Chapter 5

Development of Moral Teachings -- Ancient Greece

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Ethics: Origin and Development

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CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL TEACHINGS -- ANCIENT GREECE

WE have seen in the previous chapter that the most primitive peoples develop their own mode of social life and evolve their own carefully preserved customs and traditions, -- their own conceptions of what is good and what is bad, what is not to be done, and what is proper in different situations. In short, they evolve their own morality, their own Ethics.

Part of such rules of conduct is placed under the protection of custom. Certain acts are to be avoided because they are "wrong" or "shameful"; they would indicate a physical weakness or a weakness of character. But there are also more serious offenses and sterner rules. He who breaks these rules not only displays undesirable traits of character, but also does hurt to his tribe. But the welfare of the tribe is being watched over by the "great multitude" of the dead ancestors, and if anyone breaks the rules of conduct established from generation to generation,
the dead ancestors take revenge not only on the offender against the rules laid
down by them, but also on the entire tribe that permitted the violations of the
ancient traditions. 1 The animal kingdom, as we have seen in the second chapter,
assists the good and the just man, and in all possible ways interferes with the evil
and the unjust one. But in cases where the entire tribe takes part in a deed of evil,
then the forces of nature interfere, these forces being personified by benevolent or
evil creatures, with whom the dead ancestors of men are in communication. In
general, among the primitive peoples much more than among the civilized, each
member of the tribe is identified with his tribe. In clan vengeance, which exists at
present, and existed, as is known from history, among all the primitive peoples,
each is responsible for all, and all for each of their kinsmen.

Custom, i.e., the habit of living according to established traditions, the fear of
change, and inertia of thought, plays, accordingly, the principal rôle in the
preservation of the established rules of social life. But accidental deviations are
always possible, and in order to preserve intact the established mode of life the
elders, the prophets, the sorcerers resort to intimidation. They threaten violators of
custom with the vengeance of the ancestors and of various spirits populating the
aerial region. The mountain, the forest-spirits, avalanches, snow-storms, floods,
sickness, etc., all rise to the defense of violated custom. And in order to maintain
this fear of retribution for the desecration of rules and customs, sacred rites
signifying the worship of the forces of nature are established, sacrifices to these
forces are made, and various semi-theatrical ceremonies are conducted. 2

Morality is thus placed under the protection of the deified powers, and the worship
of these powers evolves in to religion, which sanctifies and strengthens the moral
conceptions. 3

In such an atmosphere the moral element in Man is so intimately interwoven with
mythology and religion, that it becomes extremely difficult to separate the moral
element from mystical commands handed down from above, and from religion in
general. Owing to this circumstance, the linking of morality with religion has
endured to the present time.

Like all the primitive peoples, the ancient Greeks for a long time pictured to
themselves the celestial bodies and the formidable phenomena of nature in the
form of mighty beings in human likeness, who continually interfered with the life of
men. A splendid monument of those times has come down to us in the "Iliad." It is
clear from this work that the moral conceptions of its time were of the same nature
as are now found among many savage people.
The violation of what was then considered moral, was punished by the gods, each
of the gods personifying in human likeness this or that force of nature.
But, while many peoples remained for a long time in this stage of development, in
Ancient Greece, as early as a few hundred years after the time depicted in the
"Iliad" (i.e., about the seventh and the sixth century, B.C.) thinkers began to appear
who strove to base the moral conceptions of Man not merely on fear of the gods,
but also on an understanding of man's own nature: on self-respect, on the sense of
dignity, and on the comprehension of the higher intellectual and moral aims.
In those early days, the thinkers were already divided into several schools. Some
attempted to explain the whole of nature, and consequently the moral element in
Man, in a naturalistic way, i.e., through study of nature and through experiment, --
as is now done in the natural sciences. Others, however, maintained that the origin
of the universe and its life cannot be explained in the naturalistic way, because the
visible world is the creation of supernatural powers. It constitutes the embodiment
of something, of some forces or "essences," that lie outside the regions accessible
to human observation. Hence Man can come to know the Universe not through the
impressions which he receives from the external world, but only by means of
abstract speculation -- "metaphysics." 4
Nevertheless, in all these essences hidden from our eye or understanding, the
thinkers of the time saw the personification of the "Supreme Intelligence," "The
Word" (or Reason), "The Supreme Will," or "The Universal Soul," which man could
conceive only through knowledge of himself. No matter how the abstract thinker,
the metaphysician, tried to spiritualize these qualities and to ascribe to them a
superhuman or even a supernatural existence, he always pictured them to himself,
like the gods of antiquity, in the image and the likeness of human reason and
human feelings, and whatever he learned about these qualities and feelings came
about solely through self-observation and the observation of others. The
conception of the spiritual supernatural world thus continued to bear the traces of
the most primitive anthropomorphism of nature. The Homeric gods were returning,
only in more spiritualized form.
It must be said, however, that from the time of Ancient Greece, and up to the present day, the metaphysical philosophy found highly gifted followers. They were not content with descriptions of the celestial bodies and of their movement, of thunder, lightning, falling stars, or of planets and animals, but they strove to understand surrounding nature as a cosmic whole. For this reason they succeeded in making a considerable contributions to the development of general knowledge. Even the first thinkers of the metaphysical school understood -- and therein lies their great merit -- that whatever be the explanation given to natural phenomena, they cannot be regarded as arbitrary acts of certain rulers of the universe. Neither arbitrariness, nor the passions of the gods, nor blind accident can explain the life of nature. We are compelled to acknowledge that every natural phenomenon -- the fall of any particular stone, the flow of a brook, or the life of any one tree or animal, constitutes the necessary manifestation of the properties of the whole, of the sum total of animate and inanimate nature. They are the unavoidable and logical consequences of the development of fundamental properties in nature and its entire antecedent life. And these laws can be discovered by human intellect. In view of these facts the "metaphysicians" often anticipated the discoveries of science, expressing them in a poetical form. And indeed, owing to such interpretation of the universal life, as early as the fifth century B.C., some Greek thinkers expressed, in spite of their metaphysics, such suppositions about natural phenomena that they may be called the forerunners of modern scientific physics and chemistry. Similarly, in the Middle Ages, and later, up to the eighteenth century, some important discoveries were made by investigators who, while keeping to the metaphysical or even purely religious explanations in interpreting the intellectual and especially the moral life of man, adopted, nevertheless, the scientific method when they undertook the study of the physical sciences.

