CHAPTER IX.

EVOLUTION AND ETHICS.

The Origin of Morals an Inquiry not foreign to the Subject of this Book.—Modern Utilitarian View as to that Origin.—Mr. Darwin's Speculation as to the Origin of the Abhorrence of Incest.—Cause assigned by him insufficient.—Care of the Aged and Infirm opposed by "Natural Selection;" also Self-abnegation and Asceticism.—Distinctness of the Ideas "Right" and "Useful."—Mr. John Stuart Mill.—Insufficiency of "Natural Selection" to account for the Origin of the Distinction between Duty and Profit.—Distinction of Moral Acts into "Material" and "Formal."—No Ground for believing that Formal Morality exists in Brutes.—Evidence that it does exist in Savages.—Facility with which Savages may be misunderstood.—Objections as to Diversity of Customs.—Mr. Hutton's Review of Mr. Herbert Spencer.—Anticipatory Character of Morals.—Sir John Lubbock's Explanation.—Summary and Conclusion.

ANY inquiry into the origin of the notion of "morality"—the conception of "right"—may, perhaps, be considered as somewhat remote from the question of the Genesis of Species; the more so, since Mr. Darwin, at one time, disclaimed any pretension to explain the origin of the higher psychical phenomena of man. His disciples, however, were never equally reticent, and indeed he himself is now not only about to produce a work on man (in which this question must be considered), but he has distinctly announced the extension of the application of his theory to the very phenomena in question. He says:[1] "In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation. Light will be thrown on the origin of man

[1] "Origin of Species," 5th edit., 1869, p. 577.

and his history." It may not be amiss then to glance slightly at the question, so much disputed, concerning the origin of ethical conceptions and its bearing on the theory of "Natural Selection."

The followers of Mr. John Stuart Mill, of Mr. Herbert Spencer, and apparently, also, of Mr. Darwin, assert that in spite of the great *present* difference between the ideas "useful" and "right," yet that they are, nevertheless, one in *origin*, and that that origin consisted ultimately of pleasurable and painful sensations.

They say that "Natural Selection" has evolved moral conceptions from perceptions of what was useful, i e., pleasurable, by having through long ages preserved a predominating number of those individuals who have had a natural and spontaneous liking for practices and habits of mind useful to the race, and that the same power has destroyed a predominating number of those individuals who possessed a marked tendency to contrary practices. The descendants of individuals so preserved have, they say, come to inherit such a liking and such useful habits of mind, and that at last (finding this inherited tendency thus existing in themselves, distinct from their tendency to conscious self-gratification) they have become apt to regard it as fundamentally distinct, *innate*, and independent of all experience. In fact, according to this school, the idea of "right" is only the result of the gradual accretion of useful predilections which, from time to time, arose in a series of ancestors naturally selected. In this way, "morality" is, as it were, the congealed past experience of the race, and "virtue" becomes no more than a sort of "retrieving," which the thus improved human animal practises by a perfected and inherited habit, regardless of self-gratification, just as the brute animal has acquired the habit of seeking prey and bringing it to his master, instead of devouring it himself.

Though Mr. Darwin has not as yet expressly advocated this view, yet some remarks made by him appear to show his disposition to sympathize with it. Thus in his work on "Animals and Plants under Domestication,"[2] he asserts that "the savages of Australia and South America hold the crime of incest in abhorrence;" but he considers that this abhorrence has probably arisen by "Natural Selection," the ill effects of close interbreeding causing the less numerous and less healthy offspring of incestuous unions to disappear by degrees, in favor of the descendants (greater both in number and strength) or individuals who naturally, from some cause or other, as he suggests, preferred to mate with strangers rather than with close blood-relations; this preference being transmitted and becoming thus instinctive, or habitual, in remote descendants.

But on Mr. Darwin's own ground, it may be objected that this notion fails to account for "abhorrence" and "moral reprobation;" for, as no stream can rise higher than its source, the original "slight feeling" which was *useful* would have been perpetuated, but would never have been augmented beyond the degree requisite to insure this beneficial preference, and therefore would not certainly have become magnified into "abhorrence." It will not do to assume that the union of males and females, each possessing the required "slight feeling," must give rise to offspring with an intensified feeling of the same kind; for, apart from reversion, Mr. Darwin has called attention to the unexpected modifications which sometimes result from the union of *similarly* constituted parents. Thus, for example, he tells us:[3] "If two top-knotted canaries are matched, the young, instead of having very fine top-knots, are generally bald." From examples of this kind, it is fair, on Darwinian principles, to infer that the union of parents

[2] Vol. ii., p. 122.

