

The Knowledge of Good and Evil

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The study and practice of medicine do not necessarily make a man virtuous, or honest, or a gentleman; in a few cases, as shown by the records of the courts, the special knowledge and opportunities of the physician may have led men to commit crimes which they would not have attempted if they had not been medical men,—but, fortunately, such cases are very rare.

In the great majority of cases the special influence of the medical life of the present day is to broaden the views of the man who lives it, to make him independent in judgment;—rather sceptical as to the occurrence of the millennium in the near future;—quite incredulous as to the truth of the maxim that “all men are born free and equal;”—more inclined to consider and perform the immediate evident duty of the day and hour which lies just before him than to reflections upon the errors of other men;—free from morbid fear of death, and of that which comes after death;—and none the less a believer in the existence of a Supreme Being and in the fundamental principles of religion although he may not consider them capable of scientific demonstration.

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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

IN a remarkable paper on “Moral Deficiencies as determining Intellectual Functions,” published in the July number of this JOURNAL, the learned author has made a very interesting contribution to that famous discussion which was begun, according to a very respectable tradition, in the Garden of Eden, and which, in much more recent times, was continued in the incomparable conversation between Mephistopheles and the student in “Faust.” Every thoughtful consideration of so interesting and momentous a question is welcome, and no reader can doubt the thoughtfulness, and in many ways the instructiveness, of the admirably candid and fearless essay referred to. In attempting, as I shall here do, to explain some of the

relations between moral and intellectual development from a point of view not wholly identical with that of the author of this former paper, I shall do best to give my argument as little as possible the directly controversial form. Something of controversy will indeed creep into these paragraphs; but the matter at issue is in fact too real and tragic to warrant very much of the weighing of the accuracy or adequacy of this or of that individual phrase which one may chance to find in the speech of one's conscientious fellow-student. Our words easily differ, and may even be open to grave misunderstandings,—never more so than when we write on the intricate relations which obtain between moral defect and intellectual skill. It is easy therefore to misinterpret or to misuse another's expressions upon such subjects; and this fact, while it certainly seriously increases the responsibility of any one who feels called upon to give public utterance to his views as to such delicate problems, makes doubtless only the more unprofitable too detailed a controversy over words that have once been uttered. It is, after all, the cause involved that is here of moment. For the problem of the relations between moral deficiencies and intellectual ability is indeed so complex as to make only too possible expressions of opinion that, by reason of the difficulty of the subject, may easily prove to be erroneous, and that, by reason of the practical moment of the issue in question, may in consequence easily cause the judicious to grieve.

Meanwhile, of the reality of the issue itself there can be no doubt. The words rendered, *Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum*, were felt by the author of the original tale to embody a paradoxical truth that, for us who come after him, has only grown more wealthy in its paradoxes as time has gone on. As for the part later played, in the discussion, by Mephistopheles, in the passage just referred to, the significance of these as of other utterances of Faust's tempter lies just in the fact that they contain, in all their cruel irony, an aspect of the real truth. Moral goodness, as an attainment, is doubtless something very different from innocence. And attained goodness is only won through a conflict with the forces of

evil, which involves a pretty deep knowledge of evil. But knowledge of evil, in us men (and for excellent "psycho-physical" reasons, too), frequently leads to sin, and very commonly does so, in any given individual, before it actually leads the individual himself to the possible goodness that lies for him beyond and above this knowledge of evil. Therefore, on the way that leads the triumphant towards the goal of attained goodness, there will be found many who pause by the way, and who are content, after their fashion, with this or that sort of knowledge of evil, and with the sin in which, in their cases, this knowledge has actually involved them. Among these numerous wayfarers, moreover, there will be found many in whom such knowledge is a very marked feature of their whole mental life. Some of them, accordingly, will be very clever and ingenious persons, and will owe much of their wit to their lack of innocence. As against the innocent,—the dwellers, as it were, in Eden,—these knowing sinners,—can always assert that there is something more advanced,—more Godlike, in fact, as the serpent said,—in their wisdom, than in the ignorance of those who cannot conceive of sin. And thus insight and moral defect will come to have that frequent actual association, which the writer of the paper here referred to has noticed as a fact in the life of the world, and which is, in truth, the source of so serious a tragedy in human life. For it is precisely this association which often helps to make evil so keenly attractive in the eyes of the young and curious. But if one examines more closely, one finds that the paradox of the serpent is but one special case of an universal paradox of all human consciousness. And it is only necessary to state this paradox in its extremest form to deprive it of half its susceptibility to misunderstanding. There will, of course, indeed, always remain a great number of perplexing special problems in this as in all regions of our life; but at least we shall no longer be misled in our principles of judgment, when once we have grasped the deepest source of the difficulty. The common mistake, in dealing with all such matters, is the half-truth, and it was just in the half-truth that the wisdom of the original

serpent consisted. Even so, however, to point out in succession now this, now that case where an intellectual advance results from some particular moral deficiency, may be to any extent confusing and disheartening. To discover, however, a principle so universal that it would determine *a priori* the existence of many such paradoxical cases in any moral world, even the best, so soon as that world were conceived as more than one of transparently empty innocence,—this is an undertaking worthy of the serious moralist; and, properly set forth, such an undertaking can be in no wise either confusing to the little ones, or disheartening to the earnestly-minded. And, after all, why should science, in its cool regard for truth, need to be disheartening when the truth happens to be inspiring, or choose to be confusing in order to prove itself to be dispassionate?

As a fact I find, since writing the body of what follows, that the author of the essay here in question actually recognizes, in its universality, precisely that principle which I am about to expound afresh, and has elsewhere,* in the already published first volume of his treatise on ethics, discussed in a general and significant way the close relation which exists between the ethical worth of the individual and the presence of evil tendencies and temptations in his consciousness. Little or nothing of what I here write will therefore seem new to him, and therefore it is indeed better that I avoid the controversial tone. But in the essay now in question, on the “Moral Deficiencies,” our author has written as if he had forgotten or chosen to neglect his own former discussion. This his former discussion itself, moreover, has but just come into my own hands, and the following essay, written before I had seen the first volume of the “*Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft*,” must therefore be regarded as, on the whole, far less a reply than an independent contribution to our topic. Where what I shall here say agrees, then, with our author’s former chapter, in his published “*Einleitung*,”—the chapter on “*Verdienst*

* See “*Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft*,” by Georg Simmel. Berlin, 1892, vol. i., 3tes Kapitel, on “*Sittliches Verdienst und Schuld*.”

und Schuld,"—I shall only be supplementing his more recent essay by the thoughts presented in his previous publication. Where my own views run altogether counter to his, the contrast may still be of service.

I.