At the same time religion began to acquire a more spiritual character. Instead of the conception of separate, man-like gods, there appeared in Greece, especially among the Pythagoreans, conceptions of some sort of general forces creating the life of the universe. Such was the conception of "fire" (i.e., "caloric") permeating the whole world, of "numbers," i.e., the mathematical laws of motion, of "harmony," i.e., a rational essence in the life of nature; while on the other hand, there was
originating a conception of a Single Being, ruling the universe. There were also hints of "Universal Truth," and "Justice."

However, Greek philosophy could not content itself for a long time with such abstract conceptions. More than four centuries B.C. there appeared, on the one hand, the *Sophists* and the *amoralists* (hedonists, etc., who did not recognize the obligatory nature of moral principles) and, on the other hand, thinkers like Socrates and Plato (in the fifth century B.C.), Aristotle (in the fourth), and Epicurus (in the third), who laid the foundations of Ethics, i.e., the science of moral, and these foundations have not lost their importance to the present day.

The writings of the Sophist Protagoras (born about 480 B.C.) have reached us only in fragments and we cannot, therefore, form a complete idea of his philosophy. We only know that he adopted a negative attitude toward religions, and as for morality, he considered it an institution of human social origin. This morality, in his opinion, was determined by the development in all respects of each people at a particular period. This accounts for the differences in moral principles among different peoples. Hence follows the conclusion that "good" and "evil" are relative conceptions.

Such ideas were advocated not only by Protagoras, but there soon formed in Greece a whole *school of Sophists*, who held to these notions.

In general, we find in Ancient Greece no leaning toward the idealistic philosophy; the predominating element in Greece was the striving for *actions* and for the training of *will*, for active participation in the life of society, and for the development of men intellectually strong, and energetic. Faith in gods as governing the acts of men, was on the wane. The whole mode of life of Ancient Greece, -- which then consisted of small independent republics, -- the thirst for an understanding of nature, the growing acquaintance with the surrounding world owing to travel and colonization -- all these factors urged Man toward the assertion of his individuality, toward the negation of the power of custom and faith, toward the liberation of the intellect. And side by side with this process came the rapid development of the sciences. This development was so much the more remarkable because, only a few centuries later, during the existence of the Roman Empire, and especially after the invasion of the Barbarians, who moved upon Europe from Asia, scientific progress came to a halt throughout the entire human race. For many
centuries science was at a standstill. The intellectual movement originated by the Sophists could not remain long in the same form. It unavoidably led to a deeper study of men -- his thinking, his feeling, his will, and his social institutions, and also of the whole life of the Cosmos-Universe, i.e., of Nature in general. And with such study the superficial attitude of the Sophists toward moral questions soon ceased to satisfy thoughtful men. And on the other hand, the development of the sciences, liberating man from slavish obedience to religion and custom, led to cultivation of the moral principles through experimental knowledge and in a manner much more thorough than the Sophists could attain by means of their dialects.

All this taken together undermine the philosophy of mere negation. Socrates (born 469, died 399 B.C.) came out against the Sophists in the name of true knowledge. He shared their revolutionary tendencies, but he sought a more solid support for the foundation of morality than the superficial critique of the Sophists. While remaining a revolutionary in religion and in philosophy, he hung everything upon the supreme reason of Man, and upon the attaining by man of the inner harmony between reason and the various feelings and passions. Besides, Socrates did not, of course, "negate virtue," but merely interpreted it very broadly, as the ability to attain proficiency in intellectual development, in the arts, and in creative work. To reach this goal, first of all knowledge is necessary; not so much scientific knowledge, as the understanding of social life and of the inter-relations among man. Virtue, he taught, is not a revelation from the gods, but a rational innate knowledge of what is truly good, and of what makes man capable of living without oppressing others but treating them justly; makes him capable of serving society, and not himself alone. Without this, society is inconceivable.

A disciple of Socrates, Plato (428-348 B.C.) expounded these ideas more completely and spiritualized them with an idealistic conception of morality. He inquired even more deeply into the essence of morality, although his mode of thinking was metaphysical. without attempting to present Plato's principal ideas in their abstract form, but merely dwelling on their essence, his teaching may be formulated as follows: the principles of good and justice are contained in Nature itself. There is an abundance of evil and injustice in the cosmic life, but side by side
with them are laid the foundations of all good. It was this element of Good and Justice that Plato endeavored to reveal and to set forth in all its power, so that it should become the guiding principle in human life.

Unfortunately, instead of following the path which was then already being marked out in Greece, instead of showing in what form the fundamental principles of morality result from the life of Nature itself, from the sociality of men, and from the nature of man's intelligence, from innate intelligence as well as from that developed by social life -- Plato sought the foundations of morality outside of the universe, in the "idea" which underlies the structure of cosmic life, but which is not expressed in it quite definitely.

In spite of the unending number of interpretations of Plato's abstract thought, it is difficult to get at the essence of his philosophy. But we will hardly make a mistake in saying that the great Greek thinker, with his deep understanding of the intimate connection between human life and the life of Nature as a whole, found it impossible to explain the moral element in Man by mere striving for what is individually acceptable, as was done by the Sophists. He was still less capable of considering morality an accidental product of social life simply because morality assumed different forms in different places and at different times. He might have asked himself the question, -- as perhaps he did: how does it happen that though man is led by a striving for what is acceptable to him personally, he nevertheless arrives at moral conceptions that are, after all, similar among different peoples and at different times, since they all hold as desirable the happiness of all? Why is it that, in final analysis, the happiness of the individual is identified with the happiness of the majority of men? Why is not the former possible without the other? and what transforms man from a self-loving creature into a being capable of considering the interests of others, and not infrequently of sacrificing for them his personal happiness and even his life?

