Section XII: The Post-Enlightenment Period

Contemporary Civilization (Ideas and Institutions of Western Man)

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4. Jeremy Bentham and Utilitarianism

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4. Jeremy Bentham and Utilitarianism

Abstract
Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) is the lst Englishman with whom we shall deal in this chapter. His life spanned the years from the Enlightenment almost up to the Victorian Age (1837-1901). His thoughts as well as his dates make him a useful transitional figure. [excerpt]

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Contemporary Civilization, Post-Enlightenment, Utilitarianism, happiness, freedom, Jeremy Bentham, David Hume

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Comments
This is a part of Section XII: The Post-Enlightenment Period. The Contemporary Civilization page lists all additional sections of Ideas and Institutions of Western Man, as well as the Table of Contents for both volumes.

More About Contemporary Civilization:
From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson’s request with the goal of “introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages.”

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems. A second edition, retitled Ideas and Institutions of Western Man, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker ’66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

Authors
a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures each in their appointed place. This law is not subject to the will of those who, by an obligation above them, and infinitely superior, are bound to submit their will to that law. The municipal corporations of that universal kingdom are not morally at liberty, at their pleasure, and on their speculations of a contingent improvement, wholly to separate and tear asunder the bands of their subordinate community, and to dissolve it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary principles. It is the first and supreme necessity only, a necessity that is not chosen, but chooses, a necessity paramount to deliberation, that admits no discussion and demands no evidence, which alone can justify a resort to anarchy. This necessity is no exception to the rule; because this necessity itself is a part, too, of that moral and physical disposition of things to which man must be obedient by consent or force: but if that which is only submission to necessity should be made the object of choice, the law is broken, Nature is disobeyed, and the rebellious are outlawed, cast forth, and exiled, from this world of reason, and order, and peace, and virtue, and fruitful penitence, into the antagonist world of madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing sorrow.*

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) is the last Englishman with whom we shall deal in this chapter. His life spanned the years from the Enlightenment almost up to the Victorian Age (1837-1901). His thoughts as well as his dates make him a useful transitional figure.

In many ways Bentham was a product of the Enlightenment. The basis for his thought was nature or what was natural, as he interpreted it. He believed that his principles were self-evident, and that they could be understood by men of all cultural backgrounds. From his home, aptly called the Hermitage, he presented his ideas as a program, almost a blueprint for action, with the calm self-assurance of the eighteenth century aristocrat.

And yet Bentham was not just an enlightener. He differed from the earlier thinkers in many ways. His interests were more practical than theoretical. Instead of being completely critical of the past, he wished to retain what was good and improve on it. Instead of accepting nature as already perfect, he wished to perfect it. Instead of emphasizing physical nature, he focused on human nature. But his reforming zeal was not directed toward the moral or religious, which had been John Wesley's concern; nor did he accept Burke's more conservative interpretation of social reform. He rather applied the enthusiasm of Wesley to a program of enlightened social reform. He even hoped that the newly formed Latin American republics would call upon him for plans to determine their social and political structures. In 1811 he offered his services to President James Madison, asking approval for his drawing up a new code of laws for the United States.

During most of his life Bentham was known for his advocacy of prison reform. In 1784 Parliament inaugurated a program of deporting prisoners to Australia, which Bentham opposed with his own plan for their reformation. His plan, in the architectural part of which he had the help of his brother, who had been an engineer in the service of Catherine the Great, was written in 1787. In 1791 it was published as Panopticon; or the Inspection House: containing the idea of a new principle of construction applicable to any sort of establishment, in which persons of any description are to be kept under inspection; and in particular to Penitentiary-houses, Prisons. Houses of industry, Workhouses, Poor Houses, Manufactories, Lazarettos, Hospitals, and Schools; with a plan of management adopted to the principle.... The plan of construction called for a circular building in which isolated cells could all be inspected from one control position. It thus embodied for Bentham the ultimate in environmental control. The plan of management called for a contractual arrangement between the operator and the government on the basis of enlightened self-interest. When questioned about the possibility of some of the inmates resenting their loss of freedom, Bentham replied that happiness and not freedom was what people sought. He spent much of his own fortune in an abortive attempt to establish such a prison in England. With the help of friends, he recovered the money much later, but not until after he had been forced into serious financial straits, and after he had been thoroughly disillusioned with the people in power and the current form of government.

