

though less completely developed, of course.

"In Epicurus's system," says a writer, "none of the virtues was to be practised or pursued for its own sake, unless it should be the means of securing the greatest happiness of the agent."

Leave off "of the agent," and the statement need not be criticized. That any philosophical thinker should teach that virtue is to be practised only so far as it will secure the happiness of the individual is absurd. Did Epicurus teach that when a man can escape punishment by lying, fraud and murder, that he should commit those crimes; that when he can, as he imagines, add to his pleasures by drunkenness, licentiousness, etc., that he should yield to them? Certainly not.

Epicurus taught that the path of happiness is the path of virtue, and he understood perfectly that the happiness of the good man is promoted by doing his duty, even though thereby he suffers and sacrifices his life.

In teaching that virtues should be practised or pursued as a means of securing the greatest happiness, Epicurus proved that he was much wiser than our modern ethical teachers who talk about "virtue for its own sake," an expression which has befogged the minds of many Liberals.

Why should a man act rationally rather than irrationally? Why should a man be honest rather than dishonest? For the sake of rationality, for the sake of honesty? No. Because rational conduct and

honesty are conducive to our well-being; in other words, because they are better for us than are irrationality and dishonesty.

If folly and dishonesty would add to the well-being of mankind—i.e., would make man's condition more comfortable, harmonious and pleasant, now and hereafter—then the practice of what we call folly and dishonesty would be a duty.

Why should we be moral? Because it is better to be moral than immoral. Why and how better? Because morality conduces to health, longevity, harmony, and peace—in short, happiness.

The question, Why should we want to be happy? nobody asks. Happiness is the ultimate; virtue is the means. "Virtue for its own sake" is a phrase which connotes nothing that has any meaning in philosophy or ethics. The Christian may say that the object of virtue is holiness, to please God or to gain heaven. But what is the object of being holy, pleasing God, and gaining heaven, but to advance our well-being; in other words, to escape ills and to secure happiness? A comprehensive utility is the only rational foundation of morality, and "virtue for its own sake" is an irrational expression, though a popular one.

The essential truth and value of the ethical system of Epicurus are confirmed by the teachings of modern science, which declares that the good is the useful, and that the useful is whatever makes mankind better and happier.