As a disciple of Socrates, Plato could no longer ascribe the origin of the conception of the good to the revelation of gods: Thunder, Sun, Moon, etc., i.e., to the forces of Nature endowed with human attributes. On the other hand, owing to the rudimentary state of knowledge about human societies, he could not look for the explanation of the good, -- as we are seeking it now and finding it, -- in the gradual development of sociality and of the consciousness of equity. He found, therefore,
the explanation of the good in the *Idea*, in something abstract which pervades the whole universe, and consequently, Man as well. "Nothing can manifest itself in this world, which is not already implied in the life of the whole," such was his fundamental thought, -- a perfectly true philosophic thought. He did not carry it, however, to its ultimate conclusion. It would seem that he should have arrived at the conclusion that if the human reason seeks good, justice, order, in the form of the "laws of life," it does it because *all these elements are contained in the life of Nature*; he should have concluded that the mind of man draws from Nature its conceptions of the principles of good, justice, social life. Instead of that, although he tied to free himself from the error of his predecessors, Plato came to the conclusion that man's search for something higher than the everyday life, i.e., his search for Good and Justice, has its explanation and its basis not in Nature, but in something which is beyond the limits of our knowledge, of our senses, and of our experience, -- namely, in the Universal Idea.

It can be easily understood how, in after times, the "Neo-Platonists," and later Christianity, took advantage of this conclusion of the brilliant and stimulating Greek thinker, -- first for the purpose of Mysticism, and then for the justification of monotheism, and for the explanation of all the moral elements in man as coming by no means through the natural development of the social sentiments and of reason, but through revelation, i.e., inspiration from above originating in a Supreme Being.

It can also be readily understood how, not having considered the necessity of establishing morality on the very fact of social life, which would probably have led him to recognize the equality of men, -- not being permeated with the idea that all moral teachings will be impotent if the system of social life is in contradiction with them. Plato, like his predecessors, pictured in his "Republic" as an ideal social system, a class republic, based on the subjugation of some classes by others, and even on slavery, and even on the death penalty.

This also explains why, later, throughout the entire history of Ethics as a science of the development of moral conceptions in Man, beginning with ancient Greece and up to the time of Bacon and Spinoza, there prevails the same fundamental idea of the extra-human and extra-natural origin of morality.

It is true that certain Sophists, predecessors of Plato, arrived at a natural explanation of phenomena. Already in those early times they tried to explain the
life of Nature by mechanical causes, just as they tried to explain the life of Nature by mechanical causes, just as it is now being explained by the "positivist" philosophy; and some Sophists even regarded moral conceptions as the necessary consequence of the physical structure of man. But the scientific knowledge of mankind of that epoch was not sufficient to render such interpretations of morality acceptable, and for many centuries Ethics remained under the guardianship of religion. Only now is it beginning to be built up on the basis of the natural sciences. Owing to the fact that the study of Nature had made but small progress in those days, the teaching of Plato was, naturally, the most accessible to the majority of educated men. Probably it also harmonized with the new religious influences coming from the East, where Buddhism was already being developed. These circumstances alone, however, do not suffice to explain the influence of Plato, -- an influence that has lasted to our own era. The point is that Plato introduced into Ethics the **idealistic interpretations of morality**. A "soul" was to him a blending of reason, feeling and will, from which come wisdom, courage, and moderation in passion. His ideal was -- Love, Friendship; but the word Love (Eros) had at that time a broader meaning than it bears now, and Plato understood by Eros not only a mutual attachment of two beings, but also the sociality based on the accord between the desires of the individual and the desires of all the other members of society. His Eros was also what we now call **sociability, mutual sympathy**, the feeling which, as can be seen from the previously mentioned facts taken from the life of animals and of human beings, **permeates the whole world of living creatures and which is just as necessary a condition of their lives as is the instinct of self-preservation**. Plato did not know this, but he already felt the importance of this fundamental factor of all progressive development, i.e., of that which we now call **Evolution**.

Furthermore, though Plato did not realize the importance of justice in the development of morality, he nevertheless presented justice in such a form that one really wonders why subsequent thinkers did not put it at the basis of Ethics. Thus, in the dialogue "Alcibiades (I)," which is ascribed to a still youthful Plato, Socrates makes Alcibiades acknowledge that although men are capable of waging desperate wars, presumably for the sake of justice, they are, nevertheless, really fighting for what they consider most useful for themselves. The just, however, is always...
beautiful; it is always good, i.e., always expedient; so that there cannot be "any matters greater than the just, the honorable, the good, and the expedient."  

It is interesting to note that when Plato, in the same Dialogue, speaks through the mouth of Socrates about the soul and its divine aspect he considers "divine" that part of the soul "which has to do with wisdom and knowledge," i.e., not the feelings, but the reason. And he concludes the Dialogue with the following words, spoken by Socrates: "You and the State, if you act wisely and justly, will act according to the will of God," -- and "you will look only at what is bright and divine," (i.e., at the reason which gives strength to the soul) and "in that mirror you will see and know yourselves and your own good." [Alcibiades I § 134: p 507].

Plato wrote still more definitely about justice, and morality in general, in his dialogue, "The Symposium," where the participants in the feast extoll the god of love, Eros. Of course, not in the first part of this discourse, where commonplaces are being said about the god, but in the second part, where the conversation is between the poet-dramatist Agathon, and Socrates.

The virtues of Eros, says the poet, are his Justice, his Temperance, and his Courage; then his love of beauty; he tolerates no ugliness. He is the god "who empties men of disaffection and fills them with affection...who sends courtesy and sends away discourtesy; who gives kindness ever, and never gives unkindness," etc. [Symposium § p. 567.]

In the same work Plato asserts, and proves through the words of Socrates, that Love is inseparable from goodness and beauty. Love, says Socrates in the "Symposium," is "birth in beauty, whether of body or soul." Love strives to cleave to the good and the beautiful, and thus, in the final analysis, love comes to be the search for the good and the beautiful. "....The beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another...." When a man perceives this he "will become a lover of all beautiful forms; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honorable than the beauty of the outward form" and in this manner he will come to the contemplation of beauty which consists in performing his duty, and then he will understand that "the beauty in every form is one and the same," and beauty of form will no longer be to him so important. Having attained this stage of interpreting beauty, says Plato, a man "will perceive a nature of wondrous beauty...which is ever lasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning,"
but which is "absolute without diminution, and without increase, or any change" in all its parts, at all times, in all respects, in all places, and for all men. Plato reaches the highest degree of idealism when he adds: this beauty will not appear as something contained in anything else, something "existing for example in an animal, or in heaven, or in earth, or in any other place;" but as something "absolute, separate, simple," which exists independently and is self contained." [Symposium § 211; p. 581.]

