A STUDY OF MORALITY

by

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This paper is an attempt to relate ethics to the sciences, in particular to psychology. It is held that these two are closely, though complexly, related, in that human capacities (discovered by the sciences) must be known before minor moral imperatives can be formulated, and further, a major moral imperative is necessary to give meaning to the varied capacities which science enumerates as being within the scope of action.

Chapter One deals with emergent morality, a natural manifestation of the process of evolution, and points out the uncritical attitude involved in the formation of mores and taboos. These are non-relative and absolute values (imperatives) found in modern as well as primitive societies, and, when adopted, form a mechanistic view of behavior. The argument against a determined view of conduct is on three grounds: general observation of human action, and evidence from biology and the physical sciences. Man overcomes the mechanistic tendency of the natural evolutionary process by science, in the world of things (e.g. using the causality principle) and ethics in the sphere of ideas (e.g. understanding the dangers inherent in non-relative and absolute values).

Chapter Two treats the two other broad types of value. Relative and non-absolute (Calliclean) values are criticized as being in reality not values at all, since to assert that any value will do is the same as saying that none are necessary. Relative and absolute values form the
only other alternative. The relativity of values finds support in the general observation that values, to be meaningful, must be somehow related to the beings whose conduct they control. The absolute imperative assumed (as perhaps all basic imperatives must be) is simply that man ought to be healthy, in the fullest meaning of the term. This assumption is based on 1) the misery of psychologically unsound individuals, and 2) the social necessity for healthy functioning. The chapter concludes with an examination of ascetic morality, and finds it invalidated if the assumed imperative is valid. In its place a morality of full physical and mental functioning seems to be indicated, the nature of this functioning being obtained after a study of the sciences, especially psychology.

Chapter Three considers the extent of unhealthy human functioning and finds that psychologically unsound behavior, which by definition is ethically bad behavior, is exceedingly widespread, so much so that some writers have referred to the phenomenon as a mass neurosis. Adjustment to society can produce an unhealthy individual if the society itself is inherently unsound. Our own society appears in many ways to fall into this classification, which at once sets a major ethical problem—that of social rectification.
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FOREWORD

Once in a time long since past, philosophy inhabited the market-place, stirring the thoughts of ordinary men and urging them on to ever better deeds. Ethical ideas were not something to be hidden away in musty archives far from the pulsating flow of everyday life; knowledge was welcomed eagerly by the ancient Greeks as an indispensable guide for the process of living a good life: ἀρετή and ἀνθρώπος were inseparable. The Socratic dictum "know thyself" was meant to be applied, not framed and hung as a wall decoration.

But somehow, philosophical ethics have lost their contact with the affairs of men. We are guided morally, if at all, by the bludgeoning threats of theological-authoritarian dogma rather than human reason carefully organized into philosophical wisdom. In the art of living we have lost almost all claim to the classical definition of man as an animal rationale, and this in a time in history when more is known of the nature of rationality than ever before.

Were it not so frightening, our present paradox would perhaps seem amusing, for surely nothing could be more ludicrous than the picture of man eagerly developing his psychology--his knowledge of rational behavior--and simultaneously becoming everywhere more and more irrational. Each triumph in man's knowledge of himself appears correlative to greater and greater deficiency in its application. Some twenty-five
centuries ago Plato spent his life in fighting against folly in a declining Athens, and in so doing erected a magnificent philosophy—yet failed to halt the tide of corruption. Since our turbulent times are not unlike those of the fifth century B.C., the question "Why did Plato fail?" becomes pertinent. Was it because every civilization must sooner or later collapse and perish, or was it because men did not yet sufficiently know themselves? If the latter be the case, then we of the twentieth century have cause for hope. Psychology has but recently outgrown its infancy and is now passing through a disordered adolescence, nevertheless, it has contributed much to the understanding of man. We know that wars, famine in the midst of plenty, mass hysteria and other foolishness, are all related intimately to the functional characteristics of individuals, hence it can be hoped that future psychological elucidation of the relationship will give man the same control over his ideological-institutional environment that he now enjoys over his world of things.

Throughout this process of psychological development ethics will have a job to do, for of what avail is it to know what a man can do if we know not what he ought to do? And conversely, how can we decide what should be done unless we know what can and cannot be done? The question "What is the best way in which we can function?" sets the problem which relates ethics to psychology, and it is this which motivated the writing of the following pages. They will have justified themselves if they give ethics even the slightest push in the
direction of the market-place, where the decisions are made which direct the destiny of man.

Since philosophy is concerned chiefly with ideas, adequate acknowledgement of intellectual indebtedness is an impossible task—unless one were to list all lectures attended, all authors read, and so on. However, applying the criterion of personal contact, the following must be mentioned in gratitude: Dr. Harvey Gates Townsend, of the University of Oregon, my first teacher; Professor John Allan Irving (now of the University of Toronto) for his seminar on the philosophy of George Herbert Mead; Professor Edmund Macdonald, of the University of British Columbia, for his seminar on the philosophies of John Dewey and Ernst Cassirer; and Professors Ralph Gundlach, of the University of Washington, and Davison Ketchum, of the University of Toronto, who taught me that psychology and ethics are inseparable. In particular are my thanks due to Dr. Alexander Maslow, of the University of British Columbia, whose comments, criticisms and suggestions during the course of writing were always penetrating, always constructive—and always appreciated.

J. G. N.

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Chapter One.

THE PLACE OF ETHICS IN A DEVELOPING WORLD.

1. Emergent Morality Characterized by Being Non-Relative and Absolute.

It is very important to understand that tabooing of activities does not mean the simple prevention of those activities on a reasonable basis. It means the prevention of activities, whether physical or mental, on an authoritarian, moral-magic basis which is not arguable or answerable to reason.

G. Brock Chisholm, Can Man Survive?

...tis she, this superstition, who too oft has been the mother of accursed and impious deeds.

Lucretius, De Rerum Natura.

A. Mos and Taboo.

Anthropological investigations have shown morality to be an emergent in the evolutionary sequence, arising spontaneously when man ceases to live in isolation and becomes a member of a primitive community. This change from semi-solitary to communal living brings with it striking alterations in the behavior considered essential for the continuance of life. Of all the new behavior patterns, probably the most important are those interwoven into the tribal mores and taboos, for these ensure a homogeneity of behavior among all members which contributes significantly to the welfare of the group as a whole.

The individual mos has its origin in the solution of a
problem common to all members of the community. This involves a process which is essentially trial and error attempts on the part of individuals, although it is not consciously recognized as such by those using it. A workable, though not necessarily efficient, solution is finally attained, which is accepted by the rest of the group and towards which the behavior of all members converges. Future generations inherit this particular way of meeting a situation as part of their early training, and as the passage of time gradually erases remembrance of the act's origination, it comes to be associated with the idea of "Rightness". The exact psychological mechanism behind this addition of a value judgment to something that begins merely as an innovation in behavior and culminates in a habitual reaction to a situation is unknown, but it is not a surprising phenomenon when we consider that the all-important idea of societal welfare is involved. Omission of the act when called for by circumstance is a supposed danger to the integrity of the community, hence failure to conform brings spontaneous moral censure and punishment by the rest of the tribe or village, while obedience is lauded with the attribute of moral rightness; the laws governing conduct have two sharp edges, fear and moral approbation.

Simultaneous with the development of mores is the emergence of negative sanctions of behavior, or taboos. These too are inculcated at an early age, but whereas the mores are habits set up through repeated performance, the taboos are
established by constant inhibition of action. Unlike the mos, the psychological enforcement of the taboo is dependent on compulsion from within the individual, rather than dread of external coercion by the group, that is, the fear component is attached to the act itself rather than to its consequences.

