

like grocers' merchandise; I cannot admit that it is a kind of mathematical conundrum.*

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“RATIONAL HEDONISM”—A REJOINER.

MR. MACKENZIE complains of the ambiguity of the definition of pleasure upon which I rely, and says that if I take *feeling* in Dr. Ward's sense, the definition in question involves *petitio principii*, because “it is a disputed point whether feeling in that sense is ever judged to be desirable at all.” *Feeling*, in Dr. Ward's sense, is simply pleasure and pain; and I accept the word in that sense, only explaining that it is concrete pleasantness of conscious states which I regard as the ethical end, and not any “abstract” and isolated constituent of consciousness which, though *distinguishable* (and necessarily distinguished in thought and language) from the other constituents, is not *separable* from them. (Similarly *beauty* is an artistic end, though not realizable apart from paint and canvas, etc.)†

It seems to me that certain ethical writers do most undoubtedly lay down that pleasant feeling in this sense is desirable, and pain undesirable. Indeed, is not the fundamental complaint of “Idealist” against Hedonist moralists this, that the Hedonists *do* judge pleasant feeling and absence of painful feeling to be the ultimately desirable end of action? Is it not, for instance, beyond dispute that Bentham and Herbert Spencer believe this? And the same is true of Clarke and Butler, who are generally classed as Intuitionists. Could anything be more unequivocal than Butler's assertion

* On the difficulty involved in reducing intensive magnitude to extensive (with special reference to psychical intensities) I may refer to Münsterberg's “Beiträge zur Experimentellen Psychologie,” Heft 3, pp. 4-5.

† When it is said: feeling is pleasure and pain, pleasure means desirable feeling, the good or end means what is ultimately desirable, and the good or end is pleasure—a *Circulus* is avoided; and what the final statement amounts to is *not* a definition, but the synthetic proposition that what is *ultimately and intrinsically* desirable is desirable *feeling*. Pleasure is defined (or described) by Mr. Mackenzie as “a sort of unreasoned choice.” This appears to me to bring pleasure under the heads of Intellect and Will; and to be highly disputable, and it is not the same thing as saying (as he does elsewhere) that pleasure is a sense (or immediate apprehension) of value.

that "our ideas of happiness* and misery are of all our ideas the most important to us;" that we cannot *justify* to ourselves any pursuit "till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it"? And passages might be multiplied from Bentham, from Spencer, and from many others. Indeed, Mr. Mackenzie seems to imply a *general* recognition of *pleasure* as valuable when he says ("Social Philosophy," p. 227), "The idea that pleasure is our end is the most obstinate of all our preconceptions." And when he allows (as I understand him to do) in this discussion that "the concrete happiness of mankind" is a pre-eminently worthy aim, I do not see in what important respect his end differs from that of the Utilitarian. And when Carlyle says ("Sartor Resartus," Bk. II., Ch. 9), "What is this that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of? Say it in a word: is it not because thou art not *happy*?" does he not imply that happiness is an end which has been judged desirable?

Mr. Mackenzie goes on, "there are senses in which the term 'feeling' may be used. Again, why should it be said that feeling is *judged*? Do the lower animals *judge*?" No doubt "feeling" (like other words) may be used in many senses; but unless a writer may choose in which of several current senses he will use it, he can hardly hope to make his meaning intelligible. My reason for saying that *feeling is judged*, is simply that judgment is necessary to evaluation and that judgment of feeling appears to be an extremely common fact. Surely, if we are considering and estimating life, *feeling* as a constituent of conscious life naturally becomes a subject of judgment. Whether, and how far, the "lower animals" judge, I do not know, though I think that, *e.g.*, a flogged spaniel's terror of the whip looks like the outcome of a judgment that pain is to be avoided. But that *men* judge, and judge feeling, and frequently judge of pleasure and pain as desirable or undesirable (and rightly so judge), I feel unable to doubt. And if, as Mr. Mackenzie says, "a Stoic judges pleasure to be indifferent, or an ascetic judges it to be undesirable," do not the ascetic and the Stoic "judge feeling"?