Such was Plato's idealism, and it is no wonder, therefore, that it has followers to the present day. On one side, it prepared the path for the populous school of the "Eudemonists" who are still in the majority in Ethics and who assert (just as the Sophists asserted before Plato, and after him Epicurus and his followers) that whatever man does, he does "for his own pleasure." Needless to say, Plato understood this "pleasure" not in the narrow sense which he defined in the Dialogues "Laches" and the "Symposium." But on the other hand, introducing at the same time the conceptions of "soul" and "beauty," as of something which is, in a sense, contained in Nature, and yet stands above it, he prepared the ground for religious ethics, and he remains, therefore, to our time the favorite of religious thinkers. He was their predecessor. It is remarkable, however, that his high conception of Nature and of moral beauty in Nature -- which remains insufficiently appreciated to this time by both the religious and the non-religious ethics -- separates him from the former, as well as from the latter.

In the second half of his life, when Plato fell under the influence of the Pythagoreans, he attempted, with the assistance of Tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius, to establish a state according to the plan which he expounded in his works, "Statesman" and "Laws" (a product of a mind already falling into decrepitude). At that time he was no longer the same idealist as at the first period of his life and teaching. In his "State," as one of his great admirers, Vladimir Solovyev, points out with bitterness, Plato not only retained slavery, but also the death sentence for slaves for not reporting another's offense, and for the citizens in general when guilty of disrespect toward the established religion. He thus called upon men to commit the very crime which so strongly aroused his indignation when his teacher Socrates was executed owing to the same religious intolerance. "Eros," i.e., Love, which Plato preached in such wondrous form, did not prevent him from approving
these crimes. Later they were perpetrated also by the Christian Church, in spite of the love-gospel of its founder.

The middle position between the natural-scientific and the metaphysical understanding of morality is occupied by the teaching of Aristotle, who lived in the fourth century B.C. (384-322 B.C.).

Aristotle sought the explanation of our moral conceptions not in the Supreme Reason or in the Universal Idea, as Plato did, but in the actual life of men: in their striving for happiness and for what is useful to them, -- and in human reason. In this striving, he taught, two principal social virtues were evolved: friendship, i.e., love for our fellowman (we should now call it sociality) and Justice. But he understood Justice, as we shall see later, not in the sense of equality of rights.

Thus in Aristotle's philosophy we find for the first time the doctrine of the self-sufficiency of human reason. Like Plato, he thought that the source of reason is the Divinity, but this divinity, though it is the source of "reason and movement in the universe," does not interfere with the universal life. In general, while Plato strove to establish the existence of two separate worlds: the sensible world which we know through our senses, and the super-sensible world which is inaccessible to them, Aristotle strove to unite them. There was no room for faith in his teaching, and he did not recognize personal immortality. We can attain the true understanding of our life, taught Aristotle, only through the understanding of the universe.

He saw the foundation of the moral conceptions of man in the facts of actual life. All are striving for the greatest happiness. Happiness is what makes life "eligible and in want of nothing." The crude mob seeks happiness in enjoyment, while the enlightened people seek it in something higher, not in the "idea," as Plato taught, but in "an energy of the soul and actions performed with reason, "or, at least, not contrary to reason. "Man's chief good is "an energy of the soul according to virtue, " and, it must be added, in the course of the man's entire life, -- an active virtue combined with energy. Happiness is attained through a life which is in accordance with the requirements of justice, and such a life is more beautiful than anything else: It combines with the above benefits also health and "the obtaining what we love." (Ethica, book I, ch. vii.-viii., pp. 17-20.) "Nevertheless," adds Aristotle, "it
appears to stand in need of the addition of external goods," among which he includes "friends, money, political influence, noble birth, good children, and beauty." Without this "external prosperity," happiness is not complete. (ch. viii, 12, pp. 20-21.) Chance plays a part in apportioning happiness, but "it is possible, that by means of some teaching and care, it should exist in every person who is not incapacitated for virtue" (ch. ix, 3, p. 21), for even the irrational part of man's soul (i.e., our passions) "in some sense partakes of reason." (ch. xiii, 13; p. 31.) In general, Aristotle ascribed tremendous importance to reason in the development of an individual; it is the function of reason to restrain the passions; it is owing to reason that we are able to understand that striving for the good of society gives a much higher, much more "beautiful happiness" than striving for the satisfaction of one's own impulses.

It may be seen from these extracts that instead of looking for the basis of the moral conceptions in man in revelations from above, Aristotle reduce these conceptions to the decision of reason, seeking for the highest satisfaction and happiness, and he understood that the happiness of an individual is intimately connected with the happiness of society ("state," he said, meaning by it an organized community). Thus Aristotle is the predecessor of the large school of "Eudemonists," who later explained the moral instincts, feelings, and acts of man as a striving for personal happiness, and also of the modern school of the "utilitarians," beginning with Bentham and Mill and reaching to Herbert Spencer. Aristotle's "Ethics," in its form and in its careful development of each separate thought, is unquestionably just as remarkable a monument of the development of Ancient Greece, as is the rest of his works, scientific and political. But in his "Ethic," as well as in the "Politics," he pays full tribute to what we now call opportunism. Such is his famous definition of virtue as "as habit, accompanied with deliberate preference, in the relative mean, defined by reason, and as the prudent man would define it. It is a mean state between two vises, one in excess, the other in defect." (Book II, ch. vi, 10; p. 45; also Book I, ch. viii.)