Together, the mos and taboo form the structure of morality at the beginning of community life. They are the two prime agencies of social control, and serve their purpose of directing behavior with a rigor and fierceness stronger than any other known mechanism. In the words of Sumner, pioneer investigator of the folkways:

The morality of a group at any time is the sum of the taboos and prescriptions in the folkways by which right conduct is defined. Therefore, morals can never be intuitive. They are historical, institutional and empirical. (1)

From the point of view of ethics, the two most germane characteristics of the mos and taboo are, first, the un-critical attitude involved in their formation, and second, their non-relative and absolute character. To elaborate the first of these, in the problem-solving situation which initiates the emergence of a mos, it is merely the first

(1) Folkways, P. 99.
workable solution which is adopted into consuetudinary practice, and while this may be the most efficient and suitable under the specific circumstances, it is more often a second best inadequacy, or even completely false. Cases of the latter sort often involve a mistaken appraisal of the problem and its answer. For instance, after many tedious days of uneventful searching for game, a primitive man might conceivably kill and devour his dog. Should this be immediately followed by an unusually plentiful supply of food, he would quite probably seize upon the act of killing his dog as the cause of his good fortune, and so commence the practice of immolation before each hunt. It is this same confusion between cause and adjunctive factors which leads to the concepts of amulet, talisman, omen, charm, and so on, with which all early societies are embellished. And it is this same permanent possibility of falsity inherent in the structure of mos and taboo that makes them so easily able to obviate the very societal welfare for which they are ostensibly perpetuated. Once mores are formed and established, they become absolute dictates to act in a certain way and no other, they will countenance no scepticism concerning their validity, no questioning of their utility, because they are themselves the standards beyond which enquiry must not go; they are the ultimate authority, absolute and closed to doubt. But while they have acquired this absolute character, they may well have lost whatever relation to man and his changing problems they originally possessed; the rules of behavior remain
stereotyped while the men and situations to which they apply have so changed as to bear no relation to the rules which purport to govern them wisely. The fact of the matter is that even though a mos may be suitable at its inception, it has the ineluctable characteristic of becoming inadequate as time goes on. What once was applicable becomes an anachronism under changed conditions. Because of the uncritical father-to-son mode of transmission, the mores and taboos are kept constant while the environment within which they must function must of necessity change with time—behavior becomes more and more sacrosanct as it becomes increasingly incongruous, a disastrous paradox. A taboo, for example, on the eating of fish, originally serving to direct attention towards the elimination of excessive land animals, may contribute to the malnutrition of later generations when game is scarce and still-tabooed fish plentiful. Whole peoples have destroyed themselves because of their resistance to change—a rigidity which becomes understandable when viewed in terms of strong rear-conditioning throughout infancy and childhood. When behavior becomes compulsive, when morality is absolute and non-relative, it becomes impossible for men to adapt themselves to a changing world.

B. Primitive Morality In the Modern World.

We have a tendency to view knowledge of the intense power of the folkways of "primitive" communities as being somehow irrelevant to an assessment or analysis of "modern" societies. Such an attitude seems only to reflect a contemp-
orary inability to question the standards of right and wrong action set up by our folkways. Every community has its taboos and its mores, and with them the perpetual opportunity of false belief and stupid conduct.

In our Western world institutions have come into increased prominence, because of the fact that modern societies are of such a size that their individual members are no longer intimately dependent on one another, as they were in the tribal, or even feudal, community. Control of personal behavior by the simple expedient of concerted group action against transgressors is not possible just because the group as a whole does not know what its members are doing. Nevertheless, control persists by becoming vested in the functionaries of institutions. Original mores and taboos are codified into the constitutions and laws of institutions, and punishment for infringement is prescribed legally. The way of the transgressor is still hard, but first he must be found out and caught. We have institutions working ceaselessly to do just this, to add force to what other institutions have instilled, and so the follies of the mores are incorporated into large societies by special machinery adapted to the greater size. Institutions are reinforced by the use of ritualized procedures. We do not have to think when our actions are ritualized, we act at once in response to a situation, secure in the comfortable knowledge that we are unquestionably "right". In our day we have the rituals of church services, anthem singing, personal prayer,
university convocations, coronations, marriage and burial ceremonies, and a host of others. Ritual is not to be condemned holus bolus, for it may often satisfy profound psychological needs; the important thing is to recognize that ritual easily becomes altogether meaningless, without, however, losing any of its force, and that ritual utilized for the maintenance of institutions contains a dangerously unreasonable element. Ritual as a method of training is a complete reversal of the reasoning process: the act is prior to the idea and feeling, that is, logical justification follows, rather than precedes, behavior, and ideology becomes a rationalization, which is carried over into the institution supporting the ritual to secure conformity.

A new danger which attends the increase in institutional control is the fallacy of logical realism. Reification of abstractions is so much a part of everyday life that its significance frequently escapes notice; we speak easily of responsibility of and to the state, the family, the race, as if these were somehow concrete entities in which can be located.

(1) Although ritual often creates the needs which it satisfies, e.g. the primitive dance arouses emotion through innervation of the sympathetic nervous system plus adrenalin reinforcement, and also supplies the relief of emotional tension in supplying stereotyped overt behavior to release the increased energy available for motor action. But, as society becomes increasingly complex and industrialized, situations requiring emotional response become less (except, perhaps, in the minor affairs of table etiquette and so forth), while those needing intellectual response increase. Under these conditions many rituals, based on emotion, become a handicap to intellectual functioning.
human attributes. Fierce debates between extreme nominalists and realists seldom help clarify the intensely important problem of the relation between individual and institution; it is, for the present purpose at least, not necessary either to deny or affirm the "reality" of universals, but it is imperative that we see clearly that modern usage of the word "Reality" as synonymous with physical existence too often involves us, as Whitehead has warned, in a "fallacy of misplaced concreteness". The important thing is to recognize that no institution can ever have a tangible existence; behind the "institutional fiction", to use Allport's term, there are always individual human beings affecting for better or worse, the behavior of other human beings.

To sum up, emergent morality, which is a natural manifestation of the process of evolution at the human level, is characterized by an uncritical attitude towards its mode of formation on the part of those to whom it applies, and takes the form of absolute and non-relative imperatives. Further, this "primitive" type of morality is not restricted to early or barbarian groups, but is found operative in all modern societies, where mores receive an institutional reinforcement.
2. **Transcendence of Emergent Morality.**

There are in truth forces within man as well as without him. While they are infinitely frail in comparison with exterior forces, yet they may have the support of a foreseeing and contriving intelligence.


Of all things that are in motion some have the cause of their motion in themselves, others are moved only from without.

*Origen, Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta.*

**A. Determined Behavior: Is Man Only A Mechanism?**

To say that the members of a community are governed thoroughly by their group mores is to say that their lives are determined, and anthropologists have shown us that much of the behavior of primitive groups is indeed fixed conclusively and authoritatively by rigid codes of conduct. The bounds of action are set for the individual from the moment of birth, and rebellion against the existing state of things is impossible simply because it is unthinkable: mores and taboos are by their very nature beyond question, they are themselves the standards to which all judgment is referred. To doubt is to sin, to conform is to live - in the primitive community there can be no possibility of living in sin. Of course, there never has been a human community completely determined in all its aspects, there is always someone to be found who does not conform to the prevailing demands, and who, though he may die for it, alters the set behavior of the group by reacting in an unexpected and unpredictable manner. It is this sort of person who provides an apparent stumbling block to the view that man is adequately conceived as only a
mechanistic automaton, helpless before whatever impacts may chance to fall on him. Although it cannot be proven beyond all doubt, it seems as if man, unlike a mere object, has the potentiality of self-determination. Events in the world rush on like a flood which must expand because of the forces behind it, but they surge forward with no purpose, no goal, they simply occur, and of all the objects and forms of life in the world only man succeeds in detaching himself from the blind stream, and, surveying its progress, passes judgment and proceeds to alter it, to bend it to its own purposes. From out of the blind interplay of forces man emerges and stands apart, looks from whence he came, and proceeds to interrupt the purposeless flow and place himself in the flux of events as a cause which is calculated to produce those events which for various reasons he finds desirable. If he did not, his life would be determined for him by random forces.

And why should we assume a mechanistic view of man, when the sciences are dropping mechanism from their account of the world of objects? On the one hand, the laws of the physical sciences, once considered eternally valid, are more plausibly conceived as approximations which can never become exact because of the fact that the phenomena which they describe are not themselves exact. We are particularly aware

(1) vide e.g. Cohen, Reason and Nature, P. 223 ff.
of this in the field of quantum physics, out of which grew
the startling realization that much of what had previously
been considered as evidence of intrinsic order was really
evidence for man's ability to order, classify, and describe
an essentially chaotic world. Then again, the biological
sciences also paint us a picture which is not altogether
mechanistic, but is rather an illustration of natural ran­
domness, by which I mean that evolutionary change is not in­
herently teleological, it is a process in which the "laws" of
chance play a large role, which are not the laws of a mech­
anically ordered world. Dinosaurs vanished because the
peculiar exigencies of their environment forced them into ex­
cessive armor. Their extinction, it is true, did occur ac­
cording to what is termed the principle of orthogenesis (the
unidirectional characteristic of protoplasm once it is "set"),
but the initiation of the orthogenetic process was the result
of an interplay between organism and what chanced to be its
environment. Phylogeny became lawfully pathologic by chance.
Mechanism, it is true, does seem to give a suitable account

(1) It might be said that entropy functions imply a once
fully ordered universe which is becoming disordered. I rather
think that they describe only an overall energy "dissipation"
not involving order - an evidently irreversible process of
levelling energy concentrations towards an eventual equilib­
rium. The relevant point is that entropy functions are inde­
dendent of the path over which their increase occurs, that is,
the mode of increasing randomness is itself random.