It is an old observation, which recent research only makes more impressive and concrete, that all organic processes involve a certain balance of opposing forces, and that, in particular, there is in all of them such an union of conflicting tendencies as is, for instance, expressed by saying that the phenomena of physical life involve at every instant, as a part of themselves, all the essential phenomena of the death of tissues. As I read, at the moment, in the current journals, I come upon two very recent expressions of this now fairly commonplace fact. In an article on "The Nerve-Cell,"* by a well-known English expert, I find, in an argument upon the functions of nerve-fibres, the words, "Since the chemical processes which accompany death of living tissue appear to be very similar to the chemical processes which accompany activity, as is seen, for example, in the case of muscle, it is very possible," etc.; but the rest of the argument concerns us not here. Meanwhile, a paper in the *Revue Philosophique*, on the movements of lower and higher organisms,† contains, in the author's summary of some recent discussions of the chemical processes at the basis of such movements, the statement, "Nothing more resembles the phenomena of the irritation (of living tissues) than those of death; and it was a stroke of genius in Claude Bernard to insist as much as he did on the truth that every function of life is a function of organic death; that in every movement of man and of the animals 'the active substance of the muscle is destroyed and burned,' just as the brain, in thinking, is consumed; and in a word, that life is death (*La vie c'est la mort*)."

* "The Nerve-Cell Considered as the Basis of Neurology," by Professor Schafer. *Brain*, 1893, Parts LXI. and LXII., p. 156.

† "Origine et Nature du Mouvement Organique," by J. Soury. *Revue Philosophique* for July, 1893; see, in particular, p. 55.

Now, here is mentioned an union of opposing tendencies in one of the best-known and most-frequently studied of organic processes. I need not for the moment insist upon the true analogy, which some at first sight would think a strained one, between these objective physical phenomena and certain others which are observable in the subjective world, among the activities of consciousness. Of that genuine analogy I shall indeed speak in a moment. But just now I shall confine myself to the mere interpretation of phrases. And here, for the first, what it concerns us to note is that there does appear, in the account of the vital processes, a necessity of stating their nature in essentially paradoxical terms, and that yet nobody is likely, in this region, to fall a prey to certain apparently easy misunderstandings of the meaning of the phrases used. *La vie c'est la mort*: it is not hard, in the light of the concrete facts of the metabolism of tissues, as the biologists explain them to us, to understand the significant half-truth, the apt paradox, of such an expression. But suppose that some one began to draw conclusions as to the implication of these words if taken in too abstract a sense. Suppose that one passed from the processes to the products. Suppose that he said, "If the processes of life are essentially processes of death, surely it follows, then, that all live things are, as such, dead things." This consequence would no longer be a happy paradox, a half-truth. It would be nonsense. The process is an union of balanced but opposing tendencies. But the product cannot be expressed in merely negative or in indifferent terms. Living involves, yes, as it were, at every step, consists, in dying; but life is utterly different from death.

Well, without insisting just yet on the reality of the analogy as such, without dwelling on anything but the parallelism of the phrases, suppose that we do find, in our conscious life, processes whose nature has to be expressed in a paradoxical language similar to the one thus occasionally used in biology. Shall we let this necessity deceive us? Shall we be so neglectful of the complications of truth as to seem to forget that you may have to affirm of a process what would be nonsense if affirmed of the product, or if so affirmed as to confuse

product and process? To become morally wise, for instance (if moral wisdom involves an understanding of moral issues), involves becoming acquainted with impurity. Shall we accordingly say, "All the morally wise, as such, are impure?" Or, taking another view of the case, shall we conceive the "moral man" just as a product, in whom, by definition, there is to be no evil, and shall we then say, "The moral man lacks the physical experience which gives the immoral one so thorough a comprehension of the immorality of others?"* Surely such views are confusions. It is as if we either said, on the one hand, "The live tissue must lack all the essential characters by which either dead or dying tissues resemble one another;" or, on the contrary, "All the living tissues, as such, are dead." No, if the matter is merely one of comprehending phrases, we need not even take the physiological processes as our basis for illustrating this sort of confusion. If we are determined to confuse a process with either a stage or an outcome of a process, regarded as something fixed and stationary, we may as well turn Eleatics at once. Surely (for so, in substance, argued Zeno), the flying arrow, whenever it moves, *is* somewhere. But *somewhere* means a place,—yes, *one* place. And so, as of old, "the flying arrow rests,"—rest precisely as all the live things are dead, and precisely as the morally wise man remains essentially impure. For the process of wisely conceiving the moral truth involves as a moment the "psycho-physical" impurity of thinking evil; and the process of the arrow's flight involves of necessity that the arrow should be somewhere in order that it may fly. As a fact, however, the arrow that rests in its place does *not* move, the tissue that *merely* disintegrates is dead, and it is the thought that *dwells* in impurity, that is impure,—not the thought that comprehends impurity only to overcome it.†

* The latter, though not the former, of these supposed assertions is an actual quotation (from p. 491) of the article that has suggested the present one.

† Here again it is well to say that these words were written before I had seen the "Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft," where, vol. i., p. 268, the contrast between "*ruhende Qualität*" and "*Prozess*" is admirably applied to the very case

But I indeed am not content thus merely to dwell upon the analogies of phrase involved in the similarity between our current accounts of biological and of moral processes. I insist upon the actual and enlightening analogy of the two sorts of processes themselves. In so far as the life of a conscious being runs parallel to the biological processes of his organism, it is not surprising that just such a balancing of opposing tendencies, just such a unity of conflicting activities, just such a Heraclitean *καλλίστη ἁρμονία ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων*, as is everywhere found on the physiological side, should be represented in our consciousness in more ways than one. For the just mentioned relation of the death and the activity of tissues is but a single case of the presence of this union of opposing tendencies on the physiological side; and more complex instances of such union, instances that reach the grade of the co-operation of antagonist muscles in a voluntary movement, are already pretty obviously represented in consciousness. We are well aware that we give complex voluntary movements precision by "holding ourselves back." We know that true freedom of action is inseparable from elements of self-restraint and of self-control. We consciously rejoice in ruling ourselves. We are aware, in general, that our will, in every organized form, involves a consciousness of opposing tendencies,—a consciousness which very obviously has not only this its conscious aspect, but its whole psycho-physical embodiment and expression. And from this point of view we get already a general notion of the true analogy that connects, in the one world of life, the most complex organic functions,—those to which our consciousness corresponds, with those simpler physical processes which characterize all life, and which make the union of contrary tendencies so familiar an affair throughout the organic realm. It is therefore more, then, than an analogy of phrases, it is a real resemblance of type, which makes the lesson gained from a general

now before us. It is strange that the essay on "Moral Deficiencies" seems so much to have neglected this aspect.

survey of such organic activities useful when we turn to a study of the facts of consciousness.

But this resulting lesson, so far, is, that if I am talking of something conceived as the product or outcome of an organic process,—such a product as “a live organism,” or “a good man,” or “virtue,” or “intellect,”—I must not be surprised to find, in the process of which this product is not merely the result but the embodiment (the *ἐνέργεια*, in Aristotle’s sense), factors which, taken by themselves, are distinctly opposed in their character to the positive but highly abstract definition that the product, if conceived merely as something finished and at rest, would necessarily possess. Just as in the living and active tissue I find, as an essential factor of its activity, that going on which, *if it were alone*, would mean death, just as in the voluntary movement I find that stimulation of the antagonist muscles going on which, *if it were alone*, would mean an utter defeat of the intended movement, just as every important nervous stimulation seems to involve, as part of itself, the excitation of processes that tend to inhibit it, so, too, I must expect to find in all forms of the higher life, and, in particular, of the moral life, a similar complexity of structure. And I do find, as a part of moral excellence, be it of whatever grade you will, that there are tendencies present which, *if they were alone*, would be the very opposite and the destruction of every such excellence. And this must be the case, not because of the weakness of man, but because of the organic dignity and consequent complexity of virtue; and not because the moral world is a mere maze of perplexing confusions, but because the very principle of every organic life is the combination in harmony of opposing tendencies.*

II.