Mr. Mackenzie objects to an appeal to "the consciousness of the sentient (and rational) individual at the time of feeling," and

* For Clarke and Butler (as in current usage), *happiness* means pleasure, or surplus of pleasure over pain.

asks, "What does 'and rational' mean?" I meant it to emphasize the fact that in inquiring into human good, we are inquiring into the good of creatures both sensitive and "rational," and that it is only in as far as possessed of reason that comparison and judgment are possible to any being.

To the question, "What are we to do, if (as in the case of the ascetic) sense and reason seem to be opposed?" I reply that there appears to me to be here an implication that "sense" partakes of reason; and that the opposition supposed must be understood to be between this and *right* reason, which is assumed to condemn the implicit judgment of the *desirableness* of pleasure. As to the meaning of *desirable*, I answer that by it I mean what *ought to be desired*, what it is *rational* to desire. This seems to me to be the ordinary and obvious meaning; and to the next question I should reply that I believe it to be quite possible to "enjoy pleasure" unreflectively.* I cannot see that the difficulties haunting the terms "judgment" and "desirable" are avoided by the substitution of "sense," meaning (I think) discriminative apprehension, and of "value," which implies the quality of desirableness.

Mr. Mackenzie next objects that I identify *cause of pleasure* with *object of pleasure*. I certainly think that there can be no pleasure without an object, and I see no reason for refusing to call such an object a *cause*. If not, what is the precise place and function of the object? Has it, or has it not, any inseparable connection with the pleasure? But I do not wish to insist upon strict antecedence and consequence between cause and effect. I am quite content (and indeed prefer) to speak of the necessary "object" as *cause or concomitant*; but I do not think that the applicability of *cause* can be denied in all cases except where there is antecedence in time, one phenomenon (effect) persisting when the other (cause) is removed. In fact such a separation is arbitrary, and (if taken quite strictly) impracticable. Fire is a *cause* of heat, a lighted candle a cause of illumination; but need the effect *persist* when the cause is extinguished?

I should, however, completely agree with Mr. Mackenzie that

* If, however, pleasure is a *choice* (as Mr. Mackenzie says further on), can there be pleasure without explicit judgment, and what exactly would be meant by saying that we enjoy a *choice*? And if pleasure means a *sort of choice*, and desire (*cf. post*) means *simply choice*, pleasure would seem to be a *species* of the *genus* desire, and desire itself seems to be a movement of volition.

pleasure without an "object" is as chimerical as the smile without the cat (however much it may be the smile that attracts us). I think this is indicated even in the sentence quoted at this stage from my article: "Surely it is this quality *in them* [the pleasant or pleasure-producing quality] which we are thinking of and which recommends *them* to us."

With regard to the next point, Mr. Mackenzie has himself said, without qualification, that "Pleasure is not a distinguishable element in our constitution" ("Social Philosophy," p. 222); but I am ready to accept his disclaimer of the most obvious meaning of that statement, and I agree with all that he says about abstractness at this stage. Indeed, I could go further than he does and affirm that *whatever* we say is an abbreviation. No doubt when we seek truth, it is truth within some region more or less circumscribed (as when we seek happiness, it is happiness within some region more or less definitely indicated); but if we knew beforehand "in what particular statements the truth sought would turn out to be embodied," we should, of course, know it already, and should have no need to seek it.

When Mr. Mackenzie goes on to say that what he denies is that truth and beauty are *separable* elements in our experience, I am again quite in agreement; and it is from this point of view that I have observed (p. 84 of my article) that "we can distinguish in thought and words, qualities or groups of qualities without asserting or implying that they have any 'real existence' *except as constituents of a concrete complex.*" With reference to the note about Carlyle, I find that Mr. Mackenzie says, on page 203 of his "Introduction to Social Philosophy," that Carlyle "was quite willing to allow that what seemed to him the highest good for men might fairly be characterized as 'blessedness';" and the context seems to show that "blessedness" in this connection, is supposed to include a "sense of pleasure or enjoyment."

Mr. Mackenzie's actual statement here appears to me to be a perfectly fair and natural inference from the passage in "Sartor Resartus" to which he is alluding, though probably Carlyle would refuse to allow that "blessedness" is at all equivalent to *pleasure* in the narrow sense in which he himself uses pleasure. I do not, however, feel called upon to attach any special weight to Carlyle's utterances concerning Ethics; I know no reason for regarding him as an authority in matters either of ethical theory or ethical practice; and even if he were, his expressions are often much too violent and

exaggerated to be taken literally. My answer to Mr. Mackenzie's question at the end of the note would be that I believe the consciousness of doing right to be always pleasant (and of doing wrong to be always painful).