(2) vide Eddington, The Nature of the Physical World.
Cambridge, pp. 230-244.
of some forms of animal life: insect communities such as that of the ant have persisted through endless unvarying generations. There is an intricate interaction between insect and environment, yet the give and take process yields no innovation. The price of existence has become a dreary repetition of ceaseless identical cycles: an ideal adaptation in a sense, but a complete lack of adaptability. A sharp climatic change would wipe them out as automatically as their present world sustains them. The behavior of man, however, seems not to be fully explainable in the same terms as give an exhaustive account of the ant; there is something novel in human behavior: men seem able to break away from a mechanistic determination of their conduct by exterior forces to greater or less degree.

While we know of no human group exhibiting such extremely determined behavior as that of so many animal communities, we can cite numerous examples that approach the helplessness of complete dependence on random circumstance. We know also that there is much in every society that is a resultant of causes unknown and uncontrolled. We know, but do not so readily admit, that much of the structure of our own individual personalities has been determined by forces of which we have no cognizance. As humans, our environment has two facets, each seeking to determine our behavior. One is the physical world of objects and forces, the other the world of ideology, and from the pressure of neither is there any escape. We are all of us impressionable beings living in the
midst of a chaotic medley of things and ideas, all of which have the potentiality of determining how we act without awareness of their influence on our part, and if we yield uncritically to the pressures which surround us, our behavior can be nothing else but random.

B. Science and Freedom.

Besides knowing how much of what we are and do is mechanistically determined, we also feel that there is much that is not. We can conceive a time in man's remote history when his life was centered completely in the present, where his awareness was restricted to events happening here and now. In this condition he could have no possibility of an understanding of physical causality, which is, of course, dependent upon a prior awareness of time extension, of temporal spans. Later, it is found that man has learned to extend himself in time, because he has become aware of past and future in relation to his present. He can now develop a causality concept. He can look back into his past, and moreover, can seize and understand causes antecedent to what has affected him in the present; looking forward into the future he can anticipate events of a similar nature to those he has already experienced and know that their causes lie in his present. His present! Where he can get at them, fight them, alter them to suit his own purposes. He can control what is to happen to him, and in this sense his behavior has become teleological: he guides his behavior with reference to events which have yet to occur, he uses means to attain, or
prevent, ends. We have travelled a long and tortuous road since our primordial ancestors discovered how to use causality, rather than remaining at its mercy because of ignorance of its existence, and the mapping of this road is largely the history of science. The story of scientific endeavour is that of endless struggle against nature, against the subjugation of man by the world in which he must live, and in this fight for freedom against his physical surroundings, the scientist has learned that the hard prerequisite to the possibility of control is a rigorous understanding of relations between events. Alteration of a process in nature is unthinkable until interconnections among its constituent events have been elaborated, but when we do at last know these relations, we are no longer at the mercy of our enveloping medium. The mechanical determination of our behavior by the physical world ceases to be an unconquerable fact of the world; man can interrupt the cause-effect sequence and direct the course of events. He is no longer formed entirely by his environment, but can form his own future by altering the material world about him. Science tells man how things happen to him, and having this understanding, he can proceed to prevent them happening, and to such an extent as he utilizes this knowledge as a means of control, his behavior with respect to the material world cannot be considered as an automatic reaction; in going to the ant, man discovered how not to be as an ant, he became free.
C. Ethics and Freedom.

The application of the scientific method to the material world has been singularly successful in liberating mankind from the impacts of force and matter. In its few applications to the ideological world, the scientific attitude has accomplished similar wonders. Once we were quite righteously content to burn witches, incarcerate psychotics, torture heretics, starve seamen, maim children, emasculate choirs, and commit all manner of other abominations. We ceased these wretched and ridiculous practices not because of a change of heart, but after a change of mind. We had to learn a good deal about ideas, where they come from and what they do, how to test them and when to reject them. The emotional exaltation of being jolly good fellows came later as a conceited counterbalance to the nausea that accompanied our realization that we had been nothing less than bigoted fools acting nonsensically on the basis of false beliefs. Consider the man who, having in good faith burned half a dozen Salem witches, discovers witches to be merely an imaginative invention. Knowing this, he ceases his odious practice, and further, as the horror of his actions becomes more and more evident, it is understandable that he seeks some escape from the contemplation of his own foolishness. He wants absolution and wants it quickly. Regrettably, there is a multitude of religious and other devices ready to save him from remembering his own asinine behavior. Forgiven his sins, he will now likely forget the importance of knowledge and be-
gin to hate persecutors of witches with augmented fervor and uncontrolled passion - a conversion that usually passes for excellent behavior, particularly in the perspective of history, but which really marks only one more failure of man to guide his actions from a basis of understanding rather than seizing upon the idea of the moment and assuming its validity. The acceptance and use of knowledge in conduct requires constant effort directed against the incursions of false belief.

One of the paramount obstacles to the acceptance of knowledge is its disregard of personal ego. I may, for instance, know that a cause in which I have a deep interest can best be served by my own resignation from its leadership, hence, the reasonable thing to do is withdraw as gracefully as possible. This is exceedingly unpleasing to my ego, and the probability is high that I will discover many "reasons" for retaining my position. These pseudo-reasons are difficult to disentangle from well-grounded conclusions; Freud, indeed, has maintained that falsity is inevitable in ideology. All explanation, he says, arises as a rationalization which serves to make the hard world less intolerable: to face reality boldly is unbearable, therefore we invent an acceptably comfortable world of unreality. We live in dreams and illusion. It is hard to believe that such an extreme view can be consistently held. It is useful in that it points vividly to a failure into which we may readily fall. It explains much of the irrationality that pervades and plagues
our thinking, nevertheless, it is difficult to resist noting that Freud's theory of knowledge does not explain his own behavior in developing the theory. His critique of explanation is in itself a triumph, even though partial, of knowledge over false belief, and an example of success in his own struggle against ego-enhancing illusion. To realize the extent to which we are exposed to the forces of false belief is to begin to be free from them. In ethics, as in science, awareness of determined conduct marks the beginning of freedom.

Ethics could well pay close attention to the success of the scientific attitude in dealing with the material world. It gives a clue which may make possible the same surge in ethical thought which has so characterized the science of the last three centuries. I do not mean that ethics must adopt the scientific method as it is found in present day sciences. If the empiricism of science is really a process of abstraction from observed particulars, then the generalizations so obtained, were the method applied to ethics, would be no more than neat norms verifying those particular mores which chanced to be contemporary in a given community. Instead, ethics

(1) It is perhaps erroneous, though common, to refer to the scientific method, for there are many quite different methods which science uses. Ethical knowledge could probably be systematically acquired by methods analogous to, though not identical with, the various scientific methods.

(2) This is precisely what "evolutionary" ethics does. Various criticisms have been advanced, ranging from Huxley's denial of an ethical connotation to the "survival of the fittest", to Sidgwick's conclusion that the history of ethical opinion cannot be a decisive factor in determining its validity (Methods of Ethics, III, Chap. 1), and, more penetratingly, Morris Cohen's observation that "a great deal of the seeming success of evolutionary or biologic-historical ethics in suggesting solutions of moral problems is due to the unconscious assumption that mere life (i.e. biologic duration) or else the type of life which is the mode today, is the highest or most valuable end". (Reason and Nature, P. 378)
stemming from an attempt to make ethical statements which could be considered knowledge rather than dogma, first needs to become aware of the relations between events as discovered by the various sciences, and then try to relate these relations in turn to man and his conduct. Ethics need not be in itself any existing scientific method, but it can use the results of already developed sciences freely and copiously as knowledge available for the clarification and solution of moral problems. Thus there is a very close relationship between established science and ethics. Not only does ethics utilize information from the sciences, but these sciences are constantly creating new moral problems. An achievement in science such as the development of the technical means for birth control, since it changes the world in which we live, at once poses an ethical problem. Conduct is going to change in any case, and one function of ethics is first to understand that change will occur, and then prepare to meet the new situation with something other than old standards.

