal of our future feeling states, as the Hedonist thinks we do and advises us to do, but he says that the Hedonist's advice can only issue in

a sickly introspection and an intricate calculus of remote, inaccessible and indeterminable results (p. 202).

In his emphasis on the extrovert character of normal human activity Dewey, however, particularly in his earlier writings, failed to take account of the extent to which, especially in civilized communities, introverted habits tend to develop, and of the persistency with which they modify the hedonic tone experienced in intelligent contemplation of possible lines of action, so that impulse and habit find release in ways not really desirable from the standpoint of either the individual or the community. Furthermore,

although the social environment is of predominant influence in the shaping of habits, those of the extroverted egoistic type are altogether too common and too strong for social welfare. This arises for two reasons: (a) because biological needs and "instinctive" drives seek the easiest way to their satisfaction, which is often a socially undesirable way, and (b) because the social influence on habit formation comes chiefly from the groups with which the individual has closest relations, and these often express little consideration for other groups and even prejudice against them. Even though it may be argued that a sufficiently intelligent examination of the alternatives and their consequences would have led to different choices and different habits the fact remains that the socially undesirable habits exist. And it is the existing habits that, in interaction with impulse and the environment, determine when deliberation shall occur, which direction inquiry shall first take, and what prospect shall appear sufficiently promising to secure release of habit-impulse in renewed action.

DEWEY'S THEORY OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

Even if he underestimates the prevalence and tenacity of introverted egoism Dewey is certainly well aware of the evils in what we have here called extroverted egoism. He therefore sets out to show how we may work progressively toward the overcoming of these evils. And his solution of the problem is thoroughly secularistic. It recognizes no goal as calling for supreme devotion, no moral principle as sacred. The only loyalty for which Dewey calls is not to an object or a principle but to a method, the effective use of intelligence in the solution of problems as they arise. Good is identified with satisfaction, not in the sense of pleasant feeling, or in that of arriving at an end, the satiation of a

desire, but in the sense of solving a problem which has impeded activity so that activity can go on unimpeded.

Good consists in the meaning that is experienced to belong to an activity when conflict and entanglement of various incompatible impulses and habits terminate in a unified orderly release in action (p. 210).

This might suggest that any solution is as good as another, but Dewey guards against this.

Moreover there is a genuine difference between a true and a false good, a spurious satisfaction, and a "true" good, and there is an empirical test for discovering the difference. The unification which ends thought in act may be only a superficial compromise, not a real decision but a postponement of the issue. Many of our so-called decisions are of this nature. Or it may present, as we have seen, a victory of a temporarily intense impulse over its rivals, a unity by oppression and suppression, not by co-ordination. These seeming unifications which are not unifications of fact are revealed by the event, by subsequent occurrences (pp. 210-11).

The unification of which Dewey here speaks is not the unification of the individual with society, but simply such a unification of the "incompatible impulses and habits" of the individual which enables them to find "a unified, orderly release in action." An activity, achieving such unification is, by Dewey's definition, satisfactory or good. Of course, if the unification should prove superficial or temporary because the activity runs into difficulties with the social environment, such as again arouse incompatible impulses and habits in the individual, then it would be revealed as not a "true" good. The truly good decision must open the way to an activity which can attain its ends-in-view and contribute to the indefinite continuity of further activity with a minimum of internal conflict. Such a decision

is, for Dewey, morally good, and it is in such activity that the welfare of the individual consists. If our actions are to be of benefit to others they must give them the opportunity for the same kind of activity.

To foster conditions that widen the horizon of others and give them command of their own powers, so that they can find their own happiness in their own social fashion, is the way of "social" action (p. 294).

This conception of desirable social conditions accords with our own description of an ethically satisfactory community in the previous chapter.³ The question, therefore, is whether such social conditions will tend to be promoted by personal decisions made in accord with Dewey's analysis—decisions which issue from intelligent thought, activated by conflict in the life of impulse and habit, and seeking a line of activity in which that life can genuinely find "a unified, orderly release in action." Does the integrated wholeness, or integrity, of the purposive life of the individual require that, in his social relations, he must manifest adequate respect and concern for the welfare of others? Dewey appears to believe that it does; and we agree. We are convinced, however, that Dewey's analysis of human motivation does not show that it does and cannot do so unless a clear break is made with the standpoint of secularism and it is recognized that what we have called man's moral "feelings" require that he should make place for a God in his life, i.e., for an object recognized as worthy of supreme devotion.