With regard to the difficulty of summing units of pleasure, there need be no hesitation in admitting that a precise unit of feeling has yet to be formulated and accepted. But a valuable Hedonic calculus may exist, and, in fact, does exist, without this,—as economic exchange may have existed and did exist before the adoption of a definite and fixed monetary unit;* and there are calculuses existing and used in many other regions of thought and practice, in which it would be difficult to point to an exact and definite unit. It is not easy to measure even such striking objects of sense as sound and light and color; and, in the case of so-called "economic" values, it seems to me that we are driven back, whether or no, upon hedonistic considerations; also that Economists either recognize this or completely fail to assign any ultimate concrete content to the notion of value. Suppose, for instance, that (with a most distinguished English economist) we take "the development of the higher activities of the soul" as "the only reasonable aim of life" (ECONOMIC JOURNAL, vol. iii., p. 388), as that which is ultimately worth having, and by reference to which utility must be estimated. It is clear that the whole question of man's reasonable end remains completely vague, for an ultimate standard other than Hedonic, by which to test the relative worth of different psychic activities is yet to seek. Rational Hedonism, on the other hand, can not only include and justify the loftiest aspirations, but can also explain their significance, and point to their ultimate content. It is no part of the doctrine of Rational Hedonism either that pleasure is always the *proximate* end of reasonable action, or that it is only a man's own pleasure or happiness which it is reasonable for him to seek; and the end accepted by Rational Hedonism does not exclude the pleasure of "satisfied reason," or of the consciousness of well-doing.

Consider, again, the way out of the difficulty which Mr. Mackenzie suggests in the region of Ethics, namely, reference to the choice of "the best men." This is only pushing the difficulty a

* And is not money itself essentially only "counters," a conventional symbol of value? Is it not generally valuable only because it can be exchanged for other things?

little further back, and, indeed, rather increasing it; for (1) how do we recognize precisely the very best men? Either we can give a reason, or we cannot. If we cannot, what is our appeal worth? If we can, what is the test? How are disagreements on this point to be settled? Again (2), among those whom in a rough-and-ready way we regard as the best whom we know, there may be enormous divergence of opinion as to the comparative value of objects.

And I cannot see that it is (as Mr. Mackenzie says) a "strange doctrine" to hold that if *pleasure* is *sense of value*, value must (it would seem) be measured by pleasure. For there must be different *senses of value* to correspond to the different *values*, and what could be more fitted to measure value than that sense or apprehension of it which varies with its variations? It is, of course, true that in a general way "we measure heat by means of thermometers and not by our sensations;" but in making and using thermometers we have to rely largely on our sensations, and, both primarily and ultimately, it is to sensations and comparison of sensations (or perceptions) that we must appeal. And if it is said that pleasure does not increase with increase of value, can pleasure fairly be called a *sense of value*? I do not feel that any unambiguous meaning is conveyed by the phrase "measurement of value as immediately apprehended without reason." It seems to me that for measurement or for recognition of any experiences as good or evil, or for any consciousness of *value*, comparison and judgment (which involve the use of reason) are needed.

It is, however, this "measurement of value as immediately apprehended without reason" that Mr. Mackenzie affirms to be "the only intelligible meaning that can be given to the measurement of pleasure," and he regards it as equivalent to "measurement of preferability." If "preferable" means "what ought to be preferred" (as *desirable* means *what ought to be desired*), this equivalence that is affirmed between pleasure and preferability seems to imply the worth of pleasure; if, however, *preferable* means merely *actually preferred or chosen* (and this seems more in consonance with calling pleasure a *choice*), the question remains, How is *actual* choice known to be always the *right* or *best* choice? Are we to admit that *actual* conduct furnishes the only test of *right* conduct? And if we do—to mention only one inconvenient result—what becomes of ethical consistency and the "objectivity" of right? And how should we distinguish "the best men" by whose choice right is known? And, indeed, how would they be supposed to help us?

