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CHAPTER

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## I. INTRODUCTORY: MORAL AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE . . . . . I

The subject of the course. The main purpose of the introductory chapter is to make clear the difference between morality and religion as forms of rational activity.

1. *Morality*.—Taking (with Butler) the voluntary acts of individuals as the objects of moral approval and disapproval, we note (*a*) that any philosophy which holds finite individuals to be mere modes of the Absolute is fatal to the truth of moral experience, and (*b*) that the distinctive character of moral experience is the consciousness of duty rather than the consciousness of good. Two features of moral experience call for special notice in view of the ensuing argument. (1) The act of will, which is the object of moral judgement, is what is intended by the agent, and therefore includes the *motive*. Objections to this view discussed and answered. It is an error to sever the motive from the act as its temporal antecedent, or to regard motive as beyond the agent's control. (2) Moral action is *rational*; it implies knowledge, though the knowledge need not be prior to volition, and, further, is for the sake of action. As Kant held, the plain man's consciousness of duty is an activity of practical reason. Professor Alexander's criticism of this view considered. Moral experience thus provides the groundwork for moral philosophy.
2. *Religion*.—Religion, like morality, must be studied in the making; thus studied, religious experience bears the mark of rationality. Preliminary considerations: (1) The legitimate place of the relatively "static" forms of faith and worship in the religious life (the value of routine, Pascal's doctrine of *l'automate*). (2) "Dynamic" religion is not (as by Bergson) to be identified with mysticism, which, when religious, is a specific type of religious experience.

3. Our chief task is to establish the distinction between religion and morality (which is often blurred, e.g., in Professor Taylor's treatment of sin as an ethical idea). The distinction is threefold: in that (i) religion implies personal communion with God, while morality is possible apart from belief in an other-worldly order; (ii) religion is essentially knowledge and its *praxis* is dependent on *theoria*, while morality is a mode of practical experience; (iii) religious conduct is inspired by a specific motive (the love of God). To regard religion as merely practical is speculatively erroneous and practically disastrous.
4. Hence religion, as an activity of speculative reason, is more closely allied to philosophy than is morality. It leads to a theocentric world-view, which requires examination in the light of knowledge drawn from non-religious sources. Religious experience, though self-critical, cannot stand alone; as *fides quaerens intellectum*, it calls for integration with philosophy.

## II. ACTION FOR DUTY'S SAKE (MORAL ACTION)

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1. Experience shows that human actions may be judged according as they are done from a sense of duty or from desire of good. This distinction is of great importance; it rests on a difference of motive, and is between *praxis* (action) for *praxis*' sake and *praxis* governed by theoretic vision. A parallel distinction holds between two kinds of evil action. Greek thinkers allowed only for action from desire of good; the claims of duty were recognized in the Christian scheme of life, but moral action was not identified with action for duty's sake before Kant. Following Kant in this matter, we are faced by a problem of terminology: the term "ethical" will be used to cover both moral action and action *sub ratione boni*.
2. Moral action is the doing of what ought to be done (*i.e.*, duty) from a sense of obligation. The term "right" should be avoided, for (*a*) it is ambiguous and (*b*) it gives occasion to the severance of act from motive.
3. Implications of the idea of duty: (i) its negative character, as implying effort and restraint; (ii) its positive character, as implying an ideal of practical

reason, the desire to do our duty, and freedom of choice; (iii) the willing of duty universal, a principle transcending any and all particular embodiments; (iv) moral obligation is unconditional, admitting neither degrees of urgency nor conflict of concrete duties. Thus in principle we agree with Kant (though he was wrong in denying value to acts done from desire of good), especially in his "formalism", which is his crowning glory.