Ethics has to do with directing conduct, and to do this it must first free behavior from determination by an ideological environment consisting of absolute and non-relative values, just as science frees man from a haphazard physical environment. And to attain this freedom, knowledge is required of the dangers inherent in rigid authoritarian codes of conduct. In the process of acquiring this knowledge, of course, long-established and cherished institutions must often be altered, or even discarded. As George Herbert Mead has said:
Scientific method does not undertake to say what the good is, but when it has been employed, it is uncompromising in its demand that that good is no less a good because the scientific pursuit of it brings us within the taboos of institutions that we have regarded as inviolable...what scientific method does require, if it is to be consistently used, is that all the conflicting ends, the institutions and their hitherto inviolable values, be brought together and so restated and reconstructed that intelligent conduct may be possible, with reference to all of them. (1)

To sum up, the scientific attitude which permeates our western civilization simply will not tolerate non-relative and absolute values. Whether we would have it or not, I think it is a fact that god-given goods and evils are no longer acceptable to the members of our particular social group. Knowing this to be so, ethics must offer some alternative theory of value which is acceptable if it is to be an effective factor in the life of modern man.

(1) Scientific Method and the Moral Sciences, P. 236.
Chapter Two

ETHICS AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF FUNCTION.

1. Types of Value.

The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and, good to, for definite, assignable reasons.

William James, Pragmatism.


Epictetus, Moral Discourses.

A. Relative and Non-Absolute Values.

Whenever one extreme view breaks down, men are apt to swing to its opposite and cling as tenaciously to it as they once did to the first. Morally, we have for some time been in this position. Authoritarian codes have lost their power because men are now sceptical of absolutes and will have none of them. Searching for an alternative, we have followed the pendulum to the opposite end of its arc and now find ourselves in the camp of Callicles. Values are a matter of whim, of caprice, of chance, and any man's desire of the moment is endowed with the attribute of goodness. Each man decides his own good by whatever standards he chooses, be they sadistic or altruistic is irrelevant, they are non-the-less goods and must be honored as such. Bertrand Russell has said that:

...in a question as to whether this or that is the ultimate good there is no evidence either way; each disputant can only appeal to his own
emotions, and employ such rhetorical devices as shall arouse similar emotions in others...questions as to "values" are wholly outside the domain of knowledge. That is to say, when we assert that this or that has "value", we are giving expression to our own emotions, not to a fact which would still be true if our personal feelings were different. (1)

Now to say that a value can be imputed to any desire, any wish, any act, is to say that value is everywhere and in everything which has the same effect as saying value is nowhere and in nothing; that is, to assert that any standard will do is the same as saying that no standard is necessary. And to reduce value judgments to an involuntary squirt of adrenalin, as Mr. Russell does, neglects the fact that research in psychosomatic medicine has shown us that not all such secretions are in fact involuntary, that emotions are subject to control and direction. And as to how we are to choose between various emotions (values), what emotion (value) we ought to have, Mr. Russell does not say, and in not saying, begs the whole question of moral behavior.

If neither relative and non-absolute nor non-relative and absolute values are acceptable, then only one alternative remains.

B. Relative and Absolute Values.

Any ethical system which demands impossible behavior has already failed in its purpose of directing conduct. Values, to be effective, must be applicable to human affairs, otherwise they exist only in a closed frame of reference which

(1) Religion and Science, P. 229.
excludes real men and their problems. Before it can be said what is good, it must be known for whom it is good and in what situation, that is, we need a psychological and sociological knowledge of man before we can make statements concerning what he ought to do in any particular situation. Dewey and Mead are both tireless in their justifiably reiterated insistence that each problem-situation requires its own special analysis, and each involves its own values. In their own words:

We must find the interpretation of moral consciousness within the act. The appeal to a moral order which transcends either metaphysically or temporally the moral situation, the besetting assumption of the moralist that a moral reconstruction can be made intelligible only by a perfect moral order from which we have departed, or to which we are moving, have very grave practical consequences...these assumptions rob our moral consciousness of the intellectual interest which belongs to them of right. If morality connotes merely conformity to a given order, our intellectual reaction is confined to the recognition of agreement and disagreement, beyond that the moral reaction can only be emotional and instinctive. (1)

...the pragmatic import of the logic of individualized situations, each having its irrereplaceable good and principle, is to transfer the attention of theory from preoccupation with general conceptions to the problem of developing effective methods of inquiry. (2)

Before a man can decide how to act in a new situation, he first has to know what his potential actions are, that is,

(1) Mead, G. H., The Philosophical Basis of Ethics, P. 319.
(2) Dewey, John, Reconstruction in Philosophy, P. 170.
he needs knowledge of his functional capacity, and the search for this knowledge takes him into all the specialized sciences dealing with human personality: anthropology, sociology, psychology, medicine, and so on. The more he knows of himself, the better is he able to decide what conduct is best for him to follow: values are relative to the functional characteristics of the human organism.

However, knowing all the possibilities of action does not in itself give information as to which of the possibilities ought to be chosen. What is looked for in a moral enquiry is an imperative stating clearly "you ought to do this", and preferably an imperative which is categorical (in the Kantian sense) from which all minor imperatives could be deduced. If this were found, the moral problem would be resolved merely to discovering techniques of finding out how in fact to obey the general categorical imperative when specific questions of conduct arose. Such an imperative would be the most fundamental part of any system of ethics, and, therefore, the most difficult part to prove conclusively. It is even, perhaps, not too much to suggest that a categorical imperative can never be "proved", that since it is so basic it must be assumed, because of the support of various reasons which indicate, but do not prove, its validity. In the same way that scientists once assumed the existence of the "ether", and now assume the existence of the electron, so might a student of morals assume a certain categorical imperative on the strength of his general knowledge of the human organism and its social world.
Once assumed, the implications of the imperative could be traced and a moral system evolved and subjected to as many tests as ingenuity could devise.

The assumed imperative in this paper is that we ought to be healthy, healthy in the broadest meaning of a full development of our functional capacities. The values obtained from following this imperative would be both relative and absolute: relative to the characteristics of the human organism and its environment, yet absolute in that in any specific situation one course would stand out from all the possibilities as being that which entails the fullest expression of the personality. The reasons which seem to indicate this imperative are, first, the misery, discontentment and inefficiency which characterizes the individual whose functioning is psychologically unsound (weighed down with guilt, fear, etc.) and secondly, the seeming social necessity for health: if we are to survive as a social group it is incumbent upon individuals not to function inadequately, e.g. not to be emotionally aroused by the most ungrounded of rumors, or to alternately obey and assert without question, and so on. Thirdly, we know that we are biological organisms, and, using this fact as a starting point, it would appear that our destiny, or call it what you will, is somehow bound up in the adequate expression of ourselves as organisms.
2. Impulse and Act.

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow.


...it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment.

Aristotle, Ethica Nichomachea.

The abstraction of impulse and act from the complex of behavior presented by an active self is not the only method of personality analysis, but it is one of the most illuminating. Within and without the human organism changes are always going on. In Heraklitean language, you cannot step into the same river twice. Physiological imbalances occur constantly which require new covert and overt behavior to temporarily establish equilibrium, environmental factors shift and so demand new internal and external orientation of the organism, which in turn call up new acts. Interaction is continuous. Impulses require that something be done about them, but exactly what should be done is often left for us to decide, and therein lies our responsibility for our own well-being, and alternatively, our opportunity to do ourselves detriment.

A. Repression.

Impulses can never be satisfied once and for all time. The demands they make are recurrent, which is to say equilibrium is a rare condition for the organism—if it is ever at all attained; the real essence of the self is rather to be found in the shifting phases of a cycle of yearning-searching-
satisfying. We want food and so busy ourselves getting it, we have an idea that must find expression, and the world receives a *Faust* or a Parthenon and so on *ad libitum*. We never stop fulfilling our impulses, because to do so is to begin to die.