And now, in the next place, for some illustrations (drawn directly from the moral world itself) of the way in which this

* Here again I have to go over ground which the aforesaid 3tes Kapitel of the first volume of the “*Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft*” has on the whole admirably treated, while the essay on the “*Moral Deficiencies*” has strangely neglected the same considerations.

union of opposing tendencies works in that region. Then we shall be able to apply our result to some of the special problems suggested by our author.

It is of the essence of moral goodness that positively good deeds should be the result of what we call choice,—that is, that morality should be a matter not of fate, but of consciousness. There is no virtue in digesting wholesome food when I am in sound health and have once eaten it. There may be virtue in choosing, against momentary appetite, a wholesome food instead of a tempting but pernicious dainty. But if the moral processes are thus processes of conscious choice, it follows that every such choice involves a knowing of something *against* which one chooses, as well as something in favor of which one decides. But that against which one chooses is necessarily a motive, an interest, a solicitation, a temptation. For the moral choice is an inner one; the rejected alternative is not an outer enemy, but an internal “spring of action” (to use Dr. Martineau’s phrase). If so, then of necessity every distinctly moral choice involves the previous presence of a certain tendency to choose the wrong. Yes, moral choice is essentially a condemnation of the rejected motive, as well as an approval of the accepted motive. Otherwise it could be no moral choice. A being possessed of but one motive could have no conscience. But if this be so, then the consciousness of every moment of moral choice involves, also, a consciousness—a confession, if you will—of the presence in the chooser of that which he himself regards as evil. He not only coldly knows, he includes, he possesses, he is beset with some evil motive; and, nevertheless, he conquers it. This is involved in the very formal definition of a moral act. You might as well try to define the king without his subjects, or the master without his servant, or the captor without his captive or his prize, as to define a moral deed without the presence in the agent of some evil motive. The case, then, is here quite parallel to the case of the relation of life and death in the functions of the active tissues. Once define a given man as moral in respect of any one given deliberate act of choice, and then, indeed, you can no longer without

contradiction conceive him as failing to possess at least *one* significant psychical experience of evil,—namely, the experience of precisely that evil motive which he has then and there deliberately rejected as evil. Had he not first known that evil motive, and known it as verily his own, he certainly could not have deliberately chosen against it. Or am I moral because I choose not to act on the motives that I can only abstractly conceive, as possible and remote temptations, which attract others and not me? If so, how vast my morality! Like the moralizing schoolmaster in Hegel's "Philosophy of History," who is represented as warning his class against the ambitious passions of the great men of history, I can place my virtues above those of Alexander, for, unlike that glory-seeking man of blood, I have no ambitious desire to conquer Asia, or to overthrow Darius, but I leave all nations to fare as God pleases.* This sort of virtue is indeed cheap, and "moral" men in this sense are as plenty as are the weaklings; while if one points out that we possess *such* virtues not in so far as we comprehend life, and are skilful, but in so far as we are limited, and ignorant of life, and unskilful, I have no objection to offer to such an argument. Only the virtues of Hegel's schoolmaster are simply not virtues *in actu*, and one cannot even be sure that they are virtues *in potentia* until the virtuous schoolmaster has proved by his deeds his capacity for self-conquest. Put the schoolmaster in Alexander's place, and what will he do with Darius and with Asia? Who can tell? Nay, he himself cannot tell, and that is just why he is here ignorant *both* of the temptations of Alexander, and of the virtues that Alexander might have possessed, but perhaps did not possess. Here, then, ignorance conditions not only the lack of temptation, but the entire absence of the corresponding virtues as well.

Hegel skilfully said, "*Die Tugend ist nicht ohne Kampf*;

* Hegel, "Werke," IX. p. 40: Woraus sogleich folgt dass er, der Schulmeister, ein vortrefflicherer Mensch sey, als jene (Caesar u. Alexander) weil er solche Leidenschaften nicht besässe, und den Beweis dadurch gebe, dass er Asien nicht erobere, den Darius, Porus, nicht besiege, sondern freilich wohl lebe, aber auch leben lasse.

sie ist vielmehr der höchste, vollendete kampf."* "Virtue is not without strife, but is rather the highest, the fulfilled strife." But forgetting this perfectly obvious consideration, people often so ignore the element of conflict in the process, while they think only of the assumed perfection of the product, that when some one suggests, in the interest of the "intellectual functions," how an insight into life must involve a knowledge of evil, people at once assume that the washed-out soul of the colorless and inane person whom they have imagined as the model good man cannot possess such knowledge, and thereupon they lament the sad conflict which seems to result between the interest of virtue and those of the insight into life. As a fact, however, the whole case stands thus: The good man as such is neither an innocent nor an inane person, but a knowing, a warm-blooded, a passionate servant of the good. Meanwhile, neither virtue nor knowledge exists *in abstracto* among us men. There exists always some concrete virtue, which shows itself in good choices in favor of this or of this good, as against that or some other evil, end, or motive. And as to knowing, it too is no abstraction, but there exists always some concrete knowledge, which is knowledge of this or of that thing. We therefore, to be sure, cannot compare the virtuous man in the abstract with the knowing man in the abstract, to see whether the two concepts can be made to agree. Doubtless many stupid men, meanwhile, have some virtues, and many of the base are clever. Nobody, moreover, has all virtues, or all knowledge. The only possible comparison is therefore between two men as to a particular virtue, either in exercise or *in potentia*, or between the same men as to the knowledge of a particular thing. Well, this being so, let it be a question of the actual and conscious exercise, in a deliberate and not in a merely accidental way, of a given virtue, as concretely applied

* "Logik," "Werke," IV. p. 63. I venture to refer to my own discussion of this general topic, and to my statement of Hegel's view of it, in my "Spirit of Modern Philosophy," p. 210, *sq.*, and in my "Religious Aspect of Philosophy," pp. 452-459.

to a given case. Let one man choose the positive exercise of that virtue; let another, with equal deliberation, wilfully reject it. Which now of these two is just then the more knowing as to the motives involved in this virtue? I say that, so far as we have yet defined the case, there is no difference in intellectual capacity defined as between the two. Both know the good and the ill involved. For neither could consciously choose unless he in some measure knew both the good and the ill. The good man knows the ill, and is aware of the temptation to do it; otherwise his "virtuous" act would be a matter of blind health, like his digestion, or of mere lack of interest, like his present avoidance of any wicked ambition to conquer Asia. He knows the rejected ill, he is tempted, and he deliberately resists and overcomes the temptation (whether with or without free will I decide not here). The other also knows, but chooses the ill. Which is so far the more knowing? The virtuous man can surely say, "Show me thy knowledge without thy virtue, and I will show thee my knowledge *by* my virtue. For by knowing the ill and the good it is that I choose the good with open eyes." Of the later knowledge which for the sinner alone, not for the good man, results from the consequences of this sin, I shall speak hereafter.