The same can be said of his conception of Justice. Although Aristotle devoted to it a separate chapter in his "ethics," he defined it in the same spirit as he defined virtue in general, i.e., as the middle between two extremes, and he understood it not as a principle of equality of men, but in a very limited sense.
Such an interpretation of justice is worthy of particular note, because he considered justice the greatest of all the virtues, "and neither the evening nor the morning star is so admirable."

"In justice all virtue is comprehended," says a proverb of that time. Aristotle undoubtedly understood the moral importance of justice, because he taught that "justice alone of all the virtues seems to be a good to another person" (Book V, ch. I., 13; p. 120); in other words, it is a "virtue" which is not egotistical.

Moreover, Aristotle very justly concluded that "in all other acts of injustice it is possible always to refer the action to some specific vise." [Book V, ch. ii, 3; p. 121.] From this it can be surmised that he also understood that any act which we consider evil, almost invariably turns out to be an act of injustice against someone.

At the same time, while distinguishing between two different types of injustice -- the universal, which consisted in breaking the law, and the "particular injustice," which consisted in an inequitable attitude toward men, -- and while distinguishing between two corresponding types of justice, -- Aristotle recognized two other species of "particular justice" ("distributive" and "corrective"). "one species is that which is concerned in the distributions of honor, equal or unequal, or of wealth or of any of those other things which can possibly be distributed among the members of a political community"..."the other is that which is corrective in transactions between man and man" (Book V, ch. iii, 8, 9; pp. 122-123). And to this the great thinker of the ancient world immediately adds, that in equity, consequently also in justice, there should be the "mean." And since the "mean is a purely relative conception, he destroyed thereby the very conception of justice as the true solution of complex, doubtful moral questions, where a man hesitates between two possible decision. And, actually, Aristotle, did not recognize equality in "distribution," but merely demanded "corrective" justice.

Thus it is clear that, living in a society where slavery existed, Aristotle did not venture to acknowledge that justice consists in equity among men. He limited himself to commercial justice, and did not even proclaim equity the ideal of social life. Mankind had to live for nearly two thousand years longer in organized communities, before, in one country -- France -- equality was proclaimed as the
idea of social life, together with liberty and fraternity.

Generally speaking, in question of morality and in politics, Aristotle was not in advance of his time. But in his definitions of science, wisdom and art, (Book VI, ch, iii, iv, vii) he was a forerunner of Bacon's philosophy. In his discussion of the various types of the "good," and in his classification of pleasures, he anticipated Bentham. Moreover, he understood the importance of mere sociality, which, however, he confused with friendship and mutual love (Book VIII, ch. vi), and, on the other hand, he was the first to realize what has been so frequently overlooked by the majority of thinkers of our time, namely, -- that in speaking of morality, distinction should be made between that which we have the right to demand from all, and that heroic virtue which exceeds the powers of the ordinary man (Book VII, ch. i). And it is just this quality (which we now call self-sacrifice or generosity) -- that moves humanity forward and develops striving for the beautiful, -- which Aristotle's Ethics aims to develop. (The whole of Ch. viii of Book IX.) 11 But, of course, we have no right to demand it from everybody.

Such was the moral philosophy of a great, but not a profound scientist, who stood out in the civilization of his time and who has exercised for the last three centuries (from the time of the Renaissance in the sixteenth century) a strong influence on science in general, and also on ethical philosophy.

The teaching of Plato and the teaching of Aristotle thus represented two schools which differed somewhat radically in the interpretation of morality. Disputes between the two did not cease even long after the death of their founders. Little by little, however, these disputes lost their interest because both schools were already agreed that the moral element in man is not an accidental phenomenon, but that it has its deep foundation in human nature, and that there are moral conceptions that are common to all human societies.

In the third century B.C. appeared two new schools -- the Stoics and the Epicureans. The Stoics taught, in agreement with their predecessors, Plato and Aristotle, that man must live in accordance with his nature, i.e., with his intelligence and his abilities, because only such a life can give the highest happiness. But, as is known, they particularly insisted that man finds happiness, "eudemonia," not in the pursuit of external benefits: wealth, honors, etc., but in striving for something higher, something ideal; in the development of a spiritual life
for the good of the man himself, his family, and society; and most of all, in the attainment of inner freedom. The teaching of the Stoics will be discussed further on in this chapter. I shall only remark at this point that although the Stoics rejected in their teachings the Socratic metaphysics of morality, they nevertheless continued his work, for they introduced the conception of knowledge, which enables man to distinguish between different types of enjoying life and to seek for happiness in its more perfect and spiritual form. The influence of the Stoics, as we shall see, was tremendous, especially later, in the Roman world; it prepared minds for the acceptance of Christianity, and we feel it to our time. This is especially true of the teaching of Epictetus (end of the second and beginning of the first century B.C.), the essence of which was absorbed by positivism and the modern natural-scientific school of ethics.

In contrast with the Stoics, the Sophists, especially Democritus (470-380 B.C.) founder of molecular physics, and the school of the Cyrenaics in general, held as the fundamental trait of man or of any living creature the search for pleasure, for delight, for happiness ("hedonism." from the Greek work "hedone"). However, they did not sufficiently emphasize the thought that there may be different forms of striving for happiness, ranging from purely animal self-gratification to the most altruistic self-sacrifice; from narrow-personal aspirations to aspirations of a broadly social nature. But that is just the problem of Ethics, -- namely, to analyze these different forms of striving for happiness, and to show where they lead and what degree of satisfaction each one of them gives. This was very conscientiously done by Epicurus, who lived in the third century B.C. and who acquired wide popularity in the Greco-Roman world of that time, owing to his carefully worked out Eudemonism, i.e., a moral teaching which is also based on the striving for happiness, but with careful choice of means to that happiness.

"The aim of life toward which all living beings are unconsciously striving is happiness," taught Epicurus: (one might call it "the pleasant") "because, as soon as they are born, they already desire gratification and resist suffering." Reason has nothing to do with it: nature itself guides them in that direction. Reason and feeling blend in this case, and reason is subjected to feeling. In short, "pleasure is the essence and the aim of a happy life -- the primary and natural good." Virtue is desirable only if it leads to that good, while philosophy 12 is energy which, through
reasoning, gives a happy life.