[3] "Animals and Plants under Domestication," vol. i., p. 295.

who possessed a similar inherited aversion might result in phenomena quite other than the augmentation of such aversion, even if the two aversions should be altogether similar; while, very probably, they might be so different in their nature as to tend to neutralize each other. Besides, the union of parents so similarly emotional, would be rare indeed among savages, where marriages would be owing to almost any thing rather than to congeniality of mind between the spouses. Mr. Wallace tells us,[4] that they choose their wives for "rude health and physical beauty," and this is just what might be naturally supposed. Again, we must bear in mind the necessity there is that *many individuals* should be similarly and simultaneously affected with this aversion from consanguineous unions; as we have seen in the second chapter, how infallibly variations presented by only a few individuals, tend to be eliminated by mere force of numbers. Mr. Darwin indeed would throw back this aversion, if possible, to a pre-human period; since he speculates as to whether the gorillas or orang-utans, in effecting their matrimonial relations, show any tendency to respect the prohibited degrees of affinity.[5] No tittle of evidence, however, has yet been adduced pointing in any such direction, though surely if it were of such importance and efficiency as to result (through the aid of "Natural Selection" alone) in that "abhorrence" before spoken of, we might expect to be able to detect unmistakable evidence of its incipient stages. On the contrary, as regards the ordinary apes (for with regard to the highest there is no evidence of the kind) as we see them in confinement, it would be difficult to name any animals less restricted, by even a generic bar, in the gratification of the sexual instinct. And although the conditions under which they have been observed are abnormal, yet these are

[4] "Natural Selection," p. 350.

[5] "Animals and Plants under Domestication," vol. ii.

hardly the animals to present us in a state of nature, with an extraordinary and exceptional sensitiveness in such matters.

To take an altogether different case. Care of, and tenderness toward, the aged and infirm are actions on all hands admitted to be "right;" but it is difficult to see how such actions could ever have been so useful to a community as to have been seized on and developed by the exclusive action of the law of the "survival of the fittest." On the contrary, it seems probable that on strict utilitarian principles the rigid political economy of Tierra del Fuego would have been eminently favored and diffused by the impartial action of "Natural Selection" alone. By the rigid political economy referred to, is meant that destruction and utilization of "useless mouths" which Mr. Darwin himself describes in his highly interesting "Journal of Researches." [6] He says: "It is certainly true, that when pressed in winter by hunger, they kill and devour their old women before they kill their dogs. The boy being asked why they did this, answered: 'Doggies catch otters, old woman no.' They often run away into the mountains, but they are pursued by the men and brought back to the slaughter-house at their own firesides." Mr. Edward Bartlett, who has recently returned from the Amazons, reports that at one Indian village where the cholera made its appearance, the whole population immediately dispersed into the woods, leaving the sick to perish uncared for and alone. Now, had the Indians remained, undoubtedly far more would have died; as doubtless, in Tierra del Fuego, the destruction of the comparatively useless old women has often been the means of preserving the healthy and reproductive young. Such acts surely must be greatly favored by the stern and unrelenting action of exclusive "Natural Selection."

In the same way that admiration which all feel for acts

[6] See 2d edit., vol. i., p. 214.

of self-denial done for the good of others, and tending even toward the destruction of the actor, could hardly be accounted for on Darwinian principles alone; for self-immolators must but rarely leave direct descendants, while the community they benefit must by their destruction tend, so far, to morally deteriorate. But devotion to others of the same community is by no means *all* that has to be accounted for. Devotion to the whole human race, and devotion to God—in the form of asceticism—have been and are very generally recognized as "good;" and the author contends that it is simply impossible to conceive that such ideas and sanctions should have been developed by "Natural Selection" alone, from only that degree of unselfishness necessary for the preservation of brutally barbarous communities in the struggle for life. That degree of unselfishness once attained, further improvement would be checked by the mutual opposition of diverging moral tendencies and spontaneous variations in all directions. Added to which, we have the principle of reversion and atavism, tending powerfully to restore and reproduce the more degraded anterior condition whence the later and better state painfully emerged.