But the fulfilment apparently indicated by many of our impulses seems to call for behavior which imperils either the welfare of the organism as a whole, or that of other persons. Particularly is this so in the case of those "anti-social" or perverse impulses which Freud discovered abounding in everyone's unconscious mind, that is, below the threshold of conscious awareness, yet capable of influencing overt behavior. Even given a decent impulse carrying social approval we seem often unable to keep ourselves from making a mess of things and blundering along into all manner of messes. Somehow we have a propensity for beginning jubilantly and ending miserably, albeit with the best of intentions. Chiefly for these reasons, many ethical thinkers have denied the propriety of impulse satisfaction. Through the ages ascetics have tried, with varying degrees of personal success, to obviate the danger lying within the impulse by negating the validity of the whole impulse-act process. We respect these men, we look up to them as being somehow near divinity. Why? Partly because we realize their struggle to attain renunciation for themselves, but more because we suspect that these saints are somehow right, that impulse is in some way bad. Freud's
later work confirms asceticism. After laying bare the tumultuous profusion of wretched things that the average human secretly wished to do, Freud found it necessary in accounting for the obvious fact that "culture" does exist within this welter of antisociality, to declare "instinct" antithetical to culture. We cannot, according to the theory of renunciation, be civilized until we recognize and reject our base instincts and utilize the energy we would otherwise have expended in attaining their satisfaction in such desirable pursuits as bridge building, picture painting, creating atomic bombs, cosmetics, indoor plumbing, and so forth. Psychoanalytic sociology at this stage conceives of "human nature" as basically untrustworthy, chaotic, evil, something to be forcibly held in check by consciously denying its shabby demands and throwing ourselves instead into the creation of an artificial civilization. Logically, the course of this argument is valid, but the premiss from which it springs is false. Our unconscious is indeed filled with all manner of sordid impulses ranging from rape to murder, but, and the point cannot be overemphasized, these "instincts", sogenannt, are not basic, not primary; they do not represent the type of function for which our structure calls. Antisocial or perverse

Freud's early discoveries showed unequivocally that sexual repression makes people sick and incapable of work (cultural achievement). This brought a storm of protest and condemnation: Freud's "antimoralism" was the most potent weapon of his early opponents. Even partial acceptance of his theory did not come until the formulation of the rejection hypothesis, which removed the "threat to culture", that is, to the patriarchal authoritarian culture.
behavior springs from secondary pathological drives which derive from suppression of natural impulses. We have to dig deep within personality to find its essence. At one depth we discover that our respectable overt behavior sits precariously on a rather gruesome foundation of savage and distorted impulses. Freud went this far and stopped, assuming that he had reached the bed rock of human nature. Others, notably Wilhelm Reich, have gone deeper, to discover that Freud's melee of antisocial impulses arise only when the natural function of the human organism is twisted and inhibited by the varied suppressions of an authoritarian culture.

If Freud's conception of natural impulse were true, morality would have no choice but to become a device for the suppression of dangerous instincts. And the Freudian analysis does largely apply to modern character-structure as it is found today in western culture. Our morality is repressive, concerned with keeping an ugly "human nature" from asserting itself. Its failures are commonplace in our criminal records, its successes produce personalities analogous to a valveless steam boiler with a makeshift patch in its armor—the successes of authoritarian ethics are found to be neurotic. As long as human nature remains as it is, repressive morality is necessary, and with it the two alternatives for conduct: criminal act or neurosis.

(1) An analogy not without physiological basis. The feeling of "bursting" is a part of the symptomatology of masochism.
Repression in our society is most vividly illustrated in the multitudinous forms of sex-negation. One of the cornerstones of Freudian psychoanalysis is the theory of sublimation, whereby sex energy is largely denied its natural release (the mishandling of which leads too frequently to disastrous complications, since the average western adult is orgastically impotent) and is instead diverted into various sorts of "work", cultural achievement being conceived not as a joyous creative expression, but as a second alternative to the folly of libertinism, something we must force ourselves to do against our "instincts". Now, libidinous energy is quite literally energy, and it has been shown (Reich) that its discharge can only adequately occur orgastically, where there is complete surrender to involuntary contractions in the acme of the sexual act, furthermore, that satisfactory release of tension is a prerequisite, not an obstacle to work. We have grown accustomed to think of sublimation without asking by what physiological mechanism it occurs: we accept the idea that sex activity--discharge of energy--can be replaced

(1) Freud's conception of 'libido' was figurative: from observations of behavior he inferred a dynamic energetic basis for sex-activity, and, therefore, postulated a type of energy peculiarly sexual. His critics were quick to seize upon this postulation and criticize it as being an unproven fact, forgetting that Freud's procedure is as legitimate as the physicist's assumption of the electron as a basis underlying observable phenomena. Freud appended to his assumption the warning that psychoanalysis must someday be placed on a biological foundation, and in this direction Reich has measured libido as physiological bioelectric energy.

(vide Function of the Orgasm, vol. 1)
with the writing of sonnets, but how uncritically would we acquiesce to a theory which proposed that eating activity—intake of energy—should be replaced with the reading of sonnets? Sublimation can be considered valid only if it can be shown that repression, which must precede it, is either necessary, or at least desirable, and further, that diversion is a physiological possibility. I do not believe that either of these can be demonstrated clinically. Burke once said that laws, like houses, lean on one another...In this instance, the "law" of sublimation exists only as a prop to support the "law" of repression, and neither is tenable.

The ascetic argument, and consequently the ascetic morality, has been invalidated by knowledge of human functioning. "Human nature" has been wrongly assessed; we have built our codes of conduct on a fallacious estimate of the beings for whom they were formulated, and the price in human suffering has been beyond imagination. At one time individual irrationalism did not matter, except to the person himself. In our world today, the neurosis of any one of us is a threat to the lives of every other member of society. We have a choice between neurosis and rationality, and the decision may lead either to extinction as a social group or to such a life of reason as Lucretius said would give a man "equality with heaven".

B. Direction and Discrimination.

If it be agreed that inward repression of the impulse-act cycle is untenable, there still remains the problem
"How shall the outward expression of impulses proceed?" The denial of repression does not imply mere submission to the demands of impulse as they chance to arise, although many have held that it does. Throughout history, misinformed proponents of puritan morality have thunderously promulgated the theory that mankind has only two alternatives, asceticism or libertinism. Such an extremist view omits all consideration of that one characteristic of man which makes him human—his capacity for symbolic reasoning on a complex level.

If impulses succeeded one another in regular sequence the problem of attaining their satisfaction would be simplified to choosing which action would give the fullest expression to each impulse as it occurred. But such is never the case, our complexity allows us such a multiplicity of impulses that action becomes more and more complicated, more difficult to initiate and to carry through to completion. Often we find ourselves confronted with such a variety of wishes as to make it seem that whatever is done cannot begin to compensate for what must be given up. Usually our despair in these circumstances is simply a result of being in too great a hurry; when we stop and think conflicts begin to resolve, incompatibilities disappear. We consider, and in considering discover that many previously discordant impulses may be directed and coordinated in one harmonious act. Out of the chaos of inner drives arises an organized plan to give each its place in an integrated course of behavior. If all this is commonplace in human experience, it is none the less
The interpolation of intelligent thought between impulse and act makes possibly the uniquely human richness of experience which derives from behavior involving the integration of varied impulses within one coherent act. Conduct becomes good when intelligence directs the form which consumption takes, with reference to the whole organism.

C. **Altruism.**

Reasonable behavior can never be selfish behavior, if by "selfish" is meant personal benefit at the cost of harm to others. Theorists of egoism, or selfishness in action, from Callicles to Nietsche have based their conclusions on the mistaken assumption that gain to one implies loss to another. Intelligent action, however, involving as it does reference to the entire organism, necessarily involves other organisms as well, because each self is a social self. As Robert Briffault has pointed out in discussing Nietsche, "from the moment the will to power of the individual seeks to realize itself at the expense and to the detriment of others, it defeats the very objects for which it strives". In hurting others we hurt ourselves: this truth has appeared time and time again since men began to think. We find it expressed in men as far removed as Christ and Kropotkin, Socrates and Schlick, but almost nowhere do we find it taken as a guide to conduct. Man is everywhere in more than economic chains.

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(1) *The Making of Humanity.*
cannot reason well enough to fit the world into which he is born, in stupidity and ignorance lies the folly of modern man, and until such time when his intelligence fits the social situations to which it must be applied, he will be neither good nor happy. Conversely, when he becomes intelligent he will have won his world, and himself.
3. **Structure and Function.**

...an electron within a living body is different from an electron outside it, by reason of the plan of the body, ... and this plan includes the mental state.


...our mind has something analogous to an irrational soul. The power of comprehension, however, is peculiar to mind, and the rational power is perhaps common also to the more divine natures, but peculiar, among mortal beings, to man.

*Philo Judaeus.*

**A. Function and Existence.**

When we see an object by the roadside having wheels, fenders, bumpers, headlights, and so on, we say that we are seeing an automobile. But we are speaking loosely. What we do **see** is an aggregate of metals, rubbers, glass, enamel and other materials which are collectively able to **become** an automobile when someone sets it in operation. It comes into existence as an **automobile** when it begins to function. Similarly with humans. We have a structure, not of alloys but of protein ordered into organs, bones, skin, etc., yet this structure is not human, not living, unless the integral whole can function. Function begins for the individual when two germ cells unite, it stays with the structure of the organism for a few decades and then ceases to be, as mysteriously as any "spirit" ever left a primitive body. Structure alone, matter without the potentiality of function, is death; function, on the other hand, is what we are concerned with when we consider the phenomenon of life.
All measures of life are measures of function. Structure provides the ordered substance which functions and so limits the field within which action can occur, but within the broad bounds set by structure, human function can take whatever course intelligence decides for it. Moreover, there is a significant interplay between the two: structure may limit function, but function in turn can alter structure, providing the ground out of which new action can occur. It is significantly characteristic of human life that this last part of the reciprocal interplay reaches a degree found in no other organism; unlike animals man can consciously alter (or, regrettably, distort) his structure to provide for a desired type of function.