When it is said that the gratification of intemperance or envy has value—"subjective value"—it is a little difficult to see in what respect this *value* is preferable to pleasure as an end; or, indeed, in what possible respect it can be supposed to have value, *unless* as cause or occasion of pleasure to the intemperate or envious person. In what does *value* consist?

Exception might perhaps be taken (on the ground that it is likely to cause confusion) to the use of the term *desire* in the sense of *mere choice*; but passing this by, I should like just to observe, here, that the reference to *universes of desire* does not seem to me to do away with the objections to admitting that good = object of desire; that is, that whatever *is* desired, *ought to be* desired. If some monster of cruelty or revenge desires the torture of sensitive creatures, while some enlightened philanthropist desires the progress of his fellows in wisdom and bodily health, in art and knowledge, can the reference to different universes suffice to make these objects of *desire* other than disparate (in respect, that is, of non-hedonic qualities)? What is the intrinsic common quality in virtue of which they are both called *good*? If there *is* such a common quality, is the conception of *universes* required? If there is not, why should both be called good, and how can they be compared? Comparison must, it would seem, come in somewhere,—if individual desires cannot be compared, their "universes" must,—and can there be any effective comparison without a "common denominator"? Is it possible to show, or even to imagine, that all the objects of desire of any man and every man could be called "good" in any other sense whatever than a narrowly hedonic and narrowly "subjective" one?—unless, indeed, we resolve *what is good* into *what is bad* and both into *what is*. This, indeed, is, perhaps, what we are brought to by the view that *subjective values* "are constituted simply by individual choice."

Mr. Mackenzie goes on to say, "Miss Jones's question whether any object can or ought to be regarded as good or valuable if it causes no happiness, does not seem to concern me, since I have never denied that pleasantness is, in some sense, a characteristic of every desirable object." *

* My exact question was as follows: "Is any object regarded, or *can* or *ought* it to be regarded as good or valuable (however much desired) if it causes no happiness whatever,—no pleasure and no freedom from pain,—to any sentient creature? And the case could be put more strongly still by supposing an

Still, I cannot but think that the question *does* concern Mr. Mackenzie, since he repeatedly denies that pleasantness is a desirable characteristic, and of course the point of the question is simply whether pleasure (or happiness) is in itself desirable or not. If it is *not* intrinsically desirable, *to what end* and *in what sense* can it be allowed to be "a characteristic of every desirable object," and on what grounds depends the assumed concomitance of *non-desirable pleasure* with the desirability said to be proper to all objects of desire?

As regards the assertion of the qualitative differences of pleasures, I can only repeat that *if* they have a common quality, *in so far* they are qualitatively similar and comparable; if they have not, it remains to be explained why they have come to be classed together under one name. As regards "reduction" of intensive to extensive magnitudes, it seems to me evident that a greater extent of milder pleasure or pain may be, and constantly is, balanced against a less extent of more poignant feeling.* And surely it is not "evasion" to say that if things can be compared (as higher or lower, or in any other respect), they must be compared with reference to some common quality. And when Mr. Mackenzie says that as regards supposed differences of quality in pleasure, "what we are measuring is *not pleasure at all*," I do not see how this measurement of *non-hedonic quality* concerns the Hedonist.

As regards the objection about *sum of pleasures*, it seems to me rather difficult to take it very seriously. I do not understand the phrase—a phrase which I have no desire either to use or to uphold—as meaning more than a concrete succession of periods which have been predominantly happy or pleasant; I do not suppose that *pleasures* or *pleasant times* can be "summed" in any other sense than that in which the hours and years of our existence are "summed" so as to make up our life—or the sense in which our *Lehrjahre* or *Wanderjahre* can be summed. Certainly we *ought* to, and in as far as we are reasonable we *shall*, regard our life, and the

object, which, so far from causing pleasure, causes pain—pain severe, prolonged, extensive, and unrecompensed." Mr. Mackenzie has not, I think, in this discussion even attempted the ethical evaluation of *pain*.

* As regards the extensive measurement of intensive (subjective) sensations of heat, is not this, to some degree, attempted and accomplished in the medical use of thermometers? And are not intensive differences of capacity and effort measured by, or equated to, extensive differences of accomplishment and reward?

lives of others, as a totality; and I have always understood Utilitarianism to make great use of this conception.