4. It follows (i) that the "ought" cannot be justified in terms of anything save itself, and (ii) that it rouses a specific desire, viz. the desire to do our duty.
5. Stages in the development of moral experience : (i) premoral (or amoral) adjustment to practical situations (Croce's "economic" action)—the "must" and the "ought"—; (ii) transition to morality illustrated from the Roman idea of duties (*officia*), implying external compulsion and legality, and from the Stoic concept of law of nature; (iii) the advance from legal to moral obligation and to recognition of the universality of the moral principle points beyond morality to a higher form of experience.<sup>1</sup>

*Additional note to Chapter II.*

The distinction of ideals and types of conduct as the outcome of the author's personal experience. Stages in the development of his ethical views. Dominance in his own life of the ideal of duty rather than of the ideal of good. The contrary experience illustrated from a letter from a former pupil. Reflections on this difference of outlook; its religious bearings, *e.g.*, in the author's irrational suspicions in the matter of predestination. Doctor Johnson's fear of hell.

III. ACTION SUB RATIONE BONI . . . 77

- I. Greek and medieval thinkers held that all men desire the good; also, that the good is the object of all rational desire, a position which the preceding chapter has shown to be untenable. Wider and narrower senses of the term "good"; our concern is with "intrinsic" good (as distinct from "instrumental" goods and from things "good of their kind"). Good as (a) possessed good ("my" or

- “ your ” good) and (b) as an objective character of persons and things (“ a good man”, “ a good poem ”); the possession of good by a given individual may be judged to be objectively good.
2. Implications of action *sub ratione boni* : (i) it implies the thought of an end, though the category of “ means-and-end ” is inadequate for the interpretation of human conduct, and the end is not a result, but rather is immanent in the action; (ii) the desire is rational, being directed towards an ideal that is objective and implicitly universal (in contrast to impulsive action, where knowledge of the end is not presupposed); (iii) the act is spontaneous, without sense of constraint or obligation. Problem of the relation of the good to desire; it is not good because it is desired or because it satisfies desire, nor does it imply self-realization (reference to Buddhism and Indian thought); (iv) action for the good implies freedom, in the sense of a necessitation which is also spontaneity, arising from theoretic vision, in contrast to freedom of choice.
  3. Interrelation of moral action and action *sub ratione boni* in concrete ethical experience, illustrated (i) from the side of duty, by the concept of moral goodness, the thought of which may be a reinforcing motive to duty; (ii) in the life directed to good, where the sense of duty comes into play to regulate defect or excess of desire.
  4. Stages in the development of the life *sub ratione boni* : (i) action from natural inclination, without thought of good; (ii) transition to desire of a rational good—ethical significance of the self-assertive and social impulses (the story of the Fall)—; (iii) distinction between finite goods (e.g., the welfare of a “ closed ” society) and goods which are *in suo genere* infinite (e.g., knowledge), transcending complete actualization in human experience; (iv) desire directed towards a *summum bonum*. Such an absolute good (cf. duty universal) remains for ethics an unrealizable ideal, pointing beyond ethical experience to metaphysics and religion.

#### IV. THE *SEINSOLLEN* (“ OUGHT-TO-BE ”)

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1. Can the dualism which has been the theme of the two preceding chapters be resolved (as is often contended) by deriving the concept of obligation

from that of good? Can we say that what is good "ought to be" (*seinsollen*), and that what "ought to be" ought, where possible, to be done (*thunsollen*). Is duty to be justified as that which realizes and/or is conducive to good? So thought the Greeks, at the cost of failure to explain moral evil. The grounds for this view; it appears to secure objectivity, unity, value to moral actions. But it cannot be the truth.