Very few, however, dispute the complete distinctness, here and now, of the ideas of "duty" and "interest," whatever may have been the origin of those ideas. No one pretends that ingratitude may, in any past abyss of time, have been a virtue, or that it may be such now in Arcturus or the Pleiades. Indeed, a certain eminent writer of the utilitarian school of ethics has amusingly and very instructively shown how radically distinct even in his own mind are the two ideas which he nevertheless endeavors to identify. Mr. John Stuart Mill, in his examination of "Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy," says:[7] if "I am informed that the world is ruled by a Being whose attributes are infinite, but

[7] Page 103.

what they are we cannot learn, nor what the principles of his government, except that 'the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving' does not sanction them; convince me of it, and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality, I say in plain terms that I will not. Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do: he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."

This is unquestionably an admirable sentiment on the part of Mr. Mill (with which every absolute moralist will agree), but it contains a complete refutation of his own position, and is a capital instance[8] of the vigorous life of moral intuition in one who professes to have eliminated any fundamental distinction between the "right" and the "expedient." For if an action is morally good, and to be done, merely in proportion to the amount of pleasure it secures, and morally bad and to be avoided as tending to misery, and if it could be *proved* that by calling God good—whether He is so or not, in our sense of the term—we could secure a maximum of pleasure, and by refusing to do so we should incur endless torment, clearly, on utilitarian principles, the flattery would be good.

Mr. Mill, of course, must also mean that, in the matter in question, all men would do well to act with him. Therefore, he must mean that it would be well for all to accept (on the hypothesis above given) infinite and final misery for all as the result of the pursuit of happiness as the only end.

[8] I have not the merit of having noticed this inconsistency; it was pointed out to me by my friend the Rev. W. W. Roberts.

It must be recollected that in consenting to worship this unholy God, Mr. Mill is not asked to do harm to his neighbor, so that his refusal reposes simply on his perception of the immorality of the requisition. It is also noteworthy that an omnipotent Deity is supposed incapable of altering Mr. Mill's mind and moral perceptions.

Mr. Mill's decision is right, but it is difficult indeed to see how, without the recognition of an "absolute morality," he can justify so utter and final an abandonment of all utility in favor of a clear and distinct moral perception.

These two ideas, the "right" and the "useful," being so distinct here and now, a greater difficulty meets us with regard to their origin from some common source, than met us before when considering the first beginnings of certain bodily structures. For the distinction between the "right" and the "useful" is so fundamental and essential that not only does the idea of benefit not enter into the idea of duty, but we see that the very fact of an act *not* being beneficial to us makes it the more praiseworthy, while gain tends to diminish the merit of an action. Yet this idea, "right," thus excluding, as it does, all reference to utility or pleasure, has nevertheless to be constructed and evolved from utility and pleasure, and ultimately from pleasurable sensations, if we are to accept pure Darwinianism: if we are to accept, that is, the evolution of man's psychical nature and highest powers by the exclusive action of "Natural Selection," from such faculties as are possessed by brutes; in other words, if we are to believe that the conceptions of the highest human morality arose through minute and fortuitous variations of brutal desires and appetites in all conceivable directions.

It is here contended, on the other hand, that no conservation of any such variations could ever have given rise to the faintest beginning of any such moral perceptions; that by "Natural Selection" alone the maxim *fiat justitia, ruat*

cælum could never have been excogitated, still less have have found a wide-spread acceptance; that it is impotent to suggest even an approach toward an explanation of the *first beginning* of the idea of "right." It need hardly be remarked that acts may be distinguished not only as pleasurable, useful, or beautiful, but also as good in two different senses: (1) *materially* moral acts, and (2) acts which are *formally* moral. The first are acts good in themselves, *as acts*, apart from any intention of the agent which may or may not have been directed toward "right." The second are acts which are good not only in themselves, as acts, but also in the deliberate *intention* of the agent who recognizes his actions as being "right." Thus acts may be *materially* moral or immoral, in a very high degree, without being in the least *formally* so. For example, a person may tend and minister to a sick man with scrupulous care and exactness, having in view all the time nothing but the future reception of a good legacy. Another may, in the dark, shoot his own father, taking him to be an assassin, and so commit what is *materially* an act of parricide, though *formally* it is only an act of self-defence of more or less culpable rashness. A woman may innocently, because ignorantly, marry a married man, and so commit a *material* act of adultery. She may discover the facts, and persist, and so make her act *formal* also.