What I wished to urge in the passage (INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS, p. 91) which Mr. Mackenzie next criticises was *not* that there can be no chief good except what can be "realized by summing a series of successive moments" *but* (since we live and act in time, in successive moments) that no chief good, no good of consciousness possible for men, could be "enjoyed all at once." Self-realization or self-development takes time; or if "the desirable thing for man" is (as Mr. Mackenzie in this discussion seems to say) "a continuous state of happiness," is not this, too, subject to the objection of Professor Green, to which I was referring; for it certainly cannot be enjoyed "in a single flash"; and even a flash has continuity and is divisible into moments. The "fancy" that an "abstract idea of an impossible sum," or "an algebraic series" is regarded by Utilitarians as man's chief good or final end is, I think, a fancy entertained by certain opponents of Utilitarianism, and by them alone.

When Mr. Mackenzie observes that "surely all good things are concrete," I entirely agree with what I understand him to mean; as human life is concrete, it would seem that the good or end of human life must be concrete too. But when he says that it is not Hedonism to take as the end *happiness in the concrete*, I can only rejoin that I think Hedonism aims at happiness in the concrete as much as the artist aims at concrete beauty, or the scientific thinker at concrete truth. May not "Hedonists" say what their own doctrine is? And what is the difference between happiness and a continuous, or even somewhat intermittent, state of "subjective satisfaction"? Must not any good of consciousness be *ex vi termini* a "subjective" good? But a good which is *subjective* in this sense, may be also *objective* in the sense of being *rational*. And as a rational as well as a sensitive being, and able *quâ* rational, to take an universal point of view, it is possible for a man to desire the *subjective good* of other men (as Mr. Mackenzie allows that Utilitarians have done, and as he seems to require the moral agent to do who takes realization of the social self as the ethical end).

As to the ends suggested by Mr. Herbert Spencer, by Mr. Leslie Stephen, and by Green, I understand the end of the first two to be frankly hedonistic. As to the end advocated by Green, it is affirmed to be a true self-satisfaction, resulting from, or accompanying, the realization of the Social Self in a society of rational self-

conscious persons. The only unconditional good is the will to seek this good, to realize this *true and social (that is, rational) self*. Since the good, the ethical end, *means* that which it is reasonable for man to seek, this account of the end seems to leave us revolving in a circle, the only hint of escape from which (if it may be called an escape) is a reference to existing institutions, and un-analyzed moral opinions, Pagan or Christian. It seems to me that the ethical attitude of Green receives almost prophetic expression in the words of an American poet: "Dear Camerado! I confess I have urged you onwards with me and still urge you, without the least idea what is our destination."

I am grateful to Mr. Mackenzie for the liberal and conciliatory spirit in which he has criticised my article, but I am hardly grateful to him for suggesting that Utilitarians have "tripped" over the word *pleasure* as Locke did over the word *idea*. Since pleasure is the essential content of their fundamental principle, to "trip" over it could be nothing less than absolutely fatal. But in fact (as Mr. Mackenzie, with perhaps more justice than he supposes, charitably suggests) they *have* taken "concrete happiness" as end, happiness being explained as compounded of pleasant states of consciousness; and if happiness is something else than "subjective satisfaction," it would be very interesting to know what that something else is. Satisfactions may no doubt be, in a certain sense, weighed, but the subjective satisfaction of man as he is, and on the whole, cannot be secured with "grocers' merchandise" alone (though some of that is necessary event to existence),—it requires among other conditions the qualities of courage and foresight, self-control and benevolence; on the Utilitarian view, each individual has to exercise virtue as currently understood,—*i.e.*, justice, veracity, and regard to common good, and to aim at promoting it in himself and others. Though it is not the *ultimate* Hedonistic end, it is (as men are constituted) an indispensable means to that end (as earnest study and patient effort are indispensable to the production of artistic beauty or the attainment of scientific truth). And if the end of Universalistic Hedonism—the avoidance as far as possible of pain on the whole, and the attainment of as much happiness as possible in the long run—if this is a mathematical conundrum, it is one to which our rational nature impels us, since we are *sensitive*, to seek an answer.

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