Great improvement is the health and sanitation. Idea of rehabilitating these people, separate the worst from the less worse. Imprisonment being made more happy. People (outside) happy—less diss. 18th century great age of reform. Did a lot for the general people. Crime very predominant punishment severe. Bentham said punishment produces no happiness in this prisoner of the people.
Bentham's emphasis on reform, plus the fact that he had been made a citizen of France in 1792 along with Thomas Paine, did not throw him into the camp of the radicals of his early years. The doctrine of natural rights upon which they based their programs he viewed as subversive of good government. He deplored the writing of both the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of Rights. He saw in these a statement of rights such as could be turned against any constitution with disastrous effects. This opinion was not, however, as a result of the events in France, as can be seen from the date of his major work (1789). Bentham's more moderate approach to reform came from something more profound than either current events or current radicalism. It came from a rethinking of Enlightenment ideas on both morals and epistemology, in which he had the good fortune to be preceded by some of the most acute and critical minds of the eighteenth century.

Some of these critics started from the thoughts of Newton and Locke and pushed these thoughts even further than they had. In the field of epistemology this led to the development of a group of thinkers who, along with Locke, are called the British Empiricists. Included are George Berkeley (1685-1753) and David Hume (1711-1776). In the field of ethics this same self-criticism produced a number of different types of thought which attempted to solve the problem of how to harmonize man's egoism and altruism. Such enlighteners as Adam Smith and Joseph Butler had thought that this relationship, like all other relations in nature, was completely automatic.

Bishop George Berkeley did not approach the problem of the nature and limits of human knowledge without an angle, as we would say today. He was greatly worried over the manners and morals, skepticism, materialism, and atheism of his times. While this did not prevent him from writing some of the most lucid and significant philosophy to come out of England, it did interfere with his being completely objective about the opinions of those with whom he disagreed. We are, today, witnessing a revival of the study of Berkeley because of his emphasis on the importance of the human factor in both scientific and philosophical knowing.

Berkeley pushed Locke's emphasis on experience one step further and came to the conclusion that the material substance, both individual and general, which Locke had believed to be there as the cause of our sensations and support of the qualities which resulted from these sensations, could not be experienced or proven. All that we know of things individually or collectively was included in the qualities which we receive in our experience of them; and, to say that there must be some matter whose brownness and squareness we experience, was to make a gratuitous assumption. This argument led to the further assertion, of no small significance, that both types of qualities, primary or measurable (squareness) and secondary or psychological (brownness), depended equally upon the mind for their

Bentham says: "It is the punishment of the crime. If there be much pain, the crime has brought it on itself, and how much more proportionate punishment." Berkeley: "Prepare the way for utility, by determining the extent, nature, and reason of useful and inferior pleasures." 
existence. This latter argument upset what scientists since Galileo had assumed to be an obvious truth: that when they were dealing with mathematical measurements they were dealing with the "real" world. It was this sort of an upset which was welcomed by Berkeley.

The result was, as he saw it, that the constituent elements of nature were minds and their immediate objects of perception and thought. And, because minds were incapable of representing anything which was not idea, matter itself could only be the expression of minds or God. Nature thus became, for Berkeley, "divine visual language," in which experience was interpreted in terms of signs rather than the Lockean sensations of things. This type of philosophy, known as subjective idealism, differed from the idealism of Plato, which had given an independent existence to the ideas or forms. For Berkeley ideas depended on minds, or Mind, and thus lost the independent status which they had in the thought of Plato, as well as the dependence on sensation which they had for Locke. And for the bishop this line of argument meant that he had refuted skepticism, disproven materialism, and proven the necessary existence of God, as well as laid a firm foundation for manners and morals.

In this he had, like John Wesley, almost proven too much, for his philosophy lacked an a priori principle by which one could distinguish between his various experiences or signs. Such a principle later British moralists were to suggest by approaching experience from the side of morals rather than epistemology. And the remaining problem in the thought of Berkeley, that of the relation between minds and Mind, had to wait for Hegel's attempt at a metaphysical solution. In the meantime, the line of British empiricism had not yet run its full course, a development which was to be completed by David Hume.