In his analysis of human motivation Dewey gives fully adequate place to human sympathy and good will, but he does not do justice to the experience of conscience. The

³ See Chapter 2, page 24.

moral consciousness, he believes, is simply an outgrowth from social relationships, an effect of social conditioning. It is in this social foundation of conscience that he finds both the justification for freedom from all fixed moral rules and the ground for belief that such freedom, intelligently used, must eventuate in human good.

These two facts, that moral judgment and moral responsibility are the work wrought in us by the social environment, signify that all morality is social; not because we *ought* to take into account the effect of our acts upon the welfare of others, but because of facts. Others *do* take account of what we do, and they respond accordingly to our acts. Their responses actually *do* affect the meaning of what we do (p. 316).

Our moral "feelings" of responsibility and obligation are thus regarded as having no greater importance than the *actual* demands of society whence they are directly or indirectly derived. There is no reason why their demands should be given a place of supreme importance in our decisions. Yet the actual demands of society, and the interdependence of the individual and society, are such that Dewey believed that if we can free our minds from the influence of past errors and superstitions, and from that of the institutions they have created, and pursue with scientific intelligence the solution of our problems, then the solutions which make for the true good of the individual will tend in general to the true good of society. The intelligence of the individual must seek, amidst all his social and physical relations, that outlet for his energies which promises most continuous, "unified orderly release in action." What makes for social evil is not our doing this intelligently, but our doing it unintelligently; and, the source of conscience being merely the value judgments and demands of others in the past, it is unintelligent to make any end imposed by conscience supreme.

THREE FLAWS IN DEWEY'S THESIS

The argument which reaches this secularistic conclusion has three fatal flaws. The first is the failure to give due weight to the rigidities in human nature and society. We may grant the plasticity of impulse and the openness of multifarious ways in which biological needs and instinctive drives may find their satisfaction. This plasticity, however, is steadily lost as the child grows into the adolescent and then into the adult; and many of the multifarious ways open are much more troublesome than others. We tend to take the easiest way even when it is socially not the most desirable. The growing rigidities of habit and institution limit and direct the activity of intelligence itself. The existence of certain habits often creates a situation in which the promise of most continuous "unified orderly release in action" lies in a line of activity which in the long run is socially evil. Intelligence, seeking a way for release of energy in action, seeks a way congenial to existing habits, for one that is uncongenial does not promise "unified orderly release" but painful and troublesome adjustment. Every line of action involves some conflict and competition with other members of society; and intelligence finds its promise of most "unified orderly release" in choosing to conflict with those whose opposition is most easily overcome, particularly when it is supported in such exploitation of the weak by the example of the strongest or most numerous section of society. Against such results of the intelligent seeking of outlet for energy, society has erected some barriers in concepts of justice, but these are often distorted by the concerted intelligently operating energies of powerful groups; and even where this is not the case the intelligence of the individual, seeking its "unified orderly release in action," will only be influenced by concepts of justice in

so far as his conscience may be worried by the thought of injustice, or society exerts pressures in its support. Yet conscience, interpreted as merely an effect of social conditioning, is something that intelligence should ignore except so far as it points to existing social conditions that may affect the course of activity.

The second flaw in Dewey's position is that his analysis of the judgment of value, rejecting, as it does, any special place for moral values, turns the pursuit of the good into a pursuit of power. The intelligent choice is the choice that enables the energy of impulse and habit to find a unified and orderly release in action which is no mere superficial or temporary adjustment, but avoids future conflict within and without, giving free course to the ongoing activity. It is therefore a choice which learns how to avoid frustration from the environment and how to overcome the sources of frustration which cannot be avoided. The mark of intelligent choice becomes its tendency to increase the power and skill with which the individual can turn every feature of the environment, human and nonhuman, into means for the fullest and freest expression of his own impulsive energy and habitual drive. The only mark of an error in evaluation is the discovery that it has created a "conflict and entanglement of various incompatible impulses and habits," or led to an environmental situation which does not permit of their "unified and orderly release in action" (p. 219). But so long as a decision does not create a conflict of impulse and habit within the self, and gives it power to overcome any opposition in the environment, there is nothing in Dewey's criterion to say that it is wrong. What, then, could be more right than the decision which avoids conflict of impulse and habit by being in accord with a man's dominant desires, and which guarantees against frus-

tration from without by giving him control of the material and social means to obtain those desires?