Doubtless one may indeed still insist that, unless by the actual assertion of a freedom of indeterminate choice, the foregoing precise equality of knowledge between these two men cannot in the end be maintained. Well, be it so. I am, as I have said, not here arguing the free-will issue. Admit, if you please, that there must be a difference of motive between the two, and therefore a difference of knowledge; the question will then once more arise, Which of them is, at the moment of choice, the *more* knowing? For the same reasons as before, both of them alike must at least in some genuine measure know both of the motives between which they choose. Else there is mere blind prevalence of interest without any clear deliberation. Shall one say, as to the different degrees of knowledge now subsisting, It is the chooser of the good who knows not the full allurements of the other's temptation? Or shall one say, It is the sinner who is blind to those mani-

fold excellencies whose presence to consciousness determines the good man's choice? Here, if anything, the chances are largely in favor of the greater knowledge of the virtuous chooser, since in general strong temptations are comparatively elemental, while the reasons in favor of goodness are in nature usually complex and abstract. A mere boy can have a full sense of many temptations to vice; it takes reflection to see fully all the reasons why vice is intolerable. But herewith, as soon as one admits differences of knowledge, as between these two, one enters afresh the realm of the indeterminate. My object was only to show that in order to have the same choice presented, in its essential features, to two agents, one virtuous, one vicious in his decision, it is necessary to have essentially the same motives, and so the same elements of knowledge present in both cases. What further differences of knowledge there may be is indeed a matter of accident; but the chances are at least even that the good chooser is more knowing than the sinner.

But if this is so whenever an individual case of comparison is taken up, how far, then, extends the possible growth, in insight into life, of those agents who grow in active virtue; and how does their possible collective insight compare with that of the sinners concerning mere temptations? If every active virtue involves a knowledge of evil in order to be a conquest over evil,—the presence of temptation in order that the active virtue may be a victory over temptation,—then what insight into life is there that will not somewhere form part of the insight, and so of the virtue, of some virtuous agent? No, it would seem that there is no insight into life that is alien from every possible virtue, and that no sinner can say to *all* the good, "I comprehend temptations that no one of all of you can possibly understand." For had the sinner not only possessed his temptation, but won the victory over it, he would now be, with reference to that temptation alone, surely no less than he is, in insight or in being, and he would then have stood among the virtuous, where even now there may well stand some one who has been tempted in all points as he was, but who is, in this matter, without sin. I still postpone, to be sure,

a discussion of the knowledge that the sinner gets from the consequences of his sin,—from the experiences that follow upon it.

This view of the nature of virtue is, however, indeed apparently open to one or two more or less plausible objections, which it may be well still to mention.

“If this view of virtue is right,” some imaginary objector may say, “then it must follow that a good man is good merely in proportion to the number and the gravity of his resisted temptations. But if so, then a man who should be constantly tempted to murder his mother, to steal church property, to be a cannibal, and to kidnap and eat children, and who nobly resisted all these temptations, would be a more virtuous man than one who was never thus tempted, but who lived without friction the devoted life of a philanthropist, and of a public servant, always loyal and charitable of heart. As this result is absurd, it follows that virtue indeed implies, as the author of the essay here in question asserts, a certain ignorance of evil motives.”

This objection is obvious, but trivial. No one would be deceived by the parallel assertion in case of the organic processes before referred to. Life involves disintegration of tissue, and so constant death, always counteracted, indeed, by the processes of tissue-building. The more life, and the more activity of tissue,—the more disintegration, and the more building up. And so, for instance, in a warm-blooded animal, a more rapid dying process goes on than in a cold-blooded animal. It does not follow that, in a given organism, the life would grow in general vigor if disintegrating processes at random were set up, and were then just counteracted, in the struggles of a pathological condition, by the upbuilding processes that preserved the life. The death-process is not alien from my physical life, but is a part of it. The more active the life that I get, the more dying will be going on in my tissues. But the simple converse of this proposition very surely does not follow. I do not necessarily produce more life by introducing more death into my tissues. What is clear is, that if some disintegrating disease is present in my

tissues, *then* I get life, if at all, by conquering this pathological disintegration. But without just that form of disintegration, I might, indeed, have a higher life.

Just so it is too with the process of virtue. Any actively virtuous man can say, at the moments of deliberate exercise of virtue, "My virtue involves as one of its elements temptation to evil. Hence in doing good I know evil." Hence, again, the proposition that in so far as one is virtuous one is ignorant of evil is *simpliciter* false. Ignorance of a given evil may be *per accidens* a condition of a given virtue, but every active virtue involves some knowledge of evil. On the other hand no sinner can say, "My knowledge of temptation depends upon my viciousness, and if I had been good at the moment of choice in respect of the deeds wherein now I am evil, I should *ipso facto* have diminished my intelligence, in acquiring my virtues, since I should then have failed to know these temptations." For here the answer is simply, The assertion is again false. You could have known these temptations just as truly if you had resisted them. You would then have no less insight as to temptation, but much more virtue as to life. But these things being granted, it may well be that some virtues are better worth knowing than other virtues, just as some life is more vigorous than other life; so that virtues whose knowledge involves the knowing and resisting of pathological temptations may be far less interesting, both to the afflicted sufferer from the pathological enemy, and to the lover of conscious or of moral life in general, than are other active virtues, based upon the conquest over more normal temptations. Meanwhile, there can be no doubt whatever of the moral excellence of the man who, being burdened with a distinctly pathological temptation, nobly resists it, just as there can be no doubt that he loses no intellectual skill or insight, but rather cultivates both, by resisting his temptation. But since, unfortunately, the burdened man as much lacks knowledge of the normal life as the normal man fails to comprehend the depths of abnormality, the real problem here is, Which of these two sorts of knowledge of life is most worth having? And this question is in no respect

any longer a question of the relative value for the intellect of virtue and of vice, but it is a question of the relative value for the intellect of two sorts of knowledge, whereof one is normal, the other unhealthy, but whereof both alike may involve either virtue if a temptation is known and conquered, or vice, if the temptation is known and preferred.

For the rest, the kindly and public-spirited philanthropist of our example is indeed as virtuous as his weak and burdened, but still triumphant though abnormally-tempted brother, only in case the philanthropist really struggles as seriously as the latter with his own much more elevated, but none the less genuine moral problems and temptations. And the moral order actually demands of him that he shall do so. He has more talents; from him, then, more moral life is required. He may think that he finds in himself only kindness; but if he looks sharply as he goes, he will ere long find in himself sloth, or pride, or self-complacency, not to speak of a horde of more elemental if still normal passions. If he contends with these and with their outcome, he will get as rich an experience of the evils of his own world as his weaker brother gets of the evils of his. In general, then, it is here not our virtue that is responsible for our ignorance, but rather our inevitable ignorance of life that limits the scope of our virtues. The healthy man cannot have the virtues of the sick man, or the pathologically burdened soul the sort of goodness that distinguishes the genius in holy living; not, however, because virtue means ignorance of life, but because the naturally limited insight into life which each man possesses limits his possible virtues. But within his limits, the more any given man knows of life the more chance he has to be virtuous, if he chooses to be so.