2. The Utilitarian doctrine, that "ought" means conduciveness to good, discussed and rejected, as failing to give a criterion of what is really right and as contrary to moral experience. Consideration of consequences, factual and moral, enters into the preliminaries to moral decision, but cannot fully account for the decisive intuition of my duty, here and now. The doctrine of a form of good, immanent in, and realized by, moral action (as stated, e.g., by Mr. Joseph) is more philosophical and calls for fuller consideration.
3. If there is a necessary connexion between "ought" and "good", it must be synthetic; either (a) "good" is entailed by "ought" or (b) "ought" is entailed by "good". The former position (a) (that of Kant) involves the restriction of value to moral goodness.
4. The second and more serious view (b) implies that what is good "ought to be" (*seinsollen*). Hartmann's statement of this doctrine criticized. The use of the *seinsollen* in common speech, in prayer and in prophetic utterance, is illegitimate, save as implying the *thunsollen*. For the "ought", if moral, is always practical, and means that something is what someone ought to do; and implies an imperative, deriving its authority from a superior source. "Good", on the other hand, is a predicable character; the thought of it may (or may not) provoke desire, but carries with it no imperative. Moreover, how can obligations which depend on a merely possible ideal be categorical? The scale of goods, again, does not correspond to that of *prima facie* (general) obligations.
5. Thus the dependence of "ought" upon "good" is found to be contingent, not necessary. This conclusion cannot be escaped by holding that what is good always ought to be done, when it is in the

agent's power to do it. To do the best we can is at best a useful practical rule. But morality commands perfection, and, here also, points forward to religion.

## V. THE MORAL ARGUMENT TO THEISM 144

Having shown (Chapter I) the nature of the distinction between morality and religion, and (Chapters II, III, IV) the dualism arising within ethical experience, we pass to consider (a) the positive approach to religion furnished by that experience (Chapter V) and (b) the answer given by religion to the unsolved problems of ethics, and especially that of the relation between duty and goodness (Chapter VI).

1. Preliminary points: (i) The life *sub ratione boni* offers an approach to religion by provoking to the thought of an Absolute Good; so also does the moral consciousness, by exciting reverence for the moral law; moral habituation, again, is a necessary groundwork for the apprehension of speculative truth, in religion as elsewhere. (ii) Religious experience, being rational, is at once personal (*ad modum recipientis*) and objective; and, though self-critical, calls for confirmation by knowledge drawn from non-religious sources (cf. Chapter I) and especially from man's moral consciousness. (iii) The case for theism is cumulative, and rests on the convergence of several lines of probable argument (the traditional "proofs"), forming a progressive series which culminates in the moral argument.
2. The moral argument to theism is characteristic of modern thought; its presentation by Kant suffers from artificiality, due to his exclusive insistence on divine transcendence, and his desire to vindicate the independence of morality upon religious sanctions. The nerve of Kant's argument is that the unconditionality of moral obligation implies a moral order which is objectively real, and therewith a divine sovereign in the "kingdom of ends". If this inference be valid, religious belief is shown to be grounded in practical reason.
3. Consideration of the two main objections to the argument: (a) Is the recognition of the moral order a valid ground for the inference to God? Metaphysics, it will be said, suffices to refute naturalism,

apart from religion. But the metaphysical doctrine of "subsistence" fails to solve the problem of fact and value, existence and essence: it leaves us with an unresolved dualism of worlds, ideal and actual.

~~The moral argument maintains that moral values (and essences generally) are real as thoughts of an actually existing God. Value is value only when actualized.~~ The import of the ontological argument, as the denial of the severance of a world of essence from a world of existence.

4. (b) The second objection is more difficult to answer. Are we justified in speaking of God as good?

~~Certainly God cannot be regarded as subject to moral obligation, nor consequently as morally good; though the moral law is grounded in his nature. But can he be called good at all without undue anthropomorphism?~~ Neither the moral argument, nor any other, save that from religious experience, can justify this assertion. St. Thomas's theory of analogical predication examined and found wanting; the "conformity of proportionality" between finite to infinite does not hold. But a way of escape from the impasse is found in the religious experience of man's love to God, which is homogeneous with God's love to man (both alike being the activity of the divine Spirit), and can be affirmed "univocally". St. Bernard's statements (and William of Thierry's) point to this solution, which involves no confusion between the Creator and the creature. If it holds good, a basis is provided for the ascription to God of other attributes besides love, e.g., goodness, without risk of undue anthropomorphism. Thus the witness of religious experience provides the necessary complement to the moral argument.