Hume pushed the same type of Enlightenment thinking on to what metaphysical elements were left in Berkeley's thought. As Berkeley had disproven the proof of matter, so Hume, with equal devastation, disproved the reigning proofs for both mind and causality. No one, he argued, could ever really see his mind, his own or anyone else's. What he did see were merely some ideas which were supposed to be "in the mind" as qualities had been supposed to be "in matter." It was just as absurd logically to argue from idea to mind as it was to argue from idea to matter. Both were unproved and unprovable assumptions. But Berkeley's argument was not yet defeated. According to him our ideas must of necessity depend on minds or Mind, and therefore mind must exist. Hume's analysis of the idea of necessity, if accepted, completed his destruction of the bishop's thought.

He divided the idea of causality into its three constituent parts: contiguity, succession, and necessity. It was easy to see things contiguous or touching one another. It was also easy to see things succeeding or following one another. But necessity was an entirely different proposition. Neither
XII p. 41

experience nor reason seemed capable of establishing this aspect of causality, which alone made possible one's saying that something "must" have happened, or that something "must" exist. Here again, as with his shattering proof of minds, Hume did not deny the existence of necessity, only that its existence could not be proved by such means.

Hume's destructive criticisms brought down upon him the charges that he was a skeptic, an atheist, and an unbeliever. If his personal life had been notoriously immoral, many critics would not have been above using this fact to discredit his philosophical arguments. Such was not the case. His life was an example of gentleness, humanity, and love of his fellow men. His friends, among whom were numbered Adam Smith and Rousseau, agreed upon calling him le bon David.

The problem of his skepticism bothered Hume himself. There were times, he tells us, when it was better to lightheartedly forget such speculations and join one's friends for dinner. But, a more serious answer than this was needed. Since he believed in the existence of things, minds, and the necessity whose proofs he had destroyed, Hume was forced to rethink his own approach to knowing. This he did in terms of what was, for him, a deeper interpretation of experience, one which gave man's feelings, or passions as he called them, the place of priority: "Reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions." Here, in the feelings, there seemed to be unshakable ground upon which to build. Starting here it was possible to reconstruct the proofs which he had destroyed, so that one could now give reasons for believing in the existence of things and minds. And the relations which exist between them could be discovered in the connections that we have in our own experience of them as, for example, in our association of warmth with the rising sun. This association of ideas, as it came to be called, was further strengthened by habit and custom as a result of which men became accustomed to making such associations. Instead of having the ideas of things and their relations caused in his mind, the knowing subject was now seen by Hume as reading such ideas into his experience from his own feelings. Thus, for example, the element of necessity was brought back into the idea of causality by the subject as knower; but it was a very different kind of necessity. Whereas for Newton "must" had referred to a law of nature, for Hume it referred to a moral intention: something "must" be done.

Hume thus linked epistemology and ethics in a radically new way, giving expression to his great concern for the latter. The feelings of pleasure and pain became, for him, standards of what was useful and not useful; and things were known to be desirable because they were desired. Further, usefulness became identified with what was usually called good. Such an interpretation of the good could be proven simply in terms of experience; no reference to revelation, any a priori reason, or intuition was needed. Experience was sufficient. It spoke for
itself, giving men an adequate basis for knowing what they meant by good. Here was one of the major ideas which was to be brought into utilitarianism by Bentham.

Hume pressed his argument even further, into the realm of speculative philosophy. On such a basis of knowing, selves, matter, and causality could be read back into nature, although never as absolutes or laws, and always as tentative and hypothetical. But they were not so tentative as to keep Hume from one of the most cogent attacks on the supernatural element in miracles, in which he completely reduced the miraculous element to its subjective aspect. And, by analogy, God became the Spirit animating the whole world of nature, as our own spirit animates our human bodies.

This interpretation was also Hume's way of solving the problem of any possible clash between individualistic and collective desires. These desires were naturally in harmony with each other. Nature operated, as Adam Smith taught, by "an unseen hand," or as Butler had written, it was "so perfectly coincident" as to bring about what Hume called a "happy occurrence" of egoism and altruism. Hume thus placed himself in line with the basic Enlightenment thought, while avoiding the extremes of those who argued either for man's basic selfishness or for his basic unselfishness.

