

and to hinder its performance with all our might. A majority of our fellow-citizens take the same strong view, and actually employ their power as the majority, to prevent it absolutely; whereby a new article in the moral code of that community is set up. As a matter of course, any one committing the forbidden deed is disapproved of, and handed over to be punished. Every man, whose own conscience tallies with the prevailing moral rules, visits with his indignation the violations of these; whereas the man of independent views of duty, judges according to his own special convictions, whether in his own case, or as regards other persons; only, not having the community with him, he is powerless to enforce his judgments, inasmuch as the sentiment of an individual, though never so well founded, does not amount to law.

23. The phrase 'moral approbation', strictly considered, is devoid of meaning. As well might we talk of 'legal approbation'; it being known that the laws never approve, but only condemn. When a man does his duty, he escapes punishment; to assert anything more is to obliterate the radical distinction between duty and merit. It is freely admitted that there may be merit in the performance of duty, when the circumstances are such as to render this so very arduous that the generality of people fall short of it. A man may thus distinguish himself, and rise into the order of merit; but the exception here proves the rule, as showing that we praise what we think it would be hard or unreasonable to exact, require, or expect from everybody. Merit attaches itself only to something that is *not* our duty, that something being a valuable service rendered to other human beings. Positive beneficence is a merit. So with good offices, and with every kind of gratuitous labour for beneficial purposes. These are the objects of esteem, honour, reward, but not of *moral* approbation. Positive good deeds and self-sacrifice are the preserving salt of human life; but they transcend the region of morality proper, and occupy a sphere of their own. What society has seen fit to enforce with all the rigour of positive inflictions, has nothing essentially in common with those voluntary efforts of human disinterested-

ness and generous feeling that we characterize as virtuous and noble conduct, and reward with eulogy and monumental remembrance.*

24. In the present state of Ethical discussion, the objection most frequently urged against the doctrine of Utility is, that it supplies no motive but what is self-regarding, and therefore is not an adequate foundation of morals. There is some confusion of ideas on this matter; and perhaps the best preparation for clearing it up is to advert to the present position of the question concerning the existence of disinterested motives in the human mind.

Under whatever name—sympathy, disinterestedness, social feel-

* There is a seeming conflict between the definition of duty here adopted, and the distinction between duties of perfect and imperfect obligation, corresponding to perfect and imperfect rights. 'An imperfect law,' says Mr. Austin, 'in the sense of the Roman jurists, is a law which wants a sanction, and which, therefore, is not binding. Consequently, it is not so properly a law, as counsel, or exhortation addressed by a superior to inferiors.

'Many of the writers on *morals*, and the so-called *law of nature*, have annexed a different meaning to the term *imperfect*; speaking of imperfect obligations, they commonly mean duties which are not legal; duties imposed by commands of God, or duties imposed by positive morality, as contradistinguished from duties imposed by positive law. An imperfect obligation in the sense of the Roman jurists, is exactly equivalent to no obligation at all; for the term *imperfect* denotes simply that the law wants the sanction appropriate to laws of that kind. An imperfect obligation, in the other meaning of the expression, is a religious or a moral obligation. The term *imperfect* does not denote that the law imposing the duty wants the appropriate sanction. It denotes that the law imposing the duty is *not* a law established by a political superior; that it wants that *perfect*, or that surer or more cogent sanction which is imparted by the sovereign or the state.' (Austin's *Province of Jurisprudence Determined*, pp. 23-25.)

As thus explained, the so-called imperfect duties may still be duties in the fullest sense of the word; they may be enforced by society, if not by the law. They may, however, have this peculiarity, which is what Paley and others mean by the term, that they do not create corresponding *rights*. It may be a duty enforced by the social sanction (that is, by blame for neglect), to give charity, though no particular needy person can claim it from us. But, in the case of benevolent and philanthropic services, it is more correct to say that they are prompted by the rewards of society, and therefore come under merit, and not under duty.

I must also advert to the doctrine, maintained more especially among Calvinists, that the utmost that even a perfect human being could do is strictly duty, and consequently that there is no such thing as merit.