*Additional note to Chapter V: on Value and Actuality.*

- ✓ Does value, when thought out, imply actuality?

Or can value be attached to timeless essences, subsisting apart from the world of existence? Three alternatives considered: (1) that ideal forms are constructs of human thinking (naturalism), a position fatal to the claims of morality, art and religion. (2, i) the theory of subsistence, involving an unreconciled dualism of worlds, ideal and actual; and how can abstract essences have value?; (2, ii) the Platonic doctrine of forms as individual sub-

stances, a theory which, as is shown in Chapter VII, is tenable only if the form of good be identified with God. By elimination of these alternatives, we conclude that ideal values are timelessly actual in God.

## VI. DUTY, GOODNESS AND GOD: THE RELIGIOUS SYNTHESIS . . . . .

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The unanswered problems of ethical experience: can they find a solution in religion? That of the dualism of ideals (discussed in Chapters II-IV) selected for consideration.

1. Moral obligation being relative to the condition of imperfect beings in an imperfect world, a solution of the dualism must establish the primacy of good. For religion, God is at once goodness and the good, while above moral obligation and virtue; the moral law is the expression of his will for man. Illustration (from Dante, *de Mon.* III. 16) of the medieval conception of man's status and twofold end, and of the place of authority and law, in the theocentric world-order; qualifications necessary to its right interpretation.
2. ~~But are we justified in ascribing will and purpose to God?~~ Following out the implications of the assumption (see Chapter V) that God is love, we are warranted in conceiving him (*a*) as individual spirit, (*b*) self-conscious, (*c*) self-diffusive in creative activity (*ἐνεργεῖα ἀκίνητος*, "activity of immobility"). Love implies both a conscious lover and an object capable of reciprocating. Thus intelligence and will can be ascribed to God in relation to his creation by a justifiable analogy. The concept of purpose, on the other hand, implies limitations which render it applicable only to human apprehension of God's timeless activity of creation as manifested within the temporal order. In this sense we can speak of God's purposes, not of a single purpose; for the temporal order is not a self-contained whole, and the timeless order, to which it is relative, lies beyond our ken.
3. Corollaries from the foregoing: (i) what is really right (*i.e.*, God's will for man) is knowable by man only in part; (ii) the value of acts done for duty's sake is guaranteed for religious faith.



4. The problem of the unity of all values is answered by reference to God, in whose goodness all forms of good find their principle of unification.

*Additional note to Chapter VI.*

The chief remaining antinomies of ethics and the solutions offered by Christianity.

1. "Ought" implies "can"; yet the moral command is to will perfectly what is really our duty, and this cannot be fulfilled or even known. The moral law remains formal and transcendent of all empirical content; but the impracticability of its full application is no ground for moral scepticism. For religion, the moral ideal wins content as God's will for man, and man's inability to accomplish it is overcome by divine grace.

2. The problems of (a) moral evil and (b) moral freedom.

(a) Morality has its life in the conflict against evil, and yet sets its faith in the sovereignty of good; to regard evil as illusory or, again, as ultimately real, is equally fatal to morality. The impasse in the philosophies of Spinoza and of Gentile. The problem is integral with that of time. For religion, moral evil has its source in the will; as such it is positive and actual *ex parte creaturae*, negative and non-existent *ex parte Creatoris*. Christianity has never burked the problem; but a complete solution lies beyond the capacity of the human mind.

(b) Moral obligation and responsibility imply freedom of choice; yet the ideals of duty and good alike point to a higher form of freedom, in which choice is excluded and the self responds spontaneously to attraction. For religion, *non posse peccare* is the condition of the redeemed *in patria*. Here again the religious solution rests on the real distinction between a state of moral probation and one of consummated perfection.

