

LOCKE, SHAFTESBURY, HUME.

IN his passion for clearness and consistency Hobbes "cuts things in two with an axe." Locke, on the contrary, is preeminently the philosopher of compromise and practical sagacity. His aim is to enquire into the limits of human knowledge, and his conclusion is that "the light of reason shines bright enough for all our purposes." Society and rights are not, as Hobbes said, the creation of contract; the contract between society and the government is merely to protect the rights that already exist, and hence its terms may be revised from time to time. Locke advocates toleration in matters of religion, but on the ground that only "probability" is possible in that region. He denies "innate ideas," as a protest against anything being accepted as true that is incomprehensible, and yet he makes knowledge the passive acceptance of ideas that "obtrude themselves on the mind whether we will or no." As on his own showing all knowledge is purely of immediate feelings, Locke is inconsistent in saying that we know the "primary" qualities of bodies as they are in things themselves. Having reduced knowledge to the changing states of the individual subject, it is no wonder that Locke at last is led to "suspect a science of nature to be impossible." Equally inconsistent in his theory of conduct. (1) *Will* is for Locke simply the power of choice, *freedom* the power of acting upon choice, and *desire* the motive which impels the will to act. There is no meaning, he says, in saying that the *will* is free; what we should say is that the *man* is free. This seems to be in defence of human freedom, but in reality Locke only means that a man acts freely when he is not forced to act, or prevented from acting, by external compulsion. For even when he acts freely his will is determined by the feeling of "uneasiness" called *desire*, and the "most pressing uneasiness" always prevails. (2) The motive to every act is the desire for pleasure, and the pleasure which leads to action is that, which, to the man at the time seems the greatest pleasure. But if a man's action is always determined by the pleasure which to him at the moment is greatest, how can he act otherwise than he does act? and, if not, how can he be blamed for doing the only thing he could do? (3) Locke's answer is, that sometimes we mistake imaginary for real happiness from want of care and foresight. We are able to "suspend the satisfaction of our desires in particular cases" until we have examined whether that which appears good really is good. This is the reason why we blame men for doing things which are not fitted to secure happiness. (4) The need for such "suspension" of desire arises from the fact that present pleasure assumes an importance that does not properly belong to it. "Were the pleasure of drinking accompanied, the very moment a man takes off his glass, with that sick stomach and aching head which, in some men, are sure to follow not many hours after, I think that nobody would ever let wine touch his lips." The great use of freedom, therefore, is to hinder blind precipitancy. (5) Moral obligation arises from law, of

which there are three kinds, (a) divine law, (b) civil law, and (c) social law. The motive to obey law in any of these forms is the "pleasure or pain attending the observance or breach." Divine law acts on man through the rewards and punishments of another life; civil law enforces its commands by legal penalties; and social law is the influence of public opinion. Shaftesbury and Hutcheson modified Locke's theory without altering its essence. According to the former we desire the pleasure of others as well as of ourselves. But this distinction is virtually retracted when it is said that the motive for seeking the good of others is the pleasure we ourselves feel in contemplating their pleasure. Moral good is to Shaftesbury the well-balanced action, free equally from enthusiasm as from extreme selfishness, of a "gentleman." To this courtly moralist evil is very much "bad form." He shows a mild and genial spirit, but he has no comprehension of great moral difficulties. Hutcheson's advance on Shaftesbury is mainly in separating the "blind" from the "calm" affections, the former being defined as immediate or natural tendencies, the latter as mediate tendencies, dependent on reflection. The "blind" desires are such as hunger and thirst, and sympathy, and pity; the "calm" desires are self-love and benevolence. The "egoistic" desires, whether "blind" or "calm," are not morally good, but merely useful: the "altruistic" tendencies are reinforced by the "moral sense," by means of which we intuitively recognize good and evil.

A few of the contradictions in Locke's ethical theory may be pointed out. (1) Locke asserts man's freedom, but his account of its nature leads to what is now known as "determinism." Freedom, as he describes it, is merely "spontaneity," or the absence of external restraint, and will the "power of choice." In other words "choice" is a property of man, as motion is the property of a stone. Now Locke tells us that man is not free to choose, but only free to act. But as action, apart from choice, is merely the physical movement which follows the choice, there is no more freedom in human action than in the fall of a stone. Nor, again, is a man free in his desires, for these are due to his peculiar susceptibility to pleasure and pain, which he can neither make nor unmake. Moreover, each man chooses or wills according to the desire for pleasure which at the moment of choice is strongest, and as he has no power to add or take away a single grain of the intensity of that desire, his will must be as rigorously determined for him as if he were an automaton. (2) Locke, however, says that a man has power to "suspend" his desires. But, while we feel that we have such a power, it is not possible for Locke consistently to defend it. As Hume pointed out, if reason can prevent the will from acting it must also be able to originate action. But this is inconsistent with the assertion that all action is due to feeling, not to reason. (3) Locke's account of moral obligation is thoroughly unsatisfactory. Even granting that the source of morality is in the command of a law giver different from the agent, the motive to obey