Then Epicurus expresses his fundamental thought and, probably with intention, in a rather blunt form. "The origin and the root of all good is the pleasure of the belly." His opponents freely took advantage of this saying, thus bringing Epicureanism into disrepute. Whereas Epicurus, obviously, merely meant to say that the pleasure of nourishment is the starting point of all pleasant sensations, from which later evolve all the base, as well as all the sublime sensations. Little by little this fundamental pleasure assumes thousands of variations, transforms itself into pleasures of taste, sight, imagination, -- but the starting point of all pleasurable sensations in man or in animal is the pleasant sensation experienced while taking nourishment. Those modern biologists who are investigating the first steps of conscious life, will readily agree with this idea, especially if further explanations of the Epicureans are taken into account.

"Wise and beautiful things," wrote Epicurus, "are connected with this pleasure." This pleasure, of course, does not constitute the final aim of happiness, but can be taken as the starting point, because life is impossible without nourishment. Happiness, however, results from the sum total of pleasures; and while other hedonists (Aristippus the Younger, for example), did not make sufficient distinction between various pleasures, Epicurus introduced a valuation of pleasures, depending on their influence on our life as a whole. Our very sufferings -- he taught -- may be useful, and may lead to good. Thus the Epicurean Ethics rises much higher than the Ethics of mere pleasure: 13 it came upon the path which was followed in the nineteenth century by Bentham and John Stuart Mill.

Putting as man's aim the happy life in its entirety, and not the gratification of momentary whims and passions, Epicurus pointed the way to achieving such happiness. First of all a man must limit his desires and be contented with little. Epicurus, who in his own life was ready to be content with a barley millcake and water, speaks here as a most rigorous Stoic. 14 And then one must live without inner conflicts, with a whole life, in harmony with oneself, and must feel that one lives independently, and not in enslavement to external influences. 15 At the basis of human conduct should be that which gives man highest satisfaction. But aspirations for personal gain cannot serve as such a basis, because the highest happiness is attained by concord between personal
aspirations and the aspirations of others. Happiness is freedom from evil; but this freedom cannot be attained unless the life of each individual is in accord with the interests of all. Life teaches us this lesson, and Man, as a reasoning creature, capable of utilizing the lessons of experience, chooses between the acts that lead to this accord, and the acts that lead away from it. Thus the moral structure of society, its Ethics, is developed.

Now it is easy to understand how, starting with the assertion that virtue in itself, or disinterestedness in the exact meaning of the word, does not exist, and that the whole of morality is nothing but a rationalized egotism (self-love), Epicurus arrived at a moral teaching which is in no wise inferior in its conclusions to the teachings of Socrates or even of the Stoics. Purely physical pleasure does not embrace the whole life of man; such pleasure is fleeting. But there is a life of mind and heart, a life of reminiscence and hopes, of memory and foresight, which opens to man a whole paradise of new delights.

Epicurus also endeavored to free men from the fears instilled in them by faith in gods endowed with all kinds of evil qualities; he tried to free them from dread of the horrors of life beyond the grave, and from faith in the influence of "fate," -- a faith supported even by the teachings of Democritus. To free men from all these fears it was necessary, first of all, to free them from fear of death, or rather from fear of life after death. This fear was very strong in antiquity, for life after death was then pictured as a sleep in subterranean darkness, during which man retained something like conscience, to torture him. 16 At the same time Epicurus combated the pessimism that was preached by Hegesias (his pessimism was akin to the modern pessimism of Schopenhauer) i.e., the desirability of death, in view of the abundant presence of evil and suffering in the world.

Generally speaking, the whole of Epicurus's teachings strove for intellectual and moral liberation of men. But it contained one important omission: it supplied no high moral aims, not even the one of self-sacrifice for the good of society. Epicurus did not foresee such aims as the equality of rights of all the members of society, or even the abolition of slavery. Courage, for example, consisted for him not in seeking perils, but in the ability to avoid them. The same with regard to love: a wise man must avoid passionate love, for it contains nothing natural and rational; it reduces love to a psychological illusion, and is a form of religious adoration, --
which is not to be tolerated. He was against marriage, because marriage, and later children, give too much trouble (nevertheless he loved children). But friendship he valued very highly. In friendship man forgets self-interest; in doing an act pleasing to our friend, we give pleasure to ourselves. Epicurus was always surrounded with friends, and his disciples attracted so many followers by the spirit of good fellowship in their common life, that, as one of their contemporaries, Diogenes Laertius put it, "entire cities would not provide room for them all." Contemporary writers could not praise enough the Epicurean fidelity in friendship.

In his analysis of the teachings of the Epicureans, Guyau pointed out an interesting peculiarity in them. At the first glance friendship and self-sacrifice for the friend's sake seem to contradict the principle of self-interest, by which, according to Epicurean theory, a rationally thinking man should be guided. And in order to avoid this contradiction, the followers of Epicurus explained friendship as a tacit understanding based on justice (i.e., reciprocity, or equity -- we will add). This understanding is maintained through habit. At first, the relation arises through a personal pleasure that is mutual, but little by little such relations change into a habit; love springs up, and then we love our friends without considering whether they are useful to us. Thus the Epicureans justified friendship, proving that it does not contradict their fundamental principle -- the striving for personal happiness.

But the question presented itself: "What position is an Epicurean to take with reference to the whole society?" Plato had already expressed the thought (in the dialogue "Gorgias"), says Guyau, that the only law of nature is the right of the strong. After Plato, the skeptics and Democritus denied "natural justice," and many thinkers of that time acknowledged that the rules of civic live were established by force, and then became firmly implanted through habit.

Epicurus was the first, Guyau asserts, to express the thought that was later developed by Hobbes, and after him by many others, that the so-called "natural law" was nothing but a "mutual agreement not to inflict harm nor to suffer harm at the hands of another"..."Justice has no value in itself: it exists only mutual agreements and is established wherever a mutual obligation is assumed not to do harm to others, nor to suffer harm from them." "Such covenants are introduced by wise men," says Epicurus. "And not in order to avoid doing an injustice, but in order not to suffer it from others." It is owing to reciprocity that it turns out that in
protecting ourselves from others we also protect others from ourselves. Without such covenants and laws, society would be impossible; people would devour each other, says Metrodorus, a follower of Epicurus. 17

Consequently, the conclusion from the entire Epicurean teaching was, that what we call duty and virtue is identical with the interests of the individual. Virtue is the surest means of attaining happiness, and in case of doubt as to how to act, it is best always to follow the path of virtue.