VII. VIRTUS INFUSA . . . . . 231

1. Since the religious life consists not merely in speculation (*theoria*) but also in practice, the question arises of the relation between religious and ethical conduct. The higher religions give their

~~sanction to morality, yet in so doing transform morality.~~ The so-called immoral practices enjoined by primitive religions are rather to be regarded as survivals of pre-moral custom.

2. Consideration of (i) religious duties outside the scope of morals (inclusive of routine discipline); (ii) the modification of moral duties and (iii) of ethical goods, due to the specifically religious motive of love to God, e.g., the Christian virtues of humility and joy, and the contrast between Christian and secular self-culture. Contrary to T. H. Green's view, the religious motive is found to impart a new form of life, affecting almost every detail of conduct, and implying profound modification of ethical values.
2. Illustration of the distinction between religious and moral *praxis* from the history of the appropriation by Christianity of Graeco-Roman ethics. The dualism of Stoic morality and the Christian way of life in St. Ambrose's *De Officiis*. St. Thomas Aquinas effects a synthesis of the two factors by his distinction of "acquired" and "infused" virtue; reason and revelation being man's appointed guides to temporal and eternal felicity. His doctrines (1) of divine and natural law, and (2) of the moral (acquired) and theological (infused) virtues. The latter are not set in external juxtaposition to the former, but transform moral virtue by the "form" of charity (*caritas*) which imparts unity to the whole of the Christian life. Thus "grace perfects nature".
3. Two corollaries may be drawn: (i) If the beliefs on which this theory of infused virtue rests are valid, we are confronted with a type of good conduct higher than the moral, and are led (with Professor Collingwood) to conceive a hierarchy of forms of goodness, in which morality holds an intermediate place. The difference is based on difference of motive, religious *praxis* being inspired by love towards God. (ii) An examination of this motive suggests a new variant of the ontological argument, since love towards God, if a genuine experience (and it is paradoxical to interpret it as an illusion), implies his existence (and not merely the thought thereof) as immanent in the experiencing subject.

## VIII. FROM RELIGION TO MORALITY.

1. For an example of the influence of the religious way of life upon morality, we must consider those features of Christian origin that survive in the secular morality of our own time. Nowhere else can we study the effects of a civilized religion upon an autonomous code of morals. Our subject is Christian ethics, in the strict sense of this much-abused term; for the practical teaching of Christianity is ethical rather than religious.
2. Illustration of the Christian elements in present-day morality from the concepts of (a) personality, (b) humanity, each of which, in its modern usage (e.g., by Kant in the *Grundlegung*), is a legacy from Christianity, and, when severed (as in the secular humanism of the last two centuries) from its source in religion, degenerates into an empty form. Though these concepts still persist as secularist ideals, they are doomed to lose their hold upon morality, unless grafted on the stock of religion.
3. When once a developed system of morals has become autonomous, it reacts against religion and questions the value of religious *praxis*, despite the facts (a) that religion enjoys a prerogative as *theoria*, and (b) that it claims, not to destroy, but to fulfil, morality. With those critics of religion who deny to it all value (e.g., the advocates of Dialectical materialism) there can be no compromise; for the issue is that of this-worldliness against other-worldliness. The empirical objections, based on the *chronique scandaleuse* of religious history, are true, but irrelevant in principle. For (i) a religion like Christianity makes stern demands on its adherents, and must be judged by its best fruits. (ii) The severest condemnation of abuses is in the name of religious principle and comes from within the Christian pale. (iii) Criticism of religious dogma is worthless save when based on adequate theological knowledge. (iv) The charges of formalism and superstition often rest on a misunderstanding of the missionary vocation of Christianity. Christianity has always stood for truth. (v) For religious persecution, the laity were largely responsible; to-day the State shows itself more intolerant than the Church. (vi) The gravest charges against religion are those of pride and of slothful acquiescence in things as they are.

4. Concluding observations : The relativity of moral judgements contrasted with religious *theoria* of God as the absolute good. The error of holding religious faith and God, its object, to be super-rational.