Another objection, and a common one, to the foregoing view of virtue has reference to the influence of training upon the exercise of active virtues. The virtuous man of Aristotle's original definition is such not merely by reason of his acts, but by reason of the attained character that, in the long run, he earns by his acts. The habitual and successful resistance of any given type of temptations involves, of necessity, the

gradual elimination of at least those special temptations. The cultivation of active virtues leads towards a virtuous perfection of disposition in which just these active virtues no longer have to be cultivated. In so far it is indeed true that the aim of the good man is to acquire an ignorance of certain evils which he now knows only too well. If he actively exercises virtue only in the presence of an actual knowledge of evil motives present in himself he aims, nevertheless, at the ultimate attainment of a state in which these evil motives will no longer have meaning for him. In this fashion, then, it would seem that the attainment of holiness is, in some sense, the attainment of ignorance; and so once more the argument of our author would receive a certain confirmation, and the price of possessing certain "intellectual functions" would be the retaining of certain "moral deficiencies."

Once more, however, the general biological analogies will aid us in comprehending the true sense of the facts here brought before us. The question is now the familiar one as to the relation of habit and consciousness.* I am not conscious of the detailed execution of what is so completely an habitual function of my organism that I accomplish this function swiftly and without hesitancy. I am conscious in general only of my relatively hesitant functions in so far as they are hesitant. This, again, is a psychological commonplace. On the other hand, the more by practice I exercise my consciousness of a given process, and so perfect any now hesitant function, the more I tend to bring its execution below the level of my consciousness. In this sense, to be sure, we find another paradox—and one of a most familiar and characteristic sort—in the life of the highest organisms. Consciousness, namely, is working, as it were, on all levels, in the direction of its own extinction, in so far as it is a consciousness of just this unfamiliar object; very much as the living tissues are constantly busy in compassing their own death, precisely in so far as they are tissues with just this energy becoming

* In this aspect this question is interestingly discussed in the "Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft," vol. i. p. 227, *et seq.*

free in their processes. I am conscious of a given function, and so of the objects to which this function is related, because the function is relatively novel, is imperfectly learned, is not thoroughly habitual. But it is precisely this unfamiliarity of the function and of its object that is unsatisfactory to me. I try to perfect my mastery over this function and to render its objects perfectly familiar. I train the function until it is smooth-running, facile, free from hesitancy, and so until it is no longer an object of consciousness. I now ignore both the function and its familiar objects. This I am everywhere tending to do, precisely in so far as I engage in any special business of consciousness. I am conscious of the syntax of a foreign tongue while I am learning that tongue; but the object of my conscious toil is to learn the language so well that I shall forget its syntax and speak its sentences with absolutely unreflective fluency.

But now, on the other hand, although consciousness thus, as it were, aims to compass, on every stage, and in each of its special functions, its own extinction, still, all of us who love insight talk of consciousness as being an end in itself, and are conscious that we want not less, but more of it. Our general aim as conscious beings is opposed, in this paradoxical way, to each and every one of the special aims of our own consciousness, in so far as the latter is a process whereby the unfamiliar is rendered familiar, and is so gradually brought below the level of consciousness, while our general aim as conscious beings is not to get less, but more, concrete insight, and so more consciousness.

Here again, *La vie c'est la mort*. "Die to live" is a philosophical motto that Professor Edward Caird loves to repeat in his writings, and has repeated until for my part I confess that I have grown very weary of the set phrase, as I have found that eminent thinker employing it. But though it may be important to vary the phrase, as, with the aid of M. Soury, I have here tried to do, Professor Caird is unquestionably right as to the substance of the thing. Consciousness, like living tissue, loves to feed on its own process of endless self-extinction. And the way in which it thus feeds is obvious enough. When

I have no longer to be conscious of the syntax of the new language I shall have acquired a new organic power,—namely, the power to be conscious of the relatively new and unfamiliar things that I shall want to say in that language. The more numerous the familiar and so unconscious habits that I have come to possess, the more capacity I have acquired to adjust myself to complex novel situations, and so to have, in general, more consciousness. As for the paradox of the whole situation, it is also a case of the general paradox of the will, as noted by Schopenhauer. The will wants to live. But life means specific desires, and each specific desire longing, as it does, for the possession of its object, really longs for the quenching of its restless fires in the dark Lethe of a fulfilment that means its extinction as this desire. The will, then, in longing for life longs for that which in every concrete manifestation, as this specific desire, it longs to see extinguished. Schopenhauer's paradox is but the expression, in conscious terms, of the essence of all those organic processes to which our consciousness runs parallel, and of which it is a very inadequate expression. As for Schopenhauer's pessimistic comment on this essential restlessness of the inner world, the discussion of that belongs elsewhere. Restlessness does not, as a fact, mean misery, and a wise joy in the genuine paradoxes of life is of the essence of the highest reason.

There is, then, nothing peculiar about the problem involved in the case of the growth of the virtuous man towards a perfection wherein he ceases to be conscious, both of his former defects and of the active virtues whereby he overcame these defects. Above all, the problem is in no wise one of an opposition between "moral deficiencies" and "intellectual functions." Such as it is, the paradox applies equally, and for the same reasons, to the intellectual and to the moral functions. The one sort has here no advantage over the other. The intellectual skill involved in any stage of our human consciousness, in aiming at its own perfection in the form of the acquisition of finished, habitual, intelligent functions, aims at what, as a fact, when attained, will involve its own extinction as this particular conscious activity. Just so, any growing and active

virtue aims at its own extinction, as this particular virtue, by means of the establishment of virtuous habits that will render the exercise of this conscious virtue no longer necessary or even possible. But virtue thus no more aims at its own extinction in general than intellectual skill aims at its own general abolition, or than Schopenhauer's will, in longing for fulfilment, ceases in general the desire to live. *This* must pass,—this desire—this stage of growing intellect or goodness; but there is more that is desirable, there is more virtue, just as there is more wit, beyond. This is the universal rule of conscious life. *Die Leidenschaft flieht, die Liebe muss bleiben.* When I have so well learned this virtue as no longer consciously to possess it, but to be possessed by it as by a mere instinct, well, then, indeed my active moral goodness will indeed cease as to this matter; but, on the other hand, I shall consciously be able to possess far more, and more complex active virtues, than ever, for I shall have more powers, and so be able to undertake harder tasks to go on new quests, and to fight stronger moral enemies. When I shall have mastered my present intellectual puzzles, and accordingly shall have forgotten their details in the possession of unhesitating and unconscious functions, I shall then be able to possess not less but more consciousness; for I shall have more unconscious functions upon which to build new insights.

The parallelism of virtue and of intellect in respect of the "deficiencies" thus involved in progress is here perfect. Whatever happens to the one happens to the other. Learning is based upon forgetting, conscious power upon unconscious habit, the new life upon the extinction of the immediate presence of the old. "Moral deficiency," if regarded as a lower state in a progressive growth, involves "intellectual functions" only in the same sense as that in which intellectual deficiency itself involves such present intellectual functions.