Actions of brutes, such as those of the bee, the ant, or the beaver, however materially good as regards their relations to the community to which such animals belong, are absolutely destitute of the most incipient degree of real, i. e., formal "goodness," because unaccompanied by mental acts of conscious will directed toward the fulfilment of duty. Apology is due for thus stating so elementary a distinction, but the statement is not superfluous, for confusion of thought, resulting from confounding together these very distinct things, is unfortunately far from uncommon.

Thus some Darwinians assert that the germs of morality exist in brutes, and we have seen that Mr. Darwin himself speculates on the subject as regards the highest apes. It may safely be affirmed, however, that there is no trace in brutes of any action simulating morality which are not explicable by the fear of punishment, by the hope of pleasure, or by personal affection. No sign of moral reprobation is given by any brute, and yet had such existed in germ through Darwinian abysses of past time, some evidence of its existence must surely have been rendered perceptible through "survival of the fittest" in other forms besides man, if that "survival" has alone and exclusively produced it in him.

Abundant examples may, indeed, be brought forward of useful-acts which simulate morality, such as parental care of the young, etc. But did the most undeviating habits guide all brutes in such matters, were even aged and infirm members of a community of insects or birds carefully tended by young which benefited by their experience, such acts would not indicate even the faintest rudiment of real, i. e., formal, morality. "Natural Selection" would, of course, often lead to the prevalence of acts beneficial to a community, and to acts *materially* good; but unless they can be shown to be *formally* so, they are not in the least to the point, they do not offer any explanation of the origin of an altogether new and fundamentally different motive and conception.

It is interesting, on the other hand, to note Mr. Darwin's statement as to the existence of a distinct moral feeling, even in, perhaps, the very lowest and most degraded of all the human races known to us. Thus in the same "Journal of Researches"[9] before quoted, bearing witness to the existence of moral reprobation on the part of the Fuegians, he says: "The nearest approach to religious feeling which I heard of was shown by York Minster (a Fuegian so named),

[9] Vol. i., p. 215.

who, when Mr. Bynoe shot some very fine ducklings as specimens, declared in the most solemn manner, 'Oh, Mr. Bynoe, much rain, snow, blow much.' This was evidently a retributive punishment for wasting human food."

Mr. Wallace gives the most interesting testimony, in his "Malay Archipelago," to the existence of a very distinct, and in some instances highly-developed moral sense in the natives with whom he came in contact. In one case,[10] a Papuan, who had been paid in advance for bird-skins, and who had not been able to fulfil his contract before Mr. Wallace was on the point of starting, "came running down after us holding up a bird, and saying with great satisfaction, 'Now I owe you nothing!'" And this though he could have withheld payment with complete impunity.

Mr. Wallace's observations and opinions on this head seem hardly to meet with due appreciation in Sir John Lubbock's recent work on Primitive Man.[11] But considering the acute powers of observation and the industry of Mr. Wallace, and especially considering the years he passed in familiar and uninterrupted intercourse with natives, his opinion and testimony should surely carry with it great weight. He has informed the author that he found a strongly-marked and widely-diffused modesty, in sexual matters, among all the tribes with which he came in contact. In the same way Mr. Bonwick, in his work on the Tasmanians, testifies to the modesty exhibited by the naked females of that race, who by the decorum of their postures gave evidence of the possession in germ of what under circumstances would become the highest chastity and refinement.

Hasty and incomplete observations and inductions are prejudicial enough to physical science, but when their effect is to degrade untruthfully our common humanity, there is

[10] "Malay Archipelago," vol. ii., p. 365.

[11] "The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man," p. 261. Longmans, 1870.

an additional motive to regret them. A hurried visit to a tribe, whose language, traditions, and customs are unknown, is sometimes deemed sufficient for "smart" remarks as to "ape characters," etc., which are as untrue as irrelevant. It should not be forgotten how extremely difficult it is to enter into the ideas and feelings of an alien race. If in the nineteenth century a French theatrical audience can witness with acquiescent approval, as a type of English manners and ideas, the representation of a marquis who sells his wife at Smithfield, etc. etc., it is surely no wonder if the ideas of a tribe of newly-visited savages should be more or less misunderstood. To enter into such ideas requires long and familiar intimacy, like that experienced by the explorer of the Malay Archipelago. From him, and others, we have abundant evidence that moral ideas exist at least in germ, in savage races of men, while they sometimes attain even a highly-developed state. No amount of evidence as to acts of moral depravity is to the point, as the object here aimed at is to establish that moral intuitions *exist* in savages, not that their actions are good.