The significance for ethics of a functional approach to life is that it requires rejection of the conception that ideas are some sort of entity which may be handled as things, dropped at will into a recipient mind-box and removed from their repository merely by opening the lid and blowing away the cobwebs. It is not so easy as that. Ideas involve the whole body. We think with our musculature just as much as with our brain. We can, and often do, achieve a new outlook on a verbal level—an 'intellectual emancipation'—but to what avail if the rest of our body thinks differently, and in a crisis, acts differently? There are no atheists in foxholes—unless all bodily organization and orientation is involved; the verbal level breaks down in stress unless it is maintained by the unified physiological functioning of the
system as a whole.

There is a relation between ethics and physiology. (1) Psyche and soma are functionally identical. When an individual is repeatedly subjected to verbalized ideas, particularly during the plastic period of infancy and childhood, these ideas become physiologically imbedded within his organism. Once this physical anchoring occurs, thinking in the future takes place along the lines of the original personality-forming ideology. It cannot deviate unless the physiological tensions which sustain it are broken down. Of course, in a world of changing situations these tensions do partially disintegrate, but only partially, which inevitably creates a conflict more inimical to the unity of the individual than the rigid thinking which is replaced. Half the personality thinks thus, half so, and who is to say which is best?

Empirically, psychosomatic functional identity is demonstrable. Therapy of individuals whose rigidity of personality-structure is such as to make them incapable of adequate social or personal functioning can be directed towards either psyche or soma. If the former is the point of attack, tonic muscular contractions will be observably discharged, if the latter, long forgotten but still functional ideas will be


Reich, W., *Biophysical Functionalism and Mechanistic Natural Science*, ibid, I, 97ff. (1942.)
liberated. We can get at ideology through physiology, or (1) vice versa.

**B. Emancipation.**

After a certain point is reached in the evolutionary sequence man begins to become increasingly aware of himself as a self, and concomitant with this is the development of an ability to reason symbolically. Behind this new function lies the structure which makes reason possible, the cerebrum. "The frontal lobe", says Crile:

> is the director of civilization. The frontal lobe is constantly changing the wild man's mechanism by building up the reason of civilized man, for although the frontal lobe cannot change the protoplasm of inheritance the frontal lobe can change the individual. It cannot change the phylogeny, but it can change the ontogeny. (2)

It is the emergence of cerebral hemispheres which transforms human function and sets the stage for a history that is not of necessity mechanistically determined.

Against my argument there are two criticisms commonly offered. One states that man is not in any way unique, the other that even though his capacity for symbolic reasoning is unique, it is of no importance since reason is merely an additional means for attaining ends determined blindly by will.

Ever since Darwin and his successors began to be misunderstood it has become increasingly difficult to appear

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(2) *Diseases Peculiar to Civilized Man*. P. 23.
sophisticated—or perhaps pseudo-sophisticated would be a more fitting term—unless, with the proper blend of cynicism and worldliness one is able to say that man is, after all, *only* an animal*. Rousseau even went so far as to say "a thinking man is a depraved animal". This sort of nonsense is heard so often that it may be wondered if the whole attitude is not merely a rationalization to explain away the lack of thought on the part of its expositors. Man's structure is homologous, but his function either only analogous or else incomparable, to that of his animal precursors. In particular, the development of cerebral hemispheres and the accompanying expansion of foetalization is in man a process not differing from that of other species except in degree, but this difference in amount of pedomorphism provides for a completely different type of function. From being incapable of self-conscious symbolic thought he has become potentially and actually a reasoning organism, and in so doing he has also become human. *A thinking man is the only man.*

The philosophy of voluntarism presents a far more serious criticism of the position that intelligence can direct the mode of action flowing from impulse. Schopenhauer places will (meaning volition, desires, instinctive urges, impulses) as the basic force in a thoroughly non-rational world. Blind will drives on, forever seeking expression but finding only ennui in its fleeting satisfactions, consequently, we who are manifestations of will spend our lives alternately in the torture of yearning or the boredom of spent effort, from which
there is no escape. In evidence to support the primacy of will over intellect, Schopenhauer offers the idea that, since man has evolved from an animal background, acquiring intelligence late in the process, will, which is prior in time, must therefore be supreme. Reason, the late-comer must take a subordinate position and be utilized for the development of means suitable for attaining ends dictated by will. The weakness in this argument is confusion of temporal priority with intrinsic superiority. Reason follows impulse historically, but it certainly is not therefore weaker: it would be as logical to assume a preeminence for our residual gills over our lungs.

In refuting the primacy of will it is not necessary to attempt to establish a primacy of intellect opposed to impulse. Intelligence and impulse need not be antithetical, at war with one another because of differing claims on the total personality. Once more, interaction is the key. Symbolic thought helps us tell what best action to follow in the pursuit of impulse satisfaction, but, far from being a slave to impulse, can alter the very personality structure within which impulse has its origin and being.

C. Criteria of Function.

In the *Ethica Nichomachea* Aristotle declares that good actions are those performed by good men. In the same work a good man is defined as one who consistently performs good actions. The tautology is inescapable in any ethical system which is normative, abstracting moral principles from
socially sanctioned behavior without realizing the assumption involved. Aristotelian ethics are fundamentally an affirmation of the Athenian way of life, just as Kantian ethics later exalted the moral norms of his particular culture into a Categorical Imperative, held to be independent of individual members of the society from which it was abstracted. Both are valid only on the underlying assumption that existent types of behavior are somehow ultimate. The Utilitarian theory that the greatest good is the greatest happiness for the greatest number collapses, as G. E. Moore has clearly shown in his *Principia Ethica*, because there is no method of measuring happiness, nor of knowing what present actions do in fact produce the greatest amount of happiness in a largely unknowable future. Practically, the Utilitarians are forced to assume socially acceptable opinions anent the constitution of "happiness". Similarly, hedonism must always be based on approved sorts of pleasure, sensual or intellectual.

The criticism of ethics based on social censure and approval is simply that "culture patterns" cannot be trusted. "Society" plunges its members into neurosis or slavery just as readily as into sanity or freedom, because social opinion is largely independent of intelligence. Consequently, ethics stemming from the established ideology of a community can only hope for the best—the foundation may be excellent, it may be worthless. Whenever we impute value to what chances to exist, we are acting dangerously.

There are standards of behavior which do not depend on
a mathematical abstraction from behavior as it chances to be at a given time in a specific cultural setting. We need no longer adhere to the Aristotelian generic concept in our investigations of human behavior. In the last half century, medical research has been intent on the problem of elucidating the relationships between structure and function, finding the potentialities of function, the relation between function and dysfunction, and more recently, the influence of cultural (institutional) impacts upon individual function. The results of these investigations have been of vast significance for ethical thought. We are beginning to realize what behavioral demands can and cannot be made of the human organism, and what demands the healthy human can make of his institutions. These standards of function which are arising out of research in psychiatry and similar fields are in a sense, absolute for human life as it is now. I mean that in intelligently estimating the human organism and deciding what its conduct shall be, the ethical attitude of the individual should include knowledge of what are the capacities and limitations of the individual, otherwise he will likely ask the impossible of his body. This takes the criteria of behavior out of the complex of existent behavior and locates judgment within the field of possibilities of behavior, that is, we assess behavior not merely on the evidence of what man has done, but on what he can do. We would consider anyone insane who seriously suggested that future man must adapt to a submarine environment, yet a shocking number of our social
(legal-ethical-institutional) rules call for a behavior for which man is structurally not adapted and to which he can adjust only at the expense of functioning poorly, that is, of being ill. Moreover, as well as being subjected to a cultural environment containing many irrational elements, man in turn acts on much of his environment in a thoroughly irrational manner, that is, he mis-functions.