It is, then, one sign of intellectual power, just as it is one sign of moral power, to have forgotten, as well as to have remembered, many things. Such "deficiencies" are necessary moments of our human perfection. To a vain young man, full of the learning freshly acquired at school, the old and

erudite scholar may often justly say, "Yes, you indeed have many things in mind that I now ignore; but see, I have myself forgotten far more than you ever knew." Even so, a persistent sinner, vaunting his present knowledge of temptation as against the state of the virtuous man who has outgrown and learned to ignore the movings that are still clearly present to the consciousness of the sinner, may say, "I know life; for I know these temptations, and you are no longer aware of them." But a by-stander, considering the life of the virtuous man, and seeing in him the hero of many past conflicts, may retort, "Ay, but he has forgotten because he has transcended more temptations than you ever knew." Which "deficiency" is the preferable one?

To sum up, then: The knowledge and presence of evil form, in very manifold and complex ways, a moment in the consciousness and in the life of goodness. And this must be so. It is no confusing chance puzzle of the moral world; it is a necessary result of the very essence of all life, which is everywhere an union of opposing elements. The knowledge of this fact is not disheartening, but inspiring; since all the seriousness of the moral world depends upon it. As to the relation of "deficiencies" and "functions," so far as we have yet seen, the close parallelism of the intellectual and moral processes, as well as their intimate interdependence, taken together with the general nature of life just insisted upon, renders this relation extremely, and yet very intelligibly, intimate on both sides. First, in both the intellectual and the moral life, every "function," of necessity, depends, in the lives of us human individuals, upon a corresponding "deficiency." We think in order to grow wiser, and therefore all our thinking is due to relative ignorance. We choose the right in order to avoid the tempting wrong; and therefore all moral functions depend upon present moral imperfections. Meanwhile, as to the cross-relation of moral deficiency and intellectual function, the rule holds that, since active goodness involves knowledge of temptation, the morally deficient have herein no essential intellectual advantage over the doers of good. As to the ignorance or intellectual deficiency of the

being higher in the scale of life as against the being lower in the scale and burdened with temptations unknown to the higher being, it here follows (1) that the "deficiency" of knowledge in question is shared by both beings, in so far as neither fully understands the other; (2) that in neither case does this deficiency of knowledge as to the other being, or possession of knowledge as to one's own moral office and temptations, determine by itself either any moral excellence or any moral defect, since either of the two beings is doing active moral work not in so far as he is by nature high or low in the scale, but in so far as he rightly deals with his own temptations. We call the higher being more virtuous, when he does well, not because being ignorant of baser temptations he fails to resist them, but because his virtues, when once they exist, seem to us as a part of a normal and more finished life better worth knowing than his fellows'. As to moral progress, that does indeed involve a transcending, and so a forgetting, of earlier and simpler virtues; but here moral progress is simply parallel to all intellectual progress.

In general, then, intellectual functions seem to involve moral deficiencies in precisely the same sense as that in which moral functions themselves involve moral deficiencies, and as that in which intellectual functions also involve intellectual deficiencies, every function in our life involving the presence of its own antagonist, and being successful in so far as its antagonist comes to form an organic moment in its own process, instead of being in its turn the triumphant and absorbing factor. But, on the other hand, it does not follow that you can produce a given function, intellectual or moral, by simply introducing the corresponding antagonist or deficiency into a given organic process. All active virtue implies temptation; but it does not thence follow that by increasing temptation you increase virtue, or that you remain virtuous by nursing your temptation in order to resist it. Change and progress play the same part here that they do elsewhere in the great drama of life. And if living is constant dying, it does not follow that the more death there is the more life there will be.

III.

So much for the main principles involved in our present issue. But now let the question be no longer of principles, but of cases. Moral deficiency shall be essentially involved in certain intellectual functions, or shall determine the latter. When?—First, for so it may appear, whenever the comprehension of certain forms of evil itself involves such a participation in the evil as amounts to sin. But when does this take place? “The task of understanding,” so one answers, certain “elementary passions of the human soul is very difficult from the height of official station, as well as in the normal and correct life led by many scholars;” and so “undeniably this is a point in which a theoretical knowledge gains depth from an experience of comparative immorality, either present or past.”

In judging of such assertions one's first reply is, *Distinguo*. The “elementary passions” of the human soul are indeed the most common source of sin; but they are not themselves sins in so far as they are elementary passions, but in so far as, in a given context of life, they are persistently preferred despite the fact that they prove to be incapable of organization, or destructive of existent rational good order. They are evil, in other words, in so far as they are anarchical, fighting against an already established organism, and not in so far as they are “elementary.” It is *in a context* that they become temptations; and the sinfulness of an “elementary passion” always depends on its relations to the other interests of life. It is as related to such a context that a virtuous man finds what would be an innocent accident of his organization a solicitation to evil. Experience of passion of the “elementary” in life is therefore as such never a sin. The fault of a man is not that he has elementary passions, but that he cannot make out what to do with them, or do it when he has made it out.

In saying this I speak simply the voice of the wholesome consciousness, of the Greek as of the modern man, as against any merely superstitious asceticism which condemns some natural impulses as essentially diabolical. The wise man

does not regret the elementary impulses of his temperament as such, whatever these impulses may be. What he does regret is that they are so ill reduced to order, so poorly trained to an objectively significant service. Even the "pathological temptations" before referred to are pathological not by reason of the elementary impulses involved, but by reason of the union of such impulses into complex groups of motives hostile to the general peace of society, and to the whole rational system of a man's inner life.

It is not needful to waste here many words over this matter, which has been endlessly discussed. Hatred is a fairly "elementary" passion. Shall one call it essentially a bad "spring of action" because it is necessarily "malicious." On the contrary, if we find superstitious men in the world who let cobras multiply because of a superstitious kindness, we shall wish that these men had more hatred of snakes as well as less superstition. All depends upon where and when and what you hate,—in other words, upon the context of your passion. If hatred in battle makes given soldiers fight better against the enemies of their country, then surely, if patriotism is a virtue, this virtue may demand, for these men, the cultivation of precisely such hatred. For the rest, just those passions of humanity which, under certain conditions, appear as the grossest, the fiercest, the basest, are notoriously the passions upon whose organized cultivation, and upon whose subtle influence when once they are cultivated, the whole social structure and its most sacred relations depend.

It would be the saddest of cant, then, to say that a good man, as such, can have no experiences of the truly "elementary passions,"—even the most elementary and vigorous. The fact that many moralists are and have been bloodless creatures, who have written about life without themselves possessing any temperament to speak of, is a lamentable historical accident, due in no wise to the nature of philosophy, but rather to those economic conditions of the thinker's profession which have driven many persons to turn would-be philosophers because they have failed in other walks of life to prove themselves capable men. With the author who has inspired this

paper I regret this accidental ill-fortune of philosophy. The philosophical thinker, the moralist above all, should first be a man of experience in a wide range of elementary human life. And the great heroes of ethical speculation (yes, even a man of the gentleness of a Kant) are never without indications in their works that they have really and deeply experienced at least some part of our human nature. But now this does not mean that the thinker needs to be a sinner above other men in order to be wise. Elements are one thing. The organization of life is another. It is not necessary to experience many forms of chaos in order to understand good order.