Upon this I would remark that such a tenet is not Ethical but Theological.

ings and regards, altruistic conduct,—I have always contended for our possessing impulses to act for the good of others. All utilitarians, so far as I know, have held the same view, although with some important differences.

The reality of those feelings that carry us out of ourselves, and identify us with our fellow-members of Society, could not be more strongly nor more aptly expressed than in Mill's chapter on the Sanctions of Utility ('Utilitarianism', chap. III.). The firm foundation of the utilitarian morality, he says, is 'the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow-creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature, and happily one of those which tend to become stronger, even without express inculcation, from the influences of advancing civilization. The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that, except in some unusual circumstances, or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives of himself otherwise than as the member of a body', &c. The whole passage should be conned by every student of Ethics.

With so strong an assertion of our social impulses, it may seem a matter of little consequence, how they are resolved, in the final psychological analysis. This would be so, provided the analysis does not allow them to slip through.

After displaying his usual subtlety in the discussion of the question, whether or not the disinterested impulses are, at bottom, egotistical, Mill arrives at the following conclusion: 'It results from the preceding considerations, that there is in reality nothing desired except happiness. Whatever is desired otherwise than as a means to some end beyond itself, and ultimately to happiness, is It springs not out of the relations between man and man, but out of the relations between man and God.

I am aware that some have endeavoured to make the two fields of Ethics and Theology coincident. Thus Dr. Wardlaw, in his *Lectures on Christian Ethics*, censures the whole series of Ethical writers without exception—including men (such as Butler) no less attached to Christianity than himself—for not making the doctrine of the corruption of human nature the cornerstone of their respective systems. But to deprive morality of its independent foundation and make it repose upon religion, has been repeatedly shown to constitute a vicious circle.

The science of Ethics ought, I conceive, to be constructed on broad human grounds, such as are acknowledged by men of every variety of religious opinion, and with reference to what one man can exact from another, as fellow-beings.

Now, man must work by praise and blame, reward and punishment. When he works by punishment or blame, it is duty; when by praise or reward, it is merit; such are the very meanings of the words. So, if praise and reward are proper instruments, there must be such a thing as merit in a human point of view.

desired as itself a part of happiness, and is not desired for itself until it has become so. Those who desire virtue for its own sake, desire it either because the consciousness of it is a pleasure, or because the consciousness of being without it is a pain, or for both reasons united; as in truth the pleasure and pain seldom exist separately, but almost always together, the same person feeling pleasure in the degree of virtue attained, and pain in not having attained more. If one of these gave him no pleasure, and the other no pain, he would not love or desire virtue, or would desire it only for the other benefits which it might produce to himself or to persons whom he cared for.'

This conclusion may, or may not, be sufficient for the purpose of upholding the social feelings; but, so far as I am able to judge of our disinterested impulses, they are wholly distinct from the attainment of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. They lead us, as I believe, to sacrifice pleasures, and, incur pains, without any compensation; they positively detract from our happiness.

It will be allowed that in any action deserving of the name 'disinterested', we surrender a certain portion of our own pleasure, for the benefit of another. It will also be allowed, that in such surrender, it often happens that we do not, as a matter of course, attain an equal pleasure. Sometimes we do; as in rare cases of strong affection, and in cases where the sacrifice can be made up by the mere pleasure of pity, or by the thankfulness of the recipient.

Mill's position is tenable only on the ground, that the *omission* of a disinterested act that we are inclined to, would give us so much *pain* that it is on the whole for our comfort that we should make the requisite sacrifice. There is plausibility in this supposition. If we feel ourselves urged to perform a certain act, the not doing it gives us pain. But as in the former case—the attainment of pleasure by beneficent conduct—the doctrine breaks down when we try it upon extreme cases. A man goes forward to certain death, like the sergeant that suspended the bag of gunpowder on the gate of Delhi. Are we to suppose that if he had kept back, and survived, his remorse would have been so great that all his future life would have been worse than death? Or when any one resigns a congenial position, for a distasteful one, to gratify a parent's whim, is it solely because the pain of refusal would be greater than the dislike of the new situation? All that people usually suffer from stifling a generous impulse is too slight and transient to be placed against any important sacrifice. If Howard had remained at home, enjoying the pleasures of his position, he would, I doubt not, have been a much happier man, in spite of his longings to relieve the miseries of mankind. These longings would have been an abatement from his pleasures, but need not have made his life miserable as compared with his actual career.