However, this interpretation did not completely solve the problem. Hume had, in the first place, destroyed the Enlightenment concept of nature as it came from the hands of Newton and Locke. This meant, secondly, that he had left the ordinary man, with his desire for absolutes to apply to practical questions, without anything but a method of arriving at proximate answers. Such questions as Whose pleasure or pain? Whose utility? and Whose good? could not receive final answers. In the rough and tumble of the late eighteenth century something stronger seemed to be called for than a method which relied ultimately on such a happy concurrence. It was this need which brought forth both Bentham's utilitarianism and Kant's categorical imperative.

Bentham's solution to this moral problem was utilitarianism, in which he enlarged on Hume's ideas. His own contribution was such that he was called the father of utilitarianism and the Newton of legislation. In An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1789) we can see his development of this line of thought and catch the characteristic ideas of utilitarianism: that everything is to be judged in terms of utility; that utility is to be defined in terms of the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people; that the greatest happiness principle can be expressed in terms of the most pleasure and the least pain; that it is possible to create what he called a moral arithmetic; and that there are certain "sanctions" which move people in the direction of utility thus defined.
From such a summary it is possible to conclude that Bentham had not yet completely resolved the problem of the clash between egoism and altruism. The motive upon which he builds is clearly selfish, expressed in terms of enlightened self-interest, while the end that he seeks is just as clearly altruistic or collective. He attempted to resolve the conflict by means of the sanctions, which took the place of nature's happy concurrence and applied the pressure necessary to assure the greatest happiness of the greatest number from men's individual selfishness. These sanctions were four in number: the physical, the political, the moral, and the religious. Since the favor or disfavor of God could not be readily ascertained, since the moral sanction turned out to be that of popular approval, and since the laws of nature were separate from those of morals, the major operative powers left in the field of sanctions were those of the state and popular opinion. It was just these elements of social life which Bentham wished to reform. Clearly something was needed to make Bentham's utilitarianism work; and it was this something which was the contribution of John Stuart Mill, to be discussed in the following chapter.

Having proven his theory to his own satisfaction, however, Bentham went on to show that utility was the only justification for the basic ideas of either the radicals or the conservatives. The factors of natural rights and of social contract based on these rights could, he argued, be verified only in terms of an appeal to their utility. The same was true of the conservative ideas about the importance of tradition, the constitution, history, and society. The only justification for these was also in terms of the same appeal to utility.

It is evident that utilitarianism implied a different conception of ethics from the one to which people had been accustomed. For it morals and ethics were no longer concerned with final or absolute values such as the Good, or the Right. The value of all acts depended on their utility, their tendency to produce greater happiness. Such utilitarian values could, at their best, never be anything more than a good, or a right. Nor were the usual ways of knowing values honored. Innate ideas, intuition, or revelation were no longer adequate. The only ways of knowing utilitarian values were by means of experience as interpreted by the British Empiricists. If there were any primary or final value for Bentham it was reform; and of reform there could be no end. For such reasons as these Bentham was not interested in developing any final ethical system, any more than a finished metaphysical system. It is in this change of interest that we can most clearly see the difference between Bentham on the one hand and Plato or Aquinas on the other. As morals became more and more a means of improving the human situation, and nothing more, so philosophy became more and more a means or a method of knowing, rather than the final result of that knowing.
There were other matters in the minds of his countrymen than Bentham's book in 1789. The excitement of the French Revolution and Napoleon served to focus English thought and energy on more immediate matters. The result was an almost complete neglect of Bentham until the very end of his life. He became more and more discouraged, despite the fact that his books were selling well in countries other than England. The fate of his Panopticon plan served only to deepen his discouragement.

However, the signs of a new day were appearing, even before 1815. In 1807 a parliamentary candidate was elected from Bentham's own borough, a candidate who was not the choice of either the Torry or the Whig party. His election seemed an expression of the feeling of the people in general toward both parties, a feeling which Bentham had come to share. He was rapidly drawn into the planning which centered around this new candidate. Planning in this sense was something quite different from the planning to which Bentham had been accustomed. A new period in his life opened up when he was sixty years of age.

During this last part of his life Bentham became the center of a group of reformers, called the philosophical radicals. Among these were James Mill (1773-1836) and his son, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Under the influence of these men, who were more radical than he had been, Bentham's thoughts began to change. Disappointed in the aristocratic leadership of the Enlightenment in a way in which Burke had not been, Bentham emerged as a believer in the program of political liberalism, advocating, among other things, parliamentary reform. The Reform Bill of 1832 was a distinct triumph for Bentham and his cohorts in the very last year of his life.