The third flaw in Dewey's argument is the inadequacy of his analysis of conscience. It is this which accounts for his refusal to give supremacy to moral values and thus involves his analysis in the defects already mentioned. Dewey is rightly in revolt against all intuitionistic ethical theories which would claim absolute authority for any set of specific moral principles, such as we find in the Thomistic doctrine of "natural law." But in his reaction from authoritarianism he finds no place to stop, short of a complete rejection of the supremacy of any moral ideal. He adopts the explanation of conscience put forward by a great many naturalistic psychologists. It is simply a result of social conditioning. The mind of the child echoes the value judgments he hears expressed by those around him. He passes upon his own actions the judgments he hears expressed concerning similar actions performed by himself or others. He joins the group in making demands upon individuals. He shares in expressing group approval and disapproval of the actions of others. He experiences it directed upon himself and inevitably tends to feel toward his own actions the sort of approval and disapproval he had joined in expressing upon the similar actions of others. Thus conscience becomes a voice within expressing the moral judgment that is expected from without.

CRITICISM OF DEWEY'S THEORY OF CONSCIENCE

For an extended criticism of this explanation of conscience and its alternatives, I must refer the reader to what I have written elsewhere.⁴ Here our criticism may be briefly developed in three main points. First, the theory does not

⁴ *The Moral Nature of Man* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1952).

accord with what we *mean* by saying an action is right or wrong. To say "To hang that man was wrong" does not merely mean that the speaker feels disapproval of it, or that people in general, or his own social group, object to it or disapprove of it. It does not even mean that they would object to it or disapprove of it if they understood enough about it, as the speaker does. The statement asserts that the hanging was contrary to a standard of conduct somehow required of those concerned in the action. The speaker may agree that he has learned of the standard from the social group. But if he accepts the group's authority it is because he believes the group has reason to believe it is the true standard, or has the right by some higher standard to determine the standard in this matter. The conscience of the individual, expressed in the condemnation of the hanging, therefore expresses a judgment about the hanging in relation to some ideal standard, and it involves a belief that there are good reasons for that judgment, even though the speaker may admit that he does not know what they are, having adopted his judgment on the authority of those he believes do know. More often, however, the speaker believes that he does know sufficient reasons for his judgment and that they are quite independent of the question as to how he first formed the judgment, or of how many people, if any, agree with him in it. The fact that the moral judgment is thus critically independent of the effects of social conditioning is incompatible with the view that it merely expresses an attitude due to social conditioning.⁵

Secondly, when conscientious inquiry is undertaken on any question of what is ethically right or wrong, appeal is always ultimately made to the effects of action upon human welfare. Even when, as in the case of Kant, a thinker tries to make his ethical theory independent of such empirical

⁵ This point is further discussed in Chapter 4.

considerations, he nevertheless feels it incumbent upon him to show that his theory supports moral judgments which accord with human welfare. Even though he rejects all absolutes he nevertheless tends to support his own moral judgments by the one final criterion—the effect of an action upon human well-being—and he often criticizes absolutism by showing that it tends to support principles which are not in accord with human well-being. We should therefore recognize that, though the uncritical conscience may merely echo the tradition in which it has been cradled and conditioned, the critical conscience has its own standard implicit in all its thinking—human well-being. Differences arise, not from a rejection of this standard as *the* standard of moral obligation, but from two sources: (a) from different views of the nature and needs of man and thus of the nature and conditions of his well-being, (b) from tendencies to assert more or less arbitrary limits to the human groups for whose well-being we have any moral responsibility.

Thirdly, in spite of the effects of social conditioning, which tend to limit moral responsibility to narrow and friendly groups, the critical moral conscience has tended, through the long history of ethical thinking, to break these barriers down. From the assertion of a limited range of specific duties to kinsmen and kindred groups it passed to the duty to "love thy neighbor as thyself." From a duty to one's neighbor limited to "the children of thy people" it passed to the brotherhood of man. And from a limitation of "neighbor" to those who are neighborly it passed to, "Love your enemies." These transitions were made by critical ethical thinking in opposition to inherited moral traditions and in spite of opposing emotional tendencies and habits. The critical moral conscience must therefore be recognized as carrying its standard somehow implicitly

within itself, a standard which persistently tends to affect our "feeling" for moral values, and which has gradually been made explicit in critical thinking.⁶

Of the three flaws in Dewey's argument for the secularist position in ethics, the first two point to its practical dangers. It presents no adequate reason why the individual should not often take the shortest and easiest route to the fulfillment of his own desires even at the cost of the public welfare. And it actually encourages the pursuit of power.⁷ We are therefore forced to the conclusion that Dewey's interpretation of human motivation fails, as did earlier interpretations, to show how secularism, without creating or relying on a religious devotion, can relate a satisfactory set of moral ideas to the sources of human motivation so as to secure a positive and sufficient response. This, as we saw above,⁸ is the practical requirement which secularism is called upon to fulfill; and it has failed. For no other thinkers have defended the cause of secularism better than those we have examined.