Objections, however, are sometimes drawn from the different notions as to the moral value of certain acts, entertained by men of various countries or of different epochs; also from the difficulty of knowing what particular actions in certain cases are the right ones, and from the effects which prejudice, interest, passion, habit, or even, indirectly, physical conditions, may have upon our moral perceptions. Thus Sir John Lubbock speaks [12] of certain Feejeeans, who, according to the testimony of Mr. Hunt,[13] have the custom of piously choking their parents under certain circumstances, in order to insure their happiness in a future life. Should any one take such facts as telling *against* the belief in an absolute morality, he would show a complete misap-

[12] "Primitive Man," p. 248.

[13] "Fiji and the Fijians," vol. i., p. 183.

prehension of the point in dispute; for such facts tell in *favor* of it.

Were it asserted that man possesses a distinct innate power and faculty by which he is made intuitively aware what acts considered in and by themselves are right and what wrong—an infallible and universal internal code—the illustration would be to the point. But all that need be contended for is that the intellect perceives not only truth, but also a quality of "higher" which ought to be followed, and of "lower" which ought to be avoided; when two lines of conduct are presented to the will for choice, the intellect so acting being the conscience.

This has been well put by Mr. James Martineau in his excellent essay on Whewell's Morality. He says: [14] "If moral good were a quality resident in each action, as whiteness in snow, or sweetness in fruits; and if the moral faculty was our appointed instrument for detecting its presence; many consequences would ensue which are at variance with fact. The wide range of differences observable in the ethical judgments of men would not exist; and even if they did, could no more be reduced and modified by discussion than constitutional differences of hearing or of vision. And, as the quality of moral good either must or must not exist in every important operation of the will, we should discern its presence or absence separately in each; and even though we never had the conception of more than one insulated action, we should be able to pronounce upon its character. This, however, we have plainly no power to do. Every moral judgment is relative, and involves a comparison of two terms. When we praise what *has been* done, it is with the coexistent conception of something *else* that *might have been* done; and when we resolve on a course as right, it is to the exclusion of some other that is wrong. This fact, that

[14] "Essays," Second Series, vol. ii., p. 13.

every ethical decision is in truth a *preference*, an election of one act as higher than another, appears of fundamental importance in the analysis of the moral sentiments."

From this point of view it is plain how trifling are arguments drawn from the acts of a savage, since an action highly immoral in us might be one exceedingly virtuous in him—being the highest presented to his choice in his degraded intellectual condition and peculiar circumstances.

It need only be contended, then, that there *is* a perception of "right" incapable of further analysis; not that there is any infallible internal guide as to all the complex actions which present themselves for choice. The *principle* is given in our nature, the *application* of the principle is the result of a thousand educational influences.

It is no wonder, then, that, in complex "cases of conscience," it is sometimes a matter of exceeding difficulty to determine which of two courses of action is the less objectionable. This no more invalidates the truth of moral principles than does the difficulty of a mathematical problem cast doubt on mathematical principles. Habit, education, and intellectual gifts, facilitate the correct application of both.

Again, if our moral insight is intensified or blunted by our habitual wishes, or, indirectly, by our physical condition, the same may be said of our perception of the true relations of physical facts one to another. An eager wish for marriage has led many a man to exaggerate the powers of a limited income, and a fit of dyspepsia has given an unreasonably gloomy aspect to more than one balance-sheet.

Considering that moral intuitions have to do with *insensible* matters, they cannot be expected to be more clear than the perception of physical facts. And if the latter perceptions may be influenced by volition, desire, or

health, our moral views may also be expected to be so influenced, and this in a higher degree because they so often run counter to our desires. A bottle or two of wine may make a sensible object appear double; what wonder, then, if our moral perceptions are sometimes warped and distorted by such powerful agencies as an evil education or an habitual absence of self-restraint. In neither case does occasional distortion invalidate the accuracy of normal and habitual perception.

The distinctness here and now of the ideas of "right" and "useful" is, however, as before said, fully conceded by Mr. Herbert Spencer, although he contends that these conceptions are one in root and origin.

His utilitarian Genesis of Morals, however, has been recently combated by Mr. Richard Holt Hutton, in a paper which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine.*[15]

This writer aptly objects an *argumentum ad hominem*, applying to morals the same argument that has been applied in this work to our sense of musical harmony, and by Mr. Wallace to the vocal organs of man.