But that virtue did not contain even the rudiments of human equality. Slavery roused no indignation in Epicurus. He himself treated his slaves well, but he did not recognize that they had any rights: the equality of men, apparently, did not even occur to him. And it took many hundreds of years before those thinkers who devoted themselves to moral problems ventured to proclaim as the watchword of morality -- equal rights, the equality of all human beings.

It must be noted, however, for the sake of completeness in characterizing the Epicurean teachings, that in the writings of one of Epicurus's followers, where we find the most complete exposition of his teachings, i.e., in the work of the Roman writer Lucretius (first century B.C.), in his celebrated poem "On the Nature of Things," we find already the expression of the idea of progressive development, i.e., of evolution, which now lies at the base of modern philosophy. He also expounds the scientific, materialistic understanding of the life of Nature, as it is interpreted by modern science. Generally speaking, Epicurus's conception of Nature and the universe was built, like his ethics, without any recognition of faith, while the Stoics, as pantheists, continued to believe in the constant interference of super-natural forces in our life. And the followers of Plato, especially the philosophers of the Alexandrian school, who believed in miracles and magic, had to succumb of necessity before the Christian faith. Only the Epicureans continued to remain nonbelievers, and their teaching endured very long, i.e., over five hundred years. Until the appearance of Christianity it was the most widely spread teaching in the ancient world, and thereafter it remained popular for about four hundred years. And when in the twelfth century, and later in the epoch of the Renaissance, the rationalistic movements began in Europe, their first steps in Italy were directed by the teachings of Epicurus. 18

The Epicurean teaching exercised strong influence upon the rationalist,
(seventeenth-century) Gassendi (1592-1655) and also upon his disciple, Hobbes, and even upon Locke, who prepared the ground for the Encyclopædists and for modern naturalistic philosophy. His influence was also strong on the philosophy of "negationists" like La Rochefoucauld and Mandeville, and in the nineteenth century upon Stirner, Nietzsche, and their imitators.

Finally, the fourth school, which was also developing in ancient Greece, and later came to Rome, and which has left to this day deep traces on ethical thinking, was the school of the Stoics. The founding of this school is ascribed to Zeno (340-265 B.C.) and Chrysippus (281 or 276, to 208 or 204 B.C.); and later in the Roman Empire the same teachings were developed by Seneca (54 B.C. - 36 A.D.) and especially by Epictetus (end of the first and beginning of the second century A.D.) and by Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D.).

The Stoics aimed to lead men to happiness through cultivating in them virtue, which consisted in a life that is in accord with nature, and through developing reason, and the knowledge of the life of the universe. They did not seek the origin of the moral conceptions and aspirations of man in any supernatural power: on the contrary, they asserted that nature itself contains moral laws, and consequently also the example of morality. That which men call moral law is the sequence of the universal laws that govern the life of nature, they said. Their point of view, accordingly, is in line with the ideas that are apparent in the modern ethics of Bacon, Spinoza, Auguste Comte, and Darwin. Only, it should be noted that when the Stoics spoke of the primary foundations of morality and of the life of Nature in general, they often clothed their ideas in words natural to metaphysicians. Thus they taught that Reason or the "Word" (from the Greek word "logos") permeates the universe as the General Universal Reason, and that the thing which men call moral law is the sequence of the universal laws that govern the life of Nature.

Human reason, said the Stoics, and consequently our conceptions of morality, are nothing but one of the manifestations of the forces of nature: this view, of course, did not prevent the Stoics from holding that the evil in nature and in man, physical as well as moral, is just as natural a consequence of the life of nature as is the good. Accordingly, all their teachings were directed toward helping man to develop the good in himself and to combat evil, thus attaining the greatest happiness.

Opponents of the Stoics pointed out that their teachings annihilate the distinction
between the good and the evil, and it must be admitted that, though in actual life most of the Stoics did not confuse these conceptions, they nevertheless failed to point out a definite criterion for distinguishing between the good and the evil, as was done, for example, in the nineteenth century by the utilitarians, who held as the ethical aim the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people (Bentham), -- or by those who refer to the natural preponderance of the social instinct over the personal (Bacon, Darwin), -- or by those who introduce into ethics the idea of justice, i.e., equality.

In general, it has been well said that in their reasoning the Stoics did not go so far as actually to construct the theory of morality on the natural basis. It is true that when the Stoics asserted that man should live in accordance with the laws of Nature, some of them had in view the fact that man is a social animal, and should therefore subordinate his impulses to reason and to the aims of society as a whole, and Cicero (106-143 A.D.) even referred to justice as to a foundation for morality. Man can attain wisdom, virtue, and happiness, said the Stoics, only by living in accordance with universal reason, and Nature itself ingrains in us healthy moral instincts. "But how badly the Stoics knew how to find the moral in the natural, and the natural in the moral," Jodl justly observed in his "History of Ethics." 20 And on account of this deficiency in their teaching, a deficiency which was, after all, unavoidable in those days, some of the Stoics, such as Epictetus, came to Christian ethics, which recognizes the necessity of divine revelation for knowing the moral; while others, like Cicero vacillated between the natural and the divine origin of morality; and Marcus Aurelius, who had written such beautiful moral Maxims, permitted the cruel persecution of Christians (in defense of the officially recognized gods). His Stoicism had already become transformed into religious fanaticism.