⁶ For an analysis of human nature which shows that this standard is empirically discovered as a condition of psychological integrity rather than rationally intuited as an a priori principle, see *The Moral Nature of Man* (*op. cit.*).

⁷ The failure of Dewey's psychology and ethics to supply the theoretical basis for a liberal and democratic social order is now recognized by a considerable number of naturalistic philosophers, e.g., Morton G. White, in *Social Thought in America* (New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1949). In reviewing this book Arthur Murphy adds emphasis to White's criticisms, saying, "But the basic defect in this way of thinking as a social philosophy is surely much more serious than Professor White's analysis suggests. A liberalism whose intellectual standards deprive it of the right to appeal on principle to right and justice as justifying reasons is not merely somewhat incomplete. It is morally incapacitated. Its scientific method cannot make sense of the rational cogency of its ideals and itself makes no 'liberal' sense without them. Hence the easy transition of an 'instrumentally' educated generation to compromise, to cynicism, or to antiliberal authority when the trend of events makes liberal ideals difficult to hold. A liberalism that has lost its moral principles does not long retain its authority as a social gospel." *The Philosophical Review*, October, 1951, p. 582.

⁸ See Chapter 2, page 19.

The third flaw in Dewey's argument (his inadequate analysis of conscience) is an example of the failure of secularist philosophy to solve what, above,⁹ we called its first problem—to give an intellectually satisfactory interpretation of the moral experience of mankind without invoking or implying some distinctive feature of a traditional religious ontology. It was in order to avoid any possible implications of a traditional religious nature that Dewey so emphatically rejected the distinctive nature and supreme importance of moral values. But in explaining the whole experience of the constraint of conscience as an effect of habits of thought unconsciously, or almost unconsciously, borrowed from the social environment, he cannot do justice to the independence of critical ethical thinking, or to its constant tendency to refer to the criterion of an impartial concern for human values, or to the peculiar insistency with which it makes its claims that its values should be supreme over all other values—even over those values which have a clear and present social endorsement of the sort which conscience (on the theory of its origin in social conditioning) is supposed merely to echo.

THE BASIC DEFECT OF SECULARISM

This analysis of typical and important social philosophies of secularism, and of the psychology of human motivation, enables us to see why secularism cannot meet man's needs. In refusing to recognize any supremely worthy object of devotion external to the self it leaves man without an external standard by which to integrate his own impulsive life and unify the social order. He must therefore either leave his impulsive life without any unifying factor or he must turn his attention within and adopt as the guiding principle of his choices the securing of that "unified

⁹ See Chapter 2, page 19.

and orderly release in action" in which Dewey finds that good is experienced (p. 210).

Secularism therefore means that either life is lived without a unifying guide or guidance is found through an inward direction of attention in the selecting of our goals which must inevitably tend to introvert the personality. In practice, the secularistic individual tends to oscillate between the two—between the ununified pursuit of a variety of extrovert goals and introverted consideration and choice of what appears to promise the greatest satisfaction, the fullest and most continuous "unified and orderly release in action." Fortunately, the conditions of human life are usually such that most people make their adjustments without very serious conflict and introversion. Yet without the spiritually unifying and extroverting influence involved in the recognition of an objective beyond the self supremely worthy of devotion no personality can develop its maximum unity and effectiveness. And for lack of it many make shipwreck of their lives. For lack of such a directive, or for lack of adequate recognition of its implications and consistent devotion to it, society, too, is torn into conflicting groups or disintegrated into a struggling confusion of competing individuals, uninspired by any spirit of unity and mutual responsibility.

Man, therefore, needs a God in his life. He needs to hold to the idea of something beyond his individual self that is worthy to be supreme among those objects to which he is prepared to devote himself. The standpoint of secularism leaves him floundering in the futility of indecisiveness or turns him inward upon himself to experience the frustrations of egoism or develop the insensibility and iniquity of spiritual pride. To keep his spirit whole and draw forth from it its best man needs a God to serve, a God whom he can love with all his heart and all his life and all

his mind, a God to whose service he can commit himself with self-forgetting zeal and yet know that in such commitment the truest interest of himself and his society will be secure. Secularism, therefore, must be abandoned. Man must turn to the standpoint of religion. But can he find the God he needs for the orientation and invigoration of his life among the traditional concepts of religion, such as some form of theism, or will he do better to abandon the traditional forms of religion for the naturalistic conceptions found in some form of humanism? This is the question with which the thinker is faced as soon as he has recognized the inadequacy of the standpoint of secularism for human life at its best.