Mr. Herbert Spencer's notions on the subject are thus expressed by himself: "To make my position fully understood, it seems needful to add that, corresponding to the fundamental propositions of a developed moral science, there have been, and still are, developing in the race certain fundamental intuitions; and that, though these moral intuitions are the result of accumulated experiences of utility gradually organized and inherited, they have come to be quite independent of conscious experience. Just in the same way that I believe the intuition of space possessed by any living individual to have arisen from organized and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals, who bequeathed to him their slowly-developed nervous organizations; just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only

[15] See No. 117, July, 1869, p. 272.

to be made definite and complete by personal experiences, has practically become a form of thought quite independent of experience;—so do I believe that the experiences of utility, organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications which, by continued transmissions and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition, active emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility. I also hold that, just as the space intuition responds to the exact demonstrations of geometry, and has its rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them, so will moral intuitions respond to the demonstrations of moral science, and will have their rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them."

Against this view of Mr. Herbert Spencer, Mr. Hutton objects: "1. That even as regards Mr. Spencer's illustration from geometrical intuitions, his process would be totally inadequate, since you could not deduce the necessary space intuition of which he speaks from any possible accumulations of familiarity with space relations. . . . We cannot *inherit* more than than our fathers *had:* no amount of experience of facts, however universal, can give rise to that particular characteristic of intuitions and *a priori* ideas, which compels us to deny the possibility that in any other world, however otherwise different, our experience (as to space relations) could be otherwise.

"2. That the case of moral intuitions is very much stronger.

"3. That if Mr. Spencer's theory accounts for any thing, it accounts not for the deepening of a sense of utility and inutility into right and wrong, but for the drying up of the sense of utility and inutility into mere inherent tendencies, which would exercise over us not *more* authority but *less*, than a rational sense of utilitarian issues.

"4. That Mr. Spencer's theory could not account for the intuitional sacredness now attached to *individual* moral rules and principles, without accounting *a fortiori* for the general claim of the greatest-happiness principle over us as the final moral intuition—which is conspicuously contrary to the fact, as not even the utilitarians themselves plead any instinctive or intuitive sanction for their great principle.

"5. That there is no trace of positive evidence of any single instance of the transformation of a utilitarian rule of right into an intuition, since we find no utilitarian principle of the most ancient times which is now an accepted moral intuition, nor any moral intuition, however sacred, which has not been promulgated thousands of years ago, and which has not constantly had to stop the tide of utilitarian *objections* to its authority—and this age after age, in our own day quite as much as in days gone by. . . . Surely, if any thing is remarkable in the history of morality, it is the *anticipatory* character, if I may use the expression, of moral principles—the intensity and absoluteness with which they are laid down ages before the world has approximated to the ideal thus asserted."

Sir John Lubbock, in his work on Primitive Man before referred to, abandons Mr. Spencer's explanation of the genesis of morals while referring to Mr. Hutton's criticisms on the subject. Sir John proposes to substitute "deference to authority" instead of "sense of interest" as the origin of our conception of "duty," saying that what has been found to be beneficial has been traditionally inculcated on the young, and thus has become to be disassociated from "interest" in the mind, though the inculcation itself originally sprung from that source. This, however, when analyzed, turns out to be a distinction without a difference. It is nothing but utilitarianism, pure and simple, after all. For it can never be intended that authority is obeyed because of an intuition that it *should be deferred to*, for that would

be to admit the very principle of absolute morality which Sir John combats. It must be meant, then, that authority is obeyed through fear of the consequences of disobedience, or through pleasure felt in obeying the authority which commands. In the latter case we have "pleasure" as the end and no rudiment of the conception of "duty." In the former we have fear of punishment, which appeals directly to the sense of "utility to the individual," and no amount of such a sense will produce the least germ of "ought," which is a conception different *in kind*, and in which the notion of "punishment" has no place. Thus, Sir John Lubbock's explanation only concerns a *mode* in which the sense of "duty" may be stimulated or appealed to, and makes no approximation to an explanation of its origin.