But is not sin, too, an experience? And can the good man possess that experience? We have said, in our discussion of principles, that temptation to evil is an essential element in every exercise of active virtue. But a conquered temptation, although an evil, which is conquered by the good man just because it is an evil, is still no sin. Sin proper, however, is another experience, and is *ipso facto* no part of the experience of the good man as such, just as an active disease is no part of the life of a healthy organism. Here indeed is the body of death from which the good man, as such, longs to be delivered altogether. His resisted temptation is part of his life,—the death in life of which before we spoke. But his sin is no element of his good life.

And yet, since sin forms so large a part of human life, and is vastly more than temptation, and since the endless consequences of sin, remorse, all the arts of concealment, all the ingenuity of effort to repair,—the rejoicing, too, of the froward in their frowardness,—the fierce sense of freedom of which our own Hawthorne tells in the "Marble Faun" as an experience that follows upon a crime,—the long and perplexingly fascinating agony of the consciousness of a life of sin,—the revelry and the fruitless later repentance of the Faust of the original story,—the contrition of David,—the conversion of the dying thief on the cross,—the raptures of a saved Mary Magdalene:—since all these and countless other human experiences flow not from resisted temptation, but from actual sin, were we then not one-sided in our discussion of principles, where we limited

ourselves to the study of temptation, and said that the sinner knows no more of the motives of sin (which are the temptations) than does the good man, equally tempted, who resists and conquers the temptation? That as an one-sided view of life may be true. But temptation is but a small part of the sinner's experience. It is consequence that he knows, and herein consists his intellectual opportunity. Here, indeed, is a "moral deficiency" very positively conditioning an "intellectual function." In Hell and in Purgatory they do thus know what must needs be wholly unknown to the angels, and but ill-conceived by the saints, excepting as the saints remember the long life in sin from which some of them escaped. This being true, can one (to use still the convenient allegorical fictions),—can one, as a moralist, comprehend the world of human life, unless he has lived awhile in Hell and in Purgatory, as well as among the good? What sort of moralist is, then, one who has had little or no experience of sin?

The first answer is so obvious that I wonder that any one should miss it. Such moral deficiencies do indeed determine certain intellectual functions, but precisely as they also determine certain moral functions. And the way in which they determine the latter is very enlightening as to the significance of the whole controversy.

Sins, I say, are possible conditions, not only of a deep intellectual knowledge of certain very common and momentous human experiences, but are conditions also of certain extraordinarily heroic moral deeds. Nobody has harder moral work to do than many a sinner who has repented. Nobody, therefore, can show us, on occasion, a more brilliant example of active virtue than he may learn to do. The outcast on account of a crime sometimes has a peculiarly good opportunity to become at one great stroke a saint. The thing has occasionally taken place; for the shock of the consequences of crime has sometimes been enough to shatter the habits of a sinful career in one moment of conversion. Apart from sudden conversion, which is rare, the most serious moral tasks of many men are furnished to them by the office of building up by their newly-acquired virtues what their former way-

wardness has destroyed.* And in this way, indeed, the wrath of man is sometimes taught to praise the good.

But surely the fact that certain peculiarly great opportunities for virtue in the way of reform and of making atonement are furnished to the sinner by his own past crimes,—opportunities which those of the virtuous who should never have swerved from the right could not get,—this fact, I say, does not at all tend to confuse us as to the nature of sin and of virtue. Sin, when past, furnishes especial opportunities for future virtue. But one who desires virtue will not think that he shows thus his desire for virtue by first sinning that grace may abound. When we once have sinned, our exceptional opportunities to atone may encourage us to begin afresh with zest the moral task. But whoever sins under pretence of seeking hereby for this exceptional opportunity to get a new and higher virtue by means of his intended repentance, such a man does not deceive us by his pretences. He is a liar, and the truth is not in him. He sins because he wants to sin, not because he wants any new moral function to be determined by his previous moral deficiency, and until he learns not to lie he will remain deficient and without further function.

I say that this very familiar determination of future moral opportunities and excellencies by past misdeeds shows, first of all, that here, as earlier in our discussion, the dependence of function upon deficiency holds within the moral sphere itself precisely as much as in the comparison of moral with intellectual function and deficiency, so that the case is one of an universal problem of life, and not merely one of certain specific oppositions between moral and intellectual interests. I say, also, that the reason for this dependence of the opportunity for new goodness upon past sin is obvious enough, and the outcome in so far not at all misleading.

But now, further, just as the moral function depends on the

* A brilliant literary example of moral recovery and of the heroic rebuilding of a shattered life one finds depicted in Sinkiewicz's remarkable romance, "The Deluge," recently translated from the Polish by Mr. Curtin. Kmita, the hero of this romance, is a magnificent instance for the moralist.

previous moral deficiency, precisely, and only, in so far as one does not remain in the deficiency, but transcends it, so (as I think that experience will show) it is not our mere dwelling in sin that ever enlarges our deeper insight into life so much as it is our looking back upon our sin, and representing it in precisely the light which makes it appear as sin, and so as rationally condemned, that enables us to read the intellectual lesson of the sinful experience itself. Regarding the matter, then, for the moment, solely as an "intellectual function," it is Macbeth after the murder, or in his latest monologues, who sees the truth of his case as it is. It is Dostojevsky's hero in "Crime and Punishment," just before he gives himself up to the police, whose eyes are truly open. This is the lesson of countless works of art in which the moral tragedy is portrayed. However coolly planned beforehand, the crime is still relatively blind. The still cooler and far deeper intellectual insight of later moments lifts the criminal above himself. He reads now the lesson of his case; but he reads only to condemn. His intellectual function is itself, if his eyes get opened, the beginning of a moral function.

Moreover, this not only often is but always must needs be the case. If the right is, as it is, not the object of superstitious dogma, but of science and of reason, and is known to be the right as soon as one clearly sees the situation, then a true intellectual insight into sin means a condemnation of it, and one has not the true "intellectual function" until one has really begun to transcend the "moral deficiency." After all, the freest act of sinful choice doubtless involves a certain deliberate ignorance of the reasons in favor of the good, which itself involves intellectual defect. If so, however, the relation of the "moral deficiency" to the "intellectual function" is precisely like the just noticed relation of any moral deficiency to the often very noble moral functions that may be founded upon it. The latter relation is inspiring when we have sinned, because it shows us the way out. But the expectation of getting this "far off interest" of crime, of plucking this flower that blooms in hell, attracts of itself nobody into crime; and whoever says that he commits crime with any

such noble purpose in view is, I repeat, a liar. But just so, whoever pretended to choose sin for the sake of that possible sin-transcending insight, would be but pretending.