It seems to me that we must face the seeming paradox—that there are, in the human mind, motives that pull against our happiness. It will not do to say that *because* we act so and so, *therefore* our greatest happiness lies in that course. This begs the very question in dispute. The theory of disinterested action, in the only form that I can conceive it, supposes that the action of the will and the attainment of happiness do not square throughout. There is an exceptional corner, not very large in the mass of men, where motive and happiness come into conflict. When once we allow this, human action becomes intelligible; there needs no straining to account for the extreme instances of disinterested conduct, the greatest nobility of virtue.

This is the only view compatible with our habit of praising and rewarding acts of virtue. If a man were in as good a position, under an act of great self-denial, as if he had not performed it, we might leave him unnoticed. If he has rather gained than lost by the transaction, he could dispense with any reward from us. No doubt it might be said that the anticipated public approbation was part of the case, the turning circumstance that made the action not a losing one. Here again, however, the observation recurs, that while for small sacrifices, the motive may be sufficient, for great sacrifices, it is wholly inadequate; while some of the greatest sacrifices of all have failed to gain public approbation.

Our genuinely disinterested acts are often performed without calculation, without a thought of what we are to gain or lose; and, if there be calculation, the consciousness that we shall lose does not deter us. It is impossible that what we do, under those circumstances, shall be exactly compensated in pleasures and in exemptions. Whether they will or will not, is no part of our consideration; does not count in our motives. In our less purely devoted moods, we do calculate and consider, and the loss to ourselves enters into our decision. Even then, we may deliberately incur uncompensated loss; we seldom suppose that the pain of an omitted act of beneficence would be so hard to bear, that the heaviest loss is not too much to buy it off.

I hold, therefore, that human actions include all the following classes, over and above purely self-seeking conduct, or what is called selfishness:—First, actions done to others for the positive pleasure they bring. Second, actions done to others, because their omission would leave a sting behind. Third, actions done to others, irrespective of either pleasure or pain; this alone is the pure or typical form of disinterested conduct, and without a certain share of this, society would not be held together. What is the relative proportion of the three classes could hardly be stated for an individual mind; and there are the greatest differences between one man and another. But each class is a sensible quantity in the sum of human action.

In the antithesis between Selfishness and the Social feelings, all the three must be counted: so that, practically speaking, their sum total constitutes our disinterested regards in the widest sense. When there is a question between the narrowest exclusive selfishness and a beneficent act, any one of the three kinds of motives may turn the scale.

Now, when the existence of beneficent regards is conceded, and especially, if we admit the last of the above-named classes of motives, beneficent actions must follow as a matter of course. They are not dependent upon the theory of Ethics that we choose to adopt; they are, in fact, above all theories. The Utilitarian does not make them, he counts upon them. Neither does he, or can he, abolish them. The system that tampers with them most seriously is the Theological. On one view, Theological Ethics seems the most beneficent of all; it is most stringent in requiring individual self-denial for the sake of others. But in so far as this is enforced by the rewards and punishments either of the present life, or of a future life, the operation of the system is purely self-regarding. In the thunders of eternal reward and punishment, there cannot be heard the still small voice of a purely disinterested motive.

The attempt to condemn the principle of Utility in particular, as supplying no motive to do good to others, can be retorted upon the holders of every known theory. Altruistic conduct springs out of the constitution of the mind, and this cannot be altered by theories. If the disinterested motives are weak, something may be done to educate them, and to evoke them; but for us to apply reward and punishment, is to set them aside. We may by rewards and punishments make men perform their social duties; but such performance is by that fact rendered self-regarding. To obtain virtue in its highest purity, its noblest hue, we have to abstain from the mention of both punishment and reward.