## IX. CONCLUSION . . . . . 288

The purpose of this closing chapter is to show, by reference to the state of the world to-day, how indifference to the claims of religion is largely due to the prevalent indifference to reason and truth, and the practical effects of this indifference.

1. In popular thought, and also in much of current science and philosophy, the activity of reason is restricted to logical processes of ratiocination, and super-rational faculties are invoked on the ultimate issues of life. The revolt against a narrow intellectualism and the consequent spread of unreason illustrated from the fields of morals, art, and religion.
2. The same holds in science and metaphysics, *e.g.*, Bergson's appeal from intellect to intuition, and the pragmatism of William James. The concept of motion dominates modern science as motion dominates modern life; coincidence of unrest in the world of thought with unrest in the world of action. Causes of the latter, and its results; the disparagement of truth and absorption in practical interests evidenced by the quasi-religious but wholly this-worldly gospels of Fascism and Communism.
3. Can philosophy, which bore its part in dethroning reason, help towards its restoration? Only on two conditions : (a) that it establish a wider and more fruitful conception of reason and of the rational life, reverting to the ancient and medieval tradition, and discarding the appeal to super-rational principles. The sphere of reason as inclusive of the knowledge won in personal intercourse, of man with man and of man with God, as also of the knowledge of the individual revealed by history and by art. (b) That the philosophy be a religious philosophy, resting on speculative vision of that which lies beyond space and time, and enlisting the whole of man's personality in the service of God. The bankruptcy of secular humanism points to the need of such a philosophy.
4. A wider outlook is thus opened out for philosophy.

APPENDIX I.—CROCE'S THEORY OF ECONOMIC ACTION . . . . .

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1. Croce's distinction between ethical (= moral) and economic action, as based upon and complementary to Kant's doctrine.
2. Ambiguity in his account of economic action as volition of the particular; narrower and wider interpretations.
3. He fails to establish the autonomy and rationality of economic action. For (i) the only amoral acts are found to be pre-moral; when morality has developed, there can be no merely economic action; (ii) only moral action has economic value. The confusion illustrated from Croce's theory of politics.
4. Bearing of these remarks on the problem of the distinction between historical greatness and moral goodness: greatness cannot be brought under the rubric of economic action: action directed towards *valori di cultura* is, on Croce's doctrine, ethical.
5. The source of Croce's errors lies in his restriction of ethical volition to the field of humanistic and cultural values; which in turn is due to his vigorous refusal to admit transcendence (= *il mistero*). His interpretation of history as a purely rational system.
6. Only if the universal willed in ethical action be at once transcendent and immanent, can the claims of experience be met. But this leads to a theistic philosophy.

APPENDIX II.—BERGSON ON MORALITY AND RELIGION . . . . .

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1. Contrast between the cool reception of Bergson's writings by British scientists and philosophers and the fervent and widespread response evoked in France. His views on morals and religion have at last found expression in *Les Deux Sources*.
2. The distinction between static (closed) and dynamic (open) morality; the former is infra-intellectual, the latter supra-intellectual. Both have their roots in biology; both are intermingled on the plane of civilized human life; the one is social, the other personal. Criticism of Bergson's theory of obliga-

- tion; his rejection of secularist humanism, on the other hand, holds good, for the love of humanity has its source in the Judæo-Christian legacy.
3. The distinction between static and dynamic religion. Both types, again, rest on biological foundations. But has not the latter a share in the development of primitive static cults ?
  4. Bergson's account of dynamic religion is open to criticism, in that (i) he interprets mysticism as culminating in *praxis* rather than in *theoria*, (ii) he confines dynamic religion to mystical experience, and (iii) blurs the distinction between religion and morality. Open morality is interpreted as the outcome of religious mysticism.
  5. Bergson's outlook, in his closing chapter, on the world of to-day. His vindication of Kant's three Ideas of Reason, freedom, immortality and God.

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