Generally speaking, the teachings of the Stoics contained much that was fragmentary, and even many contradictions. Regardless of this fact, however, they left deep traces on the philosophy of morality. Some of them attained the height of the gospel of universal brotherhood; but, at the same time, they did not reject individualism, passionlessness, and renunciation of the world. Seneca, the tutor of Nero (who later executed him) combined stoicism with the metaphysics of Plato, and also mingled with it the teachings of Epicurus and of the Pythagoreans. On the other hand, Cicero had a definite leaning toward the religious interpretation of
morality, seeing in the latter the expression of natural and divine laws. 21 But the fundamental thought of the Stoics was the finding of the foundation of morality in the reason of man. The striving for the social good they considered an inborn quality, which developed in man as his intellectual broadening progressed. That form of conduct is wise, they added, which is in accordance with human nature and with the nature of "all things," i.e., with Nature in general. Man must base all his philosophy and all his morality on knowledge: on knowledge of himself and of the whole of Nature. To live in accordance with Nature first of all, means, for Cicero, to know Nature and to cultivate the social impulse in oneself, i.e., the ability to check the impulses leading to injustice, in other words, to develop in oneself justice, courage, and the so-called civic virtues in general. It is easy to understand now why Cicero became the favorite writer of the seventeenth century, and why he exercised so marked an influence upon Locke, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, and upon the forerunners of the French Revolution, -- Montesquieu, Mably and Rousseau.

Thus Eucken is perfectly right when he says that the fundamental idea of Stoicism, i.e., the interpretation of morality from a scientific viewpoint, and the uplifting of morality to its full height and independence in connection with the realization of the universe as a unit, is preserved to our own time.22 To live in the world and to submit to it unconsciously is not worthy of man. One must attain the understanding of the universal life and interpret it as a continuous development (evolution), and one must live in accordance with the laws of this development. Thus did the best among the Stoics understand morality, and by this interpretation Stoicism greatly assisted the progress of the science of morality.

Furthermore, the watchword of the Stoics was, to assume not an indifferent but an active attitude toward the social life. For this purpose strength of character was developed, and this principle was very forcibly developed by Epictetus. Paulsen writes in his "System of Ethics," "nowhere shall we find more forcibly exhortations to make ourselves independent of the things which are not in our power, and to depend upon ourselves with inner freedom, than in Epictetus' little Manual." 23 Life demands rigorism, wrote the Stoics, i.e., a stern attitude toward one's weakness. Life is a struggle, and not the Epicurean enjoyment of various pleasures. The absence of a higher aim is the bitterest enemy of man. A happy life requires inner courage, loftiness of soul, heroism. And such ideas led them to the
thought of universal brotherhood, of "humanity," i.e., to a thought which had not occurred to their predecessors.

But side by side with these beautiful aspirations, we find in all the prominent Stoics indecision, antimony. In the governing of the universe they saw not only the laws of nature, but also the will of the Supreme Reason, and such a confession unavoidably paralyzed the scientific study of Nature. Their philosophy contained an antimony, and this contradiction led to compromises that were contrary to the fundamental principles of their morality -- to reconciliation with that which they rejected in their ideal. The fundamental antimony led such a thinker as Marcus Aurelius to cruel persecutions of the Christians. The attempt to merge personal life with the surrounding life led to pitiable compromises, to reconciliation with the crude, miserable reality, and as a result, we already find in the writing of the Stoics the first cries of despair, -- pessimism. Regardless of all these considerations, however, the influence exercised by the Stoics was very great. It prepared many minds for the acceptance of Christianity, and we feel its influence even now among the rationalists.

Footnotes

1See note 3, page 65.

2Some American investigators call these rites "dances"; in reality they have a much deeper significance than mere amusement. They serve to maintain all the established customs of hunting and fishing, and also the entire tribal mode of life.

3In his extensive work, based on familiarity with the inhabitants of Morocco as well as on study of the voluminous literature on the primitive peoples, Professor Westermarck showed what an important part the "curse" played and still plays in the establishment of the obligatory customs and traditions. A man cursed by his father or mother, or by the whole clan, or even by some individual not connected with him (for refusal of aid, or for an injury) is subject to the vengeance of the invisible spirits, of the shades of the ancestors, and of the forces of nature.

4"Metaphysics" in Greek means "outside of physics," i.e., beyond the domain of physical laws. Aristotle gave this name to one of the divisions of his works.

5Alcibiades I,118. [The Dialogues of Plato, translated by Benj. Jowett, Lond., and N.Y., 1892, 3rd Edition, p. 484. All further references will be to this edition] --
6[The quotations are from *The Nichomachean Ethics* of Aristotle. The translators have used the version of R. W. Browne, Bohn's Library, Lond., 1853. Mr. Browne gives the following note, in part, in connection with the word "energy": "Energy implies an activity, an active state" as contrasted with the potential. (Page 2, note b). Other translations of the Ethics are, by Chase, Everyman series, Lond. and N.Y., 1911; by F. H. Peters, Lond., 1909, 11th ed.; by J. E. C. Welldon, Lond. and N.Y., 1920.] -- Trans. Note.

7"But we must inquire into the subject of justice and injustice, and see what kind of actions they are concerned with, what kind of mean state justice is, and between what things 'the just', that is, the abstract principle of justice, is a mean" -- thus he begins the book *Of Justice and Injustice*. (Book V, ch. I, I; p. 116.)

8"Now the transgressor of law appears to be unjust, and the man who takes more than his share, and the unequal man." Thus the conception of justice means at the same time both the lawful and equitable (attitude toward me)/. Then he continues: "But laws make mention of all subjects, with a view either to the common advantage of all, or of men in power, or of the best citizens" (Book V, ch. I, 6, 10, pp. 118, 119). Thus, as is to be expected in a society based on slavery, Aristotle's interpretation of Justice, as obedience to the law, leads him to a recognition of inequality among men.

9"...justice, therefore, is not a division of virtue, but the whole of virtue; nor is the contrary injustice a part of vice, but the whole of vice." (Book V, ch. I., 14; p. 120).

10He added: "This is clear from the expression 'according to worth'; for, in distributions all agree that justice ought to be according to some standard of worth, yet all do not make that standard the same; for those who are inclined to democracy consider liberty as the standard; those who are inclined to oligarchy, wealth; [others nobility of birth;] and those who are inclined to aristocracy, virtue." (Book V., ch. iv., 3; p. 124). And in summarizing all that he had said in support of this idea, he concludes with the following words: "Now we have said what the just and what the unjust are. But this being decided, it is clear that just acting is a mean between ac

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