25. A much graver difficulty is brought out at the conclusion of Mr. Sidgwick's admirable work, entitled, 'The Methods of Ethics.' It is one of the best achievements of that work to have for ever disposed of the opposition between Intuitional Ethics and Utility. Yet, as the end of the whole matter, Mr. Sidgwick is obliged to confess that there is a fundamental contradiction, an insoluble difficulty—the difficulty of reconciling duty and interest. The meaning of Duty is something 'good for others,' not 'good for me'; and why should I be sacrificed to another man? Even though there is a motive in my constitution that urges me to self-sacrifice, why am I in particular to be oppressed with another man's burdens? Let every one bear his own burden, is the dictate of reason and justice.

It is rather too much for an ethical philosopher either to charge himself with this great problem, or to challenge any of his fellow-

workers to solve it. A difficulty so great cannot be new. Indeed, it is but a branch of the oldest of all questions—the existence of evil. It admits of no exact solution.

As the difficulty has always been felt, let us ask in what ways it has been met. For one thing, society, being well aware that duty often involves sacrifice, has always endeavoured to make compensation by rewards. That good men should suffer for the shortcomings of bad men, has been deemed an anomaly to be rectified to the utmost possible degree. The framework of human life has been considered as in need of being improved, until such time as all men should have their deserts. Next to the attainment of perfect justice is the distributing of defalcations equally, instead of making victims of a few. Thus, one of the ways of dealing with the difficulty is the ideal perfecting of society.

Another mode is exactly represented by Mill's theory of virtue, to which, according to him, mankind are to be educated more and more, namely, to derive a real pleasure from noble conduct, so that it shall not be felt as a sacrifice. If any large number of persons could attain the state of mind implied in Mill's glowing picture of the future, the overplus of spontaneous good actions would make up for all the deficiencies; and self-sacrifice in the literal sense would be unnecessary. There have been rare instances of martyrs and heroes so intoxicated with their own virtue, that they were happier in their self-devotion than in any sphere of successful worldly selfishness. It is too much to say that this is the usual operation of great virtue upon the mind. Such men are exceptionally constituted, and the kind of self-denial must be such as to chime in with their peculiar bent.

A third device is to regard Self-denial, and not happiness, as the end of being. We are constituted, it is said, to bring about the good of others, and to find in that our own good. This, however, is merely a more confusing form of the previous statement. Instead of solving, it only repeats, the difficulty. Yet it has satisfied many persons who have been shocked by St. Paul's declaration that, if there were only a present life, Christians were of all men the most miserable. No doubt the question still recurs, what is B more than C, that C should make up for B's deficiencies? To increase happiness is an intelligible position; and one of the most effectual modes of increase is mutual interchange of benefits. But the interchange should be mutual and equal; the taking from one simply to give to another is unproductive labour, aggravated by injustice.

The inculcation of unbounded Self-denial is to be regarded as an extreme statement of the happiness value of reciprocal good offices. It is found that, to reap the precious fruit, disinterestedness must sow the seed. Like putting water into a pump to make it draw, we must make a venture in order to gain a return; and the

best venture of all is to be under a disinterested impulse. That is the best state of mind for the initiating of the work. On the other side, the recipient should so respond that the giver is not allowed to lose by his action. There should be a mutual rivalry; the giver not thinking of reward, the recipient determined not to be behind with reciprocal services. The situation involves something of a psychological paradox, not without parallel in the workings of the mind. There should be disinterested conduct freely offered and bestowed, and yet it should not pass uncompensated. The giver should not expect compensation, and should, nevertheless, obtain it. We cannot dispense with the disinterested initiative, and we are bound to see that the actor has his recompense.

It would appear, therefore, that the standing determination on the part of society to make such arrangements as to repay all sacrifices, is the only solution yet offered of Mr. Sidgwick's enigma—the only Moral Cosmos. That this determination has been deplorably weak and ineffective in the past, must be granted; innumerable hecatombs of victims have been sacrificed, and we have not yet seen the end of it. We acknowledge that all this is not as it ought to be; and we strive to do better for the future. Whether the victims of by-gone ages have had, or will have, any recompense, is a question that must be met by considerations beyond the sphere of Ethics.