Could the views of Mr. Herbert Spencer, of Mr. Mill, or of Mr. Darwin, on this subject be maintained, or should they come to be generally accepted, the consequences would be disastrous indeed! Were it really the case that virtue was a *mere kind of "retrieving,"* then certainly we should have to view with apprehension the spread of intellectual cultivation, which would lead the human "retrievers" to regard from a new point of view their fetching and carrying. We should be logically compelled to acquiesce in the vociferations of some Continental utilitarians, who would banish altogether the senseless words "duty" and "merit;" and then, one important influence which has aided human progress being withdrawn, we should be reduced to hope that in this case the maxim *cessante causa cessat ipse effectus* might through some incalculable accident fail to apply.

It is true that Mr. Spencer tries to erect a safeguard against such moral disruption, by asserting that for every immoral act, word, or thought, each man during this life receives minute and exact retribution, and that thus a regard for individual self-interest will effectually prevent any moral catastrophe. But by what means will he enforce the

acceptance of a dogma which is not only incapable of proof, but is opposed to the commonly-received opinion of mankind in all ages? Ancient literature, sacred and profane, teems with protests against the successful evil-doer, and certainly, as Mr. Hutton observes,[16] "Honesty must have been associated by our ancestors with many unhappy as well as many happy consequences, and we know that in ancient Greece dishonesty was openly and actually associated with happy consequences. . . . when the concentrated experience of previous generations was held, *not* indeed to justify, but to excuse by utilitarian considerations, craft, dissimulation, sensuality, selfishness."

This dogma is opposed to the moral consciousness of many as to the events of their own lives; and the author, for one, believes that it is absolutely contrary to fact.

History affords multitudes of instances, but an example may be selected from one of the most critical periods of modern times. Let it be granted that Louis XVI. of France and his queen had all the defects attributed to them by the most hostile of serious historians; let all the excuses possible be made for his predecessor, Louis XV., and also for Madame de Pompadour, can it be pretended that there are grounds for affirming that the vices of the two former so far exceeded those of the latter, that their respective fates were plainly and evidently just? that while the two former died in their beds, after a life of the most extreme luxury, the others merited to stand forth through coming time as examples of the most appalling and calamitous tragedy?

This theme, however, is too foreign to the immediate matter in hand to be further pursued, tempting as it is. But a passing protest against a superstitious and deluding dogma may stand—a dogma which may, like any other dogma, be vehemently asserted and maintained, but which

[16] *Macmillan's Magazine*, No. 117, July, 1869.

is remarkable for being destitute, at one and the same time, of both authoritative sanction and the support of reason and observation.

To return to the bearing of moral conceptions on "Natural Selection," it seems that, from the reasons given in this chapter, we may safely affirm: 1. That "Natural Selection" could not have produced, from the sensations of pleasure and pain experienced by brutes, a higher degree of morality than was useful; therefore it could have produced any amount of "beneficial habits," but not abhorrence of certain acts as impure and sinful.

2. That it could not have developed that high esteem for acts of care and tenderness to the aged and infirm which actually exists, but would rather have perpetuated certain low social conditions which obtain in some savage localities.

3. That it could not have evolved from ape sensations the noble virtue of a Marcus Aurelius, or the loving but manly devotion of a St. Louis.

4. That, alone, it could not have given rise to the maxim *fiat justitia, ruat cœlum.*

5. That the interval between material and formal morality is one altogether beyond its power to traverse.

Also, that the anticipatory character of moral principles is a fatal bar to that explanation of their origin which is offered to us by Mr. Herbert Spencer. And, finally, that the solution of that origin proposed recently by Sir John Lubbock is a mere version of simple utilitarianism, appealing to the pleasure or safety of the individual, and therefore utterly incapable of solving the riddle it attacks.

Such appearing to be the case as to the power of "Natural Selection," we, nevertheless, find moral conceptions—*formally* moral ideas—not only spread over the civilized world, but manifesting themselves unmistakably (in however rudimentary a condition, and however misapplied)

among the lowest and most degraded of savages. If from among these, individuals can be brought forward who seem to be destitute of any moral conception, similar cases also may easily be found in highly-civilized communities. Such cases tell no more against moral intuitions than do cases of color-blindness or idiotism tell against sight and reason. We have thus a most important and conspicuous fact, the existence of which is fatal to the theory of "Natural Selection," as put forward of late by Mr. Darwin and his most ardent followers. It must be remarked, however, that whatever force this fact may have against a belief in the origination of man from brutes by minute, fortuitous variations, it has no force whatever against the conception of the orderly evolution and successive manifestation of specific forms by ordinary natural law—even if we include among such the upright frame, the ready hand, and massive brain, of man himself.