Of the Principle of Utility

I. Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think; every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while. The principle of utility recognizes this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law. Systems which attempt to question it, deal in sounds instead of sense, in caprice instead of reason, in darkness instead of light.

But enough of metaphor and declamation: it is not by such means that moral science is to be improved.

II. The principle of utility is the foundation of
the present work: it will be proper therefore at the outset to give an explicit and determinate account of what is meant by it. By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever; and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government.

III. By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual.

IV. The interest of the community is one of the most general expressions that can occur in the phraseology of morals: no wonder that the meaning of it is often lost. When it has a meaning, it is this. The community is a fictitious body, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its members. The interest of the community then is, what? — the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it.

V. It is in vain to talk of the interest of the community, without understanding what is the interest of the individual. A thing is said to promote the interest, or to be for the interest, of an individual, when it tends to add to the sum total of his pleasures: or, what comes to the same thing, to diminish the sum total of his pains.

VI. An action then may be said to be conformable to the principle of utility, or, for shortness sake, to utility, (meaning with respect to the community at large) when the tendency it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any it has to diminish it.

VII. A measure of government (which is but a particular kind of action, performed by a particular person or persons) may be said to be conformable to or dictated by the principle of utility, when in like manner the tendency which it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any which it has to diminish it.

VIII. When an action, or in particular a measure of government, is supposed by a man to be conformable to the principle of utility, it may be convenient, for the purposes of discourse, to imagine a kind of law or dictate, called a law or dictate of utility: and to speak of the action in question, as being conformable to such law or dictate.

IX. A man may be said to be a partizan of the
principle of utility, when the approbation or disapproba-
tion he annexes to any action, or to any measure, is de-
termined by and proportioned to the tendency which he con-
ceives it to have to augment or to diminish the happiness
of the community: or in other words, to its conformity or
unconformity to the laws or dictates of utility.

X. Of an action that is conformable to the principle
of utility one may always say either that it is one that
ought to be done, or at least that it is not one that
ought not to be done. One may say also, that it is right
it should be done; at least that it is wrong it should
not be done; that it is a right action; at least that it
is not a wrong action. When thus interpreted, the words
ought, and right and wrong; and others of that stamp, have
a meaning: when otherwise, they have none.

XI. Has the rectitude of this principle been ever
formally contested? It should seem that it had, by those
who have not known what they have been meaning. Is it
susceptible of any direct proof? it should seem not: for
that which is used to prove every thing else
cannot it­
selves be proved: a chain of proofs must have their com-
mencement somewhere. To give such proof is as impossible
as it is needless.

XII. Not that there is or ever has been that human
creature breathing, however stupid or perverse, who has
not on many, perhaps on most occasions of his life, de-
ferred to it. By the natural constitution of the human
frame, on most occasions of their lives men in general
embrace this principle, without thinking of it: if not
for the ordering of their own actions, yet for the trying
of their own actions, as well as of those of other men.
There have been, at the same time, not many, perhaps, even
of the most intelligent, who have been disposed to embrace
it purely and without reserve. There are even few who
have not taken some occasion or other to quarrel with it,
either on account of their not understanding always how to
apply it, or on account of some prejudice or other which
they were afraid to examine into, or could not bear to
part with. For such is the stuff that man is made of: in
principle and in practice, in a right track and in a wrong
one, the rarest of all human qualities is consistency.

XIII. When a man attempts to combat the principle of
utility, it is with reasons drawn, without his being aware
of it, from that very principle itself. His arguments, if
they prove any thing, prove not that the principle is
wrong, but that, according to the applications he supposes
to be made of it, it is misapplied. Is it possible for a
man to move the earth? Yes; but he must first find out
another earth to stand upon.

XIV. To disprove the propriety of it by arguments is im-
possible; but, from the causes that have been mentioned,
or from some confused or partial view of it, a man may
happen to be disposed not to relish it. Where this is
the case, if he thinks the settling of his opinions on
such a subject worth the trouble, let him take the following steps, and at length, perhaps, he may come to reconcile himself to it.