For the reasons now explained, it is also clear that wilful sinners, who have not learned to repent, are on the whole, as respects the cultivation of intellectual functions, far less instructive to themselves than they are to the intellect of any observant student of human nature who, not being slave to their sin, has leisure to study their varied experience, and temperament enough to interpret life with respectable skill when he sees it. The sinners whose eyes are finally opened have transcended their "deficiency." The relatively blind, who are still slaves to their sin, are in many ways an open book to the wiser among their fellows. And it is indeed true that it is the right and the duty of every moralist to learn, with due prudence, but without foolish timidity, whatever he really needs to know of the disorders of the moral world, from an observation—not cynical but humane—of the records of sinful experience in his fellows. Thus indeed their deficiency may very directly and usefully condition his function. And he will learn of life while learning also how to help the sinners themselves towards virtue.

But now shall we descend from these matters to mere trivialities? Shall we illustrate the relations of function and deficiency elsewhere? Shall we seriously inquire whether a successful liar is not naturally a more skilful person than a mere blunt speaker of the truth? Shall we reason that a liar, like the skilful hero in a fairy tale, or like Odysseus with the Cyclops, must hold at least two ideas at once in his head, while his giant or other dupe thinks of but one at a time. Well, if these things must be argued, it is indeed an old notion, precisely as old as those fairy tales whose heroes are liars, that lying is a peculiarly clever business, and is so precisely for the reason that obviously guided the authors of the fairy tales,—namely, because it is so much more skilful to think two ideas at a time than one idea. But surely the civilized man, for whom truth, whether legal, commercial, political, or moral, has now grown to be so complex an affair, has transcended

such trivialities. In all the more serious practical affairs of our modern lives, we wholly exhaust our stock of ingenuity in trying even to think the truth as it is, and fail at that. We may lie all we choose, and may even succeed as liars, but we shall get no more cleverness thereby than would be at all events needed to think or to say even the blunt truth in its nakedest simplicity. We no longer live in a world where there is question of stupid giants with one idea, and clever heroes with two at a time. The honest man's wits are all needed in order to meet even the demands of honesty. For the rest, if a liar needs cleverness to think his supposed two ideas, as in the fairy tale, what would an honest man need who must learn to defeat the liar? Surely he would have to think of the truth, and also of the liar's false idea, and finally of the proper plan for meeting the liar's falsehood and for bringing it to naught without lying himself: in sum, then, at least three ideas to the liar's two. But herewith such trifling computations may as well cease. Not thus are moral deficiencies, as such, at all peculiar in being sources of some sorts of intellectual ability. There is no possible degree of cleverness or of ingenuity that is not sadly needed in our complex world for every good cause whose undertakings are serious. "Altruism," so called, needs from its servants every skill that they can devote to the service of society.

But surely there still remain—do there not?—vast regions of knowledge which it is unholy for any given individual to tread upon. And to enter these fields would therefore involve "intellectual function," and still also true "moral deficiency;" or would it not? Yes, indeed, it is as easy as you please, and as trivial, to mention, in case of any of us, any number of such forbidden regions. My neighbor has left his house unguarded, his desk unlocked. It would greatly amuse my curiosity to read his diary, his love-letters, his other confidential documents. And yet I may not do so. Why? Because the intellect is somehow mysteriously opposed in its interests to the conscience? No: but for the simple reason that this would be theft. This knowledge is not mine. These secrets are his property, like his purse, save in being more sacred. Here the

mystery of the relation between ignorance and virtue is merely that of the existence of any private rights whatever. As his money is good for what it can buy, but is not mine to spend, so his knowledge is here a good thing to have, but it is not for me to purloin. But now, under the category thus illustrated, countless types of actually forbidden knowledge fall, of knowledge, however, that is forbidden not because the intellect ought as such to be limited in its scope, but because a man must keep to his own, and in a world where men live together possession has to be private, and therefore exclusive. My neighbor's house, his land, his affairs,—anything that is his,—I must not steal or covet. If this limitation involves not only respect for material property, but for countless, and often nameless privacies of his inner and outer life, then it is not the rights of the intellect that are at stake, but the rights of the person.

On the other hand, as to the rights of the intellect itself, knowledge, *as such*, we must maintain, is always an innocent, and frequently a holy possession. Its moral limitations, its perils, its implied sinfulness, these always belong to it *per accidens*, and with respect to specific conditions and individuals. There is no knowledge whatever to which somebody may not conceivably have a right. That not everybody may, without sin, possess a given sort, or degree, or fact of knowledge, depends always upon specific and perfectly comprehensible conditions relating to this sort, or degree, or fact. I may not seek to know another's secret by stealth; I may not seek to know the results of a sin by myself deliberately sinning; I may not seek to add to my present burdens a temptation that I have not now, and that, when I get it, may prove corrupting to me. But, on the other hand, the man whose secret this is may be blessed in knowing it. The man who has sinned may gain inspiration for reform from coolly considering the very heart and the essence of his sin, that he may find in its fruits the seeds of coming virtue. The man who has the temptation, by facing it, and so by knowing its secret, may win control over it, and may thereby use his opportunity for holiness. When in progress I abandon one knowledge for another, I do

so because the other is more of a knowledge. And thus it is never my business as a moral being to shun knowledge as knowledge, but always it is my task to get wisdom as wisdom, and then to use it in the cause of the right.

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A PHASE OF MODERN EPICUREANISM.

LOOKING over a certain periodical not many months ago, I chanced upon the following paragraphs :

“We have forgotten the true significance of the word ‘virtue,’ nowadays. We call that man virtuous who has no vices. Following the argument to its logical conclusion, we are compelled to the assumption that the most virtuous thing in nature is an oyster. His life is chaste and pure. He is a strict water-drinker. He never enjoys himself; and he never (so long as he lives) gives a moment’s pleasure to any other living thing. He would appear to be the ideal, according to a certain noisy section of the community, of what a Christian should be. It is quite in keeping with the sort of talk and writing that is prevalent just now, to imagine an oyster lecturing a lion on the subject of morality. . . . An oyster has no evil passions, and a lion has many; but is it, therefore, so very certain that the oyster is the nobler animal ?

“The truth is, we extra-righteous folk have got into a wrong way of estimating our frailer fellow-men and fellow-women. . . . We have abolished virtue, and for it substituted a lot of miserable little affectations which we call ‘virtues.’ If a man is a teetotaler and belongs to a purity league, we say he is a good man. He may be a narrow-minded, narrow-hearted, narrow-souled libel on a man, selfish and hard and cruel and weak,—a man with no more real worth in him than there is in a Brummagen idol. What matter! He has no vices—what we call vices—and therefore he is a good man.

“Can we be quite sure that our present list of virtues and vices is the only possible correct and complete one? Is the kindly, unselfish, generous, big-hearted man necessarily a villain because he does not always succeed in suppressing his natural instincts, and the evil-speaking, evil-thinking, bitter-hearted, mean-souled man a saint because he has none?”

The array of opposed adjectives is certainly overwhelming; and granted that the man who “does not always succeed in repressing his natural instincts” is “kindly, unselfish, generous, and big-hearted,” while the man who does not give way to passion is both an abnormal being, destitute of capacity in this direction, and, moreover, “evil-speaking, evil-thinking, bitter-