Edwin B. Holt has studied the ethical implications of Freudian psychoanalysis and reached a similar conclusion to that held by George Herbert Mead, who wrote "thinking is a process by means of which we do not simply put one value over against another; it is a process by means of which we can conserve, as far as possible, all the values involved". Conduct, according to Holt, is good when we discriminate between opposing choices of behavior so as to integrate them all into a harmonious course of action. In his own words:

We can now see how and why suppressions occur... It is through lack of knowledge. Our first contact with objects presents us with anomalies, contradictions, perplexities. Until further experience teaches us to discriminate further particulars within these objects, we shall be in some degree the victims of suppression, and our conduct will be to the same extent equivocal, immoral...(2) Right is that conduct, attained through discrimination of facts, which fulfills all of a man's wishes at once, suppressing none. (3)

(1) Philosophy of the Act. P. 463.
(2) The Freudian Wish and its Place in Ethics. P. 128.
(3) Ibid, P. 130.
This position, with which I am in full agreement, has been criticized severely by W. E. Hocking:

The psycho-analyst begins with a condition judged hygienically bad, namely the mental disorder. If this disorder is caused by a repression of wishes then repression must be judged to be extrinsically bad. Professor Holt translates this clinical judgment into an ethical judgment: repression is morally bad. This condemnation of repression is the characteristic common element in the two value systems. But why is this repression morally bad? The judgment, I take it, does not depend, through a utilitarian first premiss, upon the fact that repression may cause mental disorder. It seems to depend rather on the judgment that the condition of repression is one already out of normal relation to the facts of the world. The implied first premiss is that there is a natural relation to these facts, and that this natural relation is "somehow right"...Is Professor Holt perhaps treading dangerously near that view from which Thorndike has recently so solemnly warned us—the view that original human nature, as a bundle of wishes, is always right? (1)

In opposition to this criticism I first submit that a clinical judgment can, indeed, must be translated into an ethical judgment. Otherwise, what is the basis for therapy? Disease is bad. Health—structural and functional adequacy for life—is good. This is so fundamental that argument seems superfluous. Mental disorders are malfunctions, and are consequently of equal concern to clinician and ethical

(2) On second thought, I am reminded that the medical-legal fight against venereal disease was once opposed on the "moral" grounds that disease in this case was good, being God's just punishment for "sin" (vide Hodann, History of Modern Morals. P. 88ff).
philosopher: both seek to establish proper function, "proper" being defined with reference to the best of our knowledge of human functioning at any time. Secondly, repression is indeed "out of normal relation to the facts of the world". Motorcycles cannot swim, nor can man grandiosely declare severance from odious "facts of the world" and call himself an angel. Man is Man--this most obvious of truisms is too often ignored by ethical thinkers who prefer to construct man from their own imaginations rather than his physiology. In a scientific sense there is a natural relation between man's structure and his function, and to call this "wrong" is nonsence, to call it "right" is superfluous. To elucidate it is sensible--and ethical, and when we do investigate the relation we find that repression is a denial of what is basic in man, a negation of life itself. As such, it is evil. Of course, at the basis of the argument is the fear of man's "bundle of wishes" improperly construed as perverse. With this misinterpretation of human nature I have already dealt.
Chapter Three.

MALFUNCTION AND ETHICS.

1. Normality and Pathology.

...if the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul:...and the cure has to be effected by the use of certain charms, and these charms are fair words.

Plato, Charmides.

A. Incidence of Neurosis.

"On any given day nearly one percent of our population, about 1,300,000 people, are incapacitated by mental disease, mental defect, epilepsy, or other types of mental illness. The amount of unreported mental illness and handicap can only be guessed at." So reads a Supplement to the Public Health Reports published in 1938. Another report informs us that "patients with mental disease occupy more than fifty percent of all the hospital beds in the United States".

Of these, psychogenic diseases account for two-thirds of the...


total, with a discharge rate of only nine percent. (1)

There is much to be learned from figures of this sort. Records show that the number of patients in mental institutions has been increasing over the last seventy years at a rate much greater than can be accounted for by advances in medical and social awareness of the problem of mental disorder: the percentage of the population having neurosis steadily rises. This was clearly brought to our attention during the war by the shocking number of drafted men in the American forces who were rejected from service as psychologically unfit. Moreover, when we do guess at the amount of unknown mental illness, bearing in mind that the reports we do have come from a society which is neither greatly interested nor clearly aware of the problem (evidenced in the fact that the overload on personnel of existing institutions is estimated to be seventy percent), our imaginations rebel at the possible extent of neurosis.

Of course, not all mental illness necessarily incapacit-

(1) Ibid, P. 9, 33.

(2) "Government figures released after the war showed that of 4,650,000 men rejected for all causes, 1,825,000 or 39 percent were rejected for neuropsychiatric reasons...In all 14 percent of all men who passed physical examinations were rejected at the outset after neuropsychiatric diagnosis, and we take this figure as the minimum of incidence of psycho-neurosis in American males". Lundberg and Farnham, Modern Woman, The Lost Sex, Harpers, New York, 1947, P. 414.
ates to the point where the individual must be surrendered to an institution. Many malfunctions exist which seem hardly worth bringing to the attention of overworked psychiatrists who are absorbed in more serious cases. Nevertheless, these minor abnormalities, these lesser inadequacies, are very important in the life of the person concerned. They all work towards lowering his efficiency, his achievement, his happiness, and to the extent that he is insufficiently able to carry through human activities, he becomes just that much less human. A misfunction is an affront to the potentialities resident in every man.

In considerations of this sort we are sooner or later confronted with the question 'what is "normality" and what "abnormality"'? It was until quite recently thought that a normal person in any culture was simply he who possessed the average characteristics found in his society. People were thought to be classifiable by means of a simple distribution curve with a few psychotics at one end, a few exceptionally well-integrated persons at the other, while the bulk of the

(1) Some still so define normality, e.g., John Dollard (The Psychotic Person Seen Culturally) writes: "From the sociological point of view a psychotic may be seen as one who has rejected existing social organization and developed a compensatory private version of culture." This, I think, may sometimes be true, but by no means always. Two questions appear to be relevant: How can a psychosis be defined in only cultural terms? Can physiological standards of misfunction (tonic muscular contractions, inhibition of expiration, etc.) which are functionally identical with psychic disturbances be applied irrespective of the specific culture, and still have just as much validity as a tuberculosis test?
population formed a central group of ordinary normal individuals. This, of course, reduces to the idea that normality is equivalent with adjustment to existing social institutions and acceptance of the common set of values; abnormality is simply deviation from social norms. However, as psychiatry began to discover more facts concerning the nature of neurosis and to bring under observation greater numbers of people of all classes, the thought began to emerge that earlier standards of normality had been grossly misleading, had in fact sent psychiatry up somewhat of a blind alley. Concomitant developments in cultural anthropology and sociology gave impetus and verification to a new idea: society, it appeared, did not supply the final standards by which personality was to be judged. It was now seen that socially well-adjusted people can be neurotic, if the institutions to which they are adjusted, the values to which they subscribe, are such as to produce a function distorted with respect to the individual's structure. The "average" person, in the mathematical sense of the word, can be "abnormal" in the pathological sense. In order to live up to the classical idea of a *mens sana in corpore sano*, we must have a sane society.

**B. Mass Neurosis.**

In the last few years ample evidence has been thrown before a horrified world to support the view that emotional as well as bacterial plagues can sweep through whole nations. Nazi Germany formed a clear example of a people whose majority exhibited definite symptoms of character-neurosis. The
individual Nazi was an unusually well-adjusted person, fitting into his environment without conflict of the individual versus culture type, but this adjustment, since it was made to a sick society, required a neurotic personality. His marked lack of self-confidence (fear of freedom) and correlated willingness to submerge himself in a mystic group-entity and accept leadership by a guiding father-figure (craving for authority) all point to a deep-seated functional disorganization. (1)

But while German fascism, because extreme, gives us a clarity of insight into the nature of mass neurosis, we need not look only to foreign lands for further examples. As early as 1926 Trigant Burrow wrote the following words pertaining to our own culture:

the view is experimentally warranted that nervous disorder and insanity are not restricted alone to the isolated individual but that the actual presence of demonstrable disordered mental states exists unrecognized within the social organizations that form our present day civilization. (2)

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(2) Our Mass Neurosis, P. 305. See also Bain, R., Our Schizoid Culture; Devereux, G., Maladjustment and Social Neurosis; Frank, L. K., Society as the Patient.
The blunt fact is that many of the demands made by present
day institutions are such as produce psychologically unsound
behavior patterns in the individuals who accept them. I
know of no clearer exposition of the nature and function of
these demands than that of Mr. Brock Chisholm:

For many generations we have bowed our necks
to the yoke of the conviction of sin. We have
swallowed all manner of poisonous certainties fed
us by our parents, our Sunday and day school
teachers, our politicians, our priests, our newspa­
papers and others with a vested interest in con­
trolling us...Misguided by authoritarian dogma,
bound by exclusive faith, stunted by inculcated
loyalty, torn by frantic heresy, bedevilled by
insistent schism, drugged by ecstatic experience,
confused by conflicting certainty, bewildered by
invented mystery, and loaded down by the weight
of guilt and fear engendered by its own original
promises, the unfortunate human race, deprived
by these incubi of its only defences and its only
reasons for striving, its reasoning power and its
natural urges, struggles along under its ghastly
self-imposed burden. The results, the inevitable
results, are frustration, inferiority, neurosis
and inability to enjoy living, to reason clearly
or to make a world fit to live in. (1)

2. **The Anxiety Neurosis.**

The commonest symptoms of neurosis are feelings of vague malaise or uneasiness, of not being "all there", of being mysteriously out of kilter, or of some nameless lack within oneself of sense of "halfness". These feelings all stem from unconscious **anxiety**.