1. Let him settle with himself, whether he would wish to discard this principle altogether; if so, let him consider what it is that all his reasonings (in matters of politics especially) can amount to?

2. If he would, let him settle with himself, whether he would judge and act without any principle, or whether there is any other he would judge and act by?

3. If there be, let him examine and satisfy himself whether the principle he thinks he has found is really any separate intelligible principle; or whether it be not a mere principle in words, a kind of phrase, which at bottom expresses neither more nor less than the mere averment of his own unfounded sentiments; that is, what in another person he might be apt to call caprice?

4. If he is inclined to think that his own approbation or disapprobation, annexed to the idea of an act, without any regard to its consequences, is a sufficient foundation for him to judge and act upon, let him ask himself whether his sentiment is to be a standard of right and wrong, with respect to every other man, or whether every man's sentiment has the same privilege of being a standard to itself?

5. In the first case, let him ask himself whether his principle is not despotical, and hostile to all the rest of the human race?

6. In the second case, whether it is not anarchial, and whether at this rate there are not as many different standards of right and wrong as there are men? and whether even to the same man, the same thing, which is right today, may not (without the least change in its nature) be wrong to-morrow? and whether the same thing is not right and wrong in the same place at the same time? and in either case, whether all argument is not at an end? and whether, when two men have said, 'I like this,' and 'I don't like it,' they can (upon such a principle) have anything more to say?

7. If he should have said to himself, No: for that the sentiment which he proposes as a standard must be grounded on reflection, let him say on what particulars the reflection is to turn? if on particulars having relation to the utility of the act, then let him say whether this is not deserting his own principle, and borrowing assistance from that very one in opposition to which he sets it up: or if not on those particulars, on what other particulars?

8. If he should be for compounding the matter, and adopting his own principle in part, and the principle of utility in part, let him say how far he will adopt it?

9. When he has settled with himself where he will stop, then let him ask himself how he justifies to himself
the adopting it so far? and why he will not adopt it any farther?

10. Admitting any other principle than the principle of utility to be a right principle, a principle that it is right for a man to pursue; admitting (what is not true) that the word right can have a meaning without reference to utility, let him say whether there is any such thing as a motive that a man can have to pursue the dictates of it: If there is, let him say what that motive is, and how it is to be distinguished from those which enforce the dictates of utility: if not, then lastly let him say what it is this other principle can be good for?

Of the Four Sanctions or Sources of Pain and Pleasure

I. It has been shown that the happiness of the individuals, of whom a community is composed, that is their pleasures and their security, is the end and the sole end which the legislator ought to have in view: the sole standard, in conformity to which each individual ought, as far as depends upon the legislator, to be made to fashion his behaviour. But whether it be this or any thing else that is to be done, there is nothing by which a man can ultimately be made to do it, but either pain or pleasure. Having taken a general view of these two grand objects (viz. pleasure, and what comes to the same thing, immunity from pain) in the character of final causes; it will be necessary to take a view of pleasure and pain itself, in the character of efficient causes or means.

II. There are four distinguishable sources from which pleasure and pain are in use to flow: considered separately, they may be termed the physical, the political, the moral, and the religious: and inasmuch as the pleasures and pains belonging to each of them are capable of giving a binding force to any law or rule of conduct, they may all of them be termed sanctions.

III. If it be in the present life, and from the ordinary course of nature, not purposely modified by the interposition of the will of any human being, nor by any extraordinary interposition of any superior invisible being, that the pleasure or the pain takes place or is expected, it may be said to issue from or to belong to the physical sanction.

IV. If at the hands of a particular person or set of persons in the community, who under names correspondent to that of judge, are chosen for the particular purpose of dispensing it, according to the will of the sovereign or supreme ruling power in the state, it may be said to issue from the political sanction.

V. If at the hands of such chance persons in the community, as the party in question may happen in the course of his life to have concerns with, according to each man's spontaneous disposition, and not according to any settled or concerted rule, it may be said to issue from the moral
or popular sanction.

VI. If from the immediate hand of a superior invisible being, either in the present life, or in a future, it may be said to issue from the religious sanction.

VII. Pleasures or pains which may be expected to issue from the physical, political or moral sanctions, must all of them be expected to be experienced, if ever, in the present life; those which may be expected to issue from the religious sanction, may be expected to be experienced either in the present life or in a future.

VIII. Those which can be experienced in the present life, can of course be no others than such as human nature in the course of the present life is susceptible of: and from each of these sources may flow all the pleasures or pains of which, in the course of the present life, human nature is susceptible. With regard to these then (with which alone we have in this place any concern) those of them which belong to any one of those sanctions, differ not ultimately in kind from those which belong to any one of the other three: the only difference there is among them lies in the circumstances that accompany their production. A suffering which befalls a man in the natural and spontaneous course of things, shall be styled, for instance, a calamity; in which case, if it be supposed to befall him through any imprudence of his, it may be styled a punishment issuing from the physical sanction. Now this same suffering, if inflicted by the law, will be what is commonly called a punishment; if incurred for want of any friendly assistance, which the misconduct, or supposed misconduct, of the sufferer has occasioned to be withheld, a punishment issuing from the moral sanction; if through the immediate interposition of a particular providence, a punishment issuing from the religious sanction.

IX. A man's goods, or his person, are consumed by fire. If this happened to him by what is called an accident, it was a calamity: if by reason of his own imprudence (for instance, from his neglecting to put his candle out) it may be styled a punishment of the physical sanction: if it happened to him by the sentence of the political magistrate, a punishment belonging to the political sanction; that is, what is commonly called a punishment: if for want of any assistance which his neighbour withheld from him out of some dislike to his moral character, a punishment of the moral sanction: if by an immediate act of God's displeasure, manifested on account of some sin committed by him, or through any distraction of mind, occasioned by the dread of such displeasure, a punishment of the religious sanction.

X. As to such of the pleasures and pains belonging to the religious sanction, as regard a future life, of what kind these may be we cannot know. These lie not open to our observation. During the present life they are matter only of expectation: and, whether that expectation
be derived from natural or revealed religion, the particular kind of pleasure or pain, if it be different from all those which lie open to our observation, is what we can have no idea of. The best ideas we can obtain of such pains and pleasures are altogether unliquidated in point of quality. In what other respects our ideas of them may be liquidated will be considered in another place.

XI. Of these four sanctions the physical is altogether, we may observe, the ground-work of the political and the moral: so is it also of the religious, in as far as the latter bears relation to the present life. It is included in each of those other three. This may operate in any case, (that is, any of the pains or pleasures belonging to it may operate) independently of them: none of them can operate but by means of this. In a word, the powers of nature may operate of themselves; but neither the magistrate, nor men at large, can operate, nor is God in the case in question supposed to operate, but through the powers of nature.

XII. For these four objects, which in their nature have so much in common, it seemed of use to find a common name. It seemed of use, in the first place, for the convenience of giving a name to certain pleasures and pains, for which a name equally characteristic could hardly otherwise have been found: in the second place, for the sake of holding up the efficacy of certain moral forces, the influence of which is apt not to be sufficiently attended to. Does the political sanction exert an influence over the conduct of mankind? The moral, the religious sanctions do so too. In every inch of his career are the operations of the political magistrate liable to be aided or impeded by these two foreign powers: who, one or other of them, or both, are sure to be either his rivals or his allies. Does it happen to him to leave them out in his calculations? he will be sure almost to find himself mistaken in the result. Of all this we shall find abundant proofs in the sequel of this work. It behoves him, therefore, to have them continually before his eyes; and that under such a name as exhibits the relation they bear to his own purposes and designs.

Value of a Lot of Pleasure or Pain, How to be Measured

I. Pleasures then, and the avoidance of pains, are the ends which the legislator has in view: it behoves him therefore to understand their value. Pleasures and pains are the instruments he has to work with: it behoves him therefore to understand their force, which is again, in other words, their value.

II. To a person considered by himself, the value of a pleasure or pain considered by itself, will be greater or less, according to the four following circumstances:

1. Its intensity.  
2. Its duration.  
3. Its certainty or uncertainty.  
4. Its propinquity or remoteness.
III. These are the circumstances which are to be considered in estimating a pleasure or a pain considered each of them by itself. But when the value of any pleasure or pain is considered for the purpose of estimating the tendency of any act by which it is produced, there are two other circumstances to be taken into the account; these are,

5. Its fecundity, or the chance it has of being followed by sensations of the same kind: that is, pleasures, if it be a pleasure; pains, if it be a pain.