*Lundberg and Farnham, Modern Woman.*

...the frank passions of youth are met with a grimace of horror on all sides, with *rumores senum severiorum*, with an insistence on reticence and hypocrisy. Such suppression is favorable to corruption...Why should the depth of his being be thus polluted, and the most delightful of nature's mysteries be an occasion not for communion with her...but for depravity and sorrow?

*Santayana, Reason in Society.*

A. **Etiology.**

The anxiety neurosis, implicit within our particular culture, becomes explicit through the educational process: indoctrination by the family, school, church, motion pictures, literature, and so on. Every individual is equipped with a repertoire of impulses which, when expressed in action, produce pleasurable feelings (particularly so in the case of vegetative functions), and these impulses remain irrepressible in that they arise constantly even though the reception they are given is frequently repressive. Many, however, are considered by society--that is, individuals whom other individuals have trained--to be "bad", "evil", "sinful", and "unnatural", although how any impulse, being part of the basis of human nature, can be unnatural is never apodictic. Consequently, the expression of these impulses receives rather
drastic treatment. Children are whipped, physically, or worse, verbally, until they comply with the demand to be "good", that is, to stop doing the things they like to do. But impulses promising pleasure are not to be squashed, they persist in arising just as blood persists in flowing, and the voices of men will not stay them. Soon the child learns to yield to impulse only when free from observation, but now, having been repeatedly reminded of his "badness", the keen edge of pleasure is dulled by fuming acids: fear of detection, shame at his own "evil" body, and guilt from his own weakness in succumbing. As a corollary, a fear of pleasure itself is soon built up, that is to say, the individual has the required basis for an anxiety neurosis which quickly pervades his entire life and becomes a part of his personality—a personality distorted to such a degree that his capacity for social functioning is grievously impaired.

B. Medical Fact and Value Judgment.

The investigators of psychiatry are concerned with obtaining facts descriptive of how the human organism functions. The medical scientist wants to discover causal sequences and establish etiologies, he wishes to find out how to predict what results must follow if certain actions are performed by the organism, and he does this by elucidating interconnections between structure and function, organism and environment, psyche and soma, and so forth. Ethics, on the other hand, is primarily interested not in factual knowledge, but in assigning values to actions. The ethical philosopher
wants to know how ought the human organism to function, what is the best sort of action to perform under certain circumstances, he seeks an understanding of the good life for man. How then are science and axiology, fact and value, related? This question reaches exceeding import in our twentieth century world, where values are in flux and facts available in unprecedented quantity.

One way in which values can be related to facts is found in the function of fact as a check on ethical conclusions, particularly when these tend to become speculative. Values, either as they appear in the moral attitude of an individual or in a philosophical system, occur as sets in which each value is related to the others. This is to say that the general results of an inquiry concerning the good life (disregarding for the moment the method by which they are obtained) are expressed in the form "it is good to do X and Y, but not Z". Once this statement is obtained we may examine our expression of values to see if they are internally consistent, to make sure that the judgment does not contain contradictory elements.

Having done this, it becomes necessary to establish a relationship between value judgment and the beings for whom it has been formulated. Consistency in itself is not enough to warrant acceptance of a value system, there must also be some sort of correspondence between values and the characteristics of those to whom the values are to be applied. It is at this point that an attempt should be made to bridge the
gap between ethics and science. We have to take our value judgment to the psychiatrist and say "here is our considered opinion as to what we think man should do--please be so good as to tell us if he can in fact do it". If a favorable answer is received, then, and only then, can we feel reasonably sure that our values will stand the test of use; on the other hand, if we should be told "if X be done, then it becomes impossible to do Y, but Z will surely follow", there is no alternative but to discard the judgment and start our investigations anew, hard though this may be. Humbleness before fact has not too often been an attribute of ethical philosophers, but where it has been attained the dividends have been rich.

If this procedure is applied to ethical systems, and to the moral ideas of average people, contradictions appear in appalling numbers. Obvious examples such as the simultaneous holding of beliefs that we should eat meat but should not have slaughterhouses are to be found wherever we look, and more subtle illustrations, while harder to find, are just as plentiful. We are forever affirming causes and repudiating their effects, and vice versa. This is typically found in connection with psychological malfunctions. In the case of the anxiety neurosis, analysis of the ethical affirmations concerned is commonly somewhat as follows:

(1) It is "right" that manifestations of infantile sexuality (ranging from pregenital oral eroticism to genital masturbation) and adolescent heterosexual activities should be severely punished and forbidden.
Our present capitalist-competitive economic system is the "best" form that social organization can take.

It is a good thing in itself and a prerequisite to a good life that individuals be healthy, able to meet all life situations with full vitality, free from the burden of guilt, fear and shame, and to generally be capable of happiness.

It may be that the person holding this set of values, or the system advocating them, can produce seemingly very sound reasons in their defence, yet, when they are checked against the factual results of scientific investigation (in this case psychiatry and sociology) it becomes apparent that the group cannot validly be applied, since the activities implied by the first two of these value assertions are causally connected with the opposite of the third. This being so, it is clear that at least one of the values is false in its application and must be abandoned. It is, however, important to note that science used in this manner does NOT indicate which statements are false and which valid, it states only that we cannot at the same time hold them all. Hence we are forced to admit that somewhere in the process leading to our conclusions there is a serious mistake.

While the use of science as an indispensable factor in eliminating inconsistencies in ethical thought is of considerable utility, its function in this manner is negative, it points out where we are wrong but does not correct the mistake. The query now comes up "is it possible to take advantage of the efficient organization of knowledge which we call science as a positive directing agency in ethical
enquiries"? The answer, I think, is affirmative.

Probably few would disagree with the most obvious case of scientific knowledge serving as an ethical tool, which may be simply stated by saying that once ethical enquiry has decided upon a particular end, then the factual knowledge of science comes into use as a means for attaining that end. But in addition to this, I think that scientific investigation can give definite knowledge concerning what specific ends are good, what actions are morally desirable. This is particularly so in the field of psychiatry.

If it be granted that health, in its broadest meaning of functional efficiency, is a prerequisite to a good life, that the outstanding characteristic of a good man is a psychologically sound functional expression of his body's physical and mental capacities, then psychiatric research is the method by which adequate modes of expression are discovered. This is to say, psychiatry determines which individual ends will stand the test of the guiding ethical principle, and

(1) It is interesting to note that this might lead to a condemnation of the pursuit of certain other scientific investigations. It is conceivable, for instance, that psychological fact might indicate that a person engaged in research pertaining to the lethal power of poison gases or the development of other more efficient ways of killing men, is acting in a psychologically abnormal fashion—not because of anything inherent in the objects under investigation, but because of an evident callousness or unconcern of the investigator with reference to the end to which his work is directed. In this way, ethics, using one science (the "science of man") as a criterion of individual behavior, would, through its appraisal and consequent censure or approbation of the individual's activities, effect the course which other sciences (the "sciences of things") would take.
also indicates the means by which these ends are accomplished. The result of the application of this method to the sample malfunction outlined earlier, (which is only one amongst many), is easy to foresee. Having established the fact that the anxiety neurosis is a serious contradiction to the ethical principle of functional development, and knowing the etiological factors productive of the neurosis, it is then incumbent upon ethics to direct its attention towards these impediments and make their alteration a moral aim. If ethics were to do this, to attack the roots of individual malfunction wherever they may be found, it would discover itself to have engaged in a truly immense undertaking. Irrational elements so permeate our individual and institutional structures that ethics would soon be immersed in a thoroughgoing personal and social purgation, the success of which, if attained, would mark a turning point in the history of mankind.
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