6. Its purity, or the chance it has of not being followed by sensations of the opposite kind: that is, pains, if it be a pleasure; pleasures, if it be a pain.

These two last, however, are in strictness scarcely to be deemed properties of the pleasure or the pain itself; they are not, therefore, in strictness to be taken into the account of the value of that pleasure or that pain. They are in strictness to be deemed properties only of the act, or other event, by which such pleasure or pain has been produced; and accordingly are only to be taken into the account of the tendency of such act or such event.

IV. To a number of persons, with reference to each of whom the value of a pleasure or a pain is considered, it will be greater or less, according to seven circumstances: to wit, the six preceding ones; viz.

1. Its intensity.
2. Its duration.
3. Its certainty or uncertainty.
4. Its propinquity or remoteness.
5. Its fecundity.
6. Its purity.

And one other; to wit:
7. Its extent; that is, the number of persons to whom it extends; or (in other words) who are affected by it.

V. To take an exact account then of the general tendency of any act, by which the interests of a community are affected, proceed as follows. Begin with any one person of those whose interests seem most immediately to be affected by it: and take an account,

1. Of the value of each distinguishable pleasure which appears to be produced by it in the first instance.
2. Of the value of each pain which appears to be produced by it in the first instance.
3. Of the value of each pleasure which appears to be produced by it after the first. This constitutes the fecundity of the first pleasure and the impurity of the first pain.
4. Of the value of each pain which appears to be produced by it after the first. This constitutes the fecundity of the first pain, and the impurity of the first pleasure.
5. Sum up all the values of all the pleasures on the one side, and those of all the pains on the other. The balance, if it be on the side of pleasure, will give the
good tendency of the act upon the whole, with respect to
the interests of that individual person; if on the side
of pain, the bad tendency of it upon the whole.

6. Take an account of the number of persons whose inter-
estes appear to be concerned; and repeat the above pro-
cess with respect to each. Sum up the numbers expressive
of the degrees of good tendency, which the act has, with
respect to each individual, in regard to whom the ten-
dency of it is good upon the whole: do this again with
respect to each individual, in regard to whom the ten-
dency of it is good upon the whole: do this again with
respect to each individual, in regard to whom the ten-
dency of it is bad upon the whole. Take the balance;
which, if on the side of pleasure, will give the general
good tendency of the act, with respect to the total num-er or community of individuals concerned; if on the side
of pain, the general evil tendency, with respect to the
same community.

VI. It is not to be expected that this process should
be strictly pursued previously to every moral judgment,
or to every legislative or judicial operation. It may,
however, be always kept in view: and as near as the pro-
cess actually pursued on these occasions approaches to it,
so near will such process approach to the character of an
exact one.

VII. The same process is alike applicable to pleasure
and pain, in whatever shape they appear: and by whatever
denomination they are distinguished: to pleasure, whether
it be called good (which is properly the cause or instru-
ment of pleasure) or profit (which is distant pleasure, or
the cause or instrument of distant pleasure,) or conveni-
ence, or advantage, benefit, emolument, happiness, and so
forth: to pain, whether it be called evil, (which corre-
sponds to good) or mischief, or inconvenience, or disad-
vantage, or loss, or unhappiness, and so forth.

VIII. Nor is this a novel and unwarranted, any more
than it is a useless theory. In all this there is nothing
but what the practice of mankind, wheresoever they have a
clear view of their own interest, is perfectly conformable
to. An article of property, an estate in land, for in-
stance, is valuable, on what account? On account of the
pleasures of all kinds which it enables a man to produce,
and what comes to the same thing the pains of all kinds
which it enables him to avert. But the value of such an
article of property is universally understood to rise or
fall according to the length or shortness of the time
which a man has in it: the certainty or uncertainty of
its coming into possession: and the nearness or remote-
ness of the time at which, if at all, it is to come into
possession. As to the intensity of the pleasures which a
man may derive from it, this is never thought of, because
it depends upon the use which each particular person may
come to make of it; which cannot be estimated till the
particular pleasures he may come to derive from it, or
the particular pains he may come to exclude by means of it, are brought to view. For the same reason, neither does he think of the fecundity or purity of these pleasures.

Thus much for pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness, in general. We come now to consider the several particular kinds of pain and pleasure. *