

## THE ORIGIN OF THE KNOWLEDGE

Where the end is fixed and it is merely a question as to the choice of means, we reply : Choose means which will certainly attain the end. Where it is a question as to the choice of ends we would say : Choose an end which reason regards as really attainable. This answer is, however, insufficient, many a thing attainable is rather to be shunned than sought after ; choose the best among attainable ends, this alone is the adequate answer.<sup>17</sup>

But the answer is obscure ; what do we mean by “the best” ? what can be called “good” at all ? and how can we attain to the knowledge that one thing is good and better than another ?

18. In order to answer this question satisfactorily, we must, above all, inquire into the origin of the conception of the good, which lies, like the origin of all our conceptions, in certain concrete impressions.<sup>18</sup>

We possess impressions with physical content. These exhibit to us sensuous qualities localized in space. Out of this sphere arise the conceptions of colour, sound, space and many others. The conception of the good, however, has not here its origin. It is easily recognizable that the conception of the good like that of the true, which, as having affinity, is rightly placed side by side with it, derives its origin from concrete impressions with psychical content.

19. The common feature of everything psychical consists in what has been called by a very unfortunate and ambiguous term, consciousness ; i.e. in a subject-attitude ; in what has been termed an *intentional* relation to something which, though perhaps not real, is none the less an inner object of perception ;<sup>19</sup> No hearing without the heard, no believing without the believed,

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no hoping without the hoped for, no striving without the striven for, no joy without the enjoyed, and so with other mental phenomena.

20. The sensuous qualities which are given in our impressions with physical content exhibit manifold differences. So also do the intentional relations given in our impressions with psychical content. And, as in the former case, the number of the senses is determined by reference to those distinctions between sensuous qualities which are most fundamental (called by Helmholtz distinctions of modality), so in the latter case the number of fundamental classes of mental phenomena is fixed by reference to the most fundamental distinctions of intentional relation.<sup>20</sup>

In this way we distinguish three fundamental classes. Descartes in his *Meditations*<sup>21</sup> was the first to exhibit these rightly and completely; but sufficient attention has not been paid to his observations, and they were soon quite forgotten, until in recent times, and independently of him, these were again discovered. Nowadays they may lay claim to sufficient verification.<sup>22</sup>

The first fundamental class is that of ideas (*Vorstellungen*) in the widest sense of the term (Descartes' *ideae*). This class embraces concrete impressions, those for example which are given to us through the senses, as well as every abstract conception.

The second fundamental class is judgment (Descartes' *judicia*). Previous to Descartes these were thought of as forming, along with ideas, *one* fundamental class, and since Descartes' time philosophy has fallen once more into this error. This view regarded judgment as consisting essentially in a combination or relation of ideas to one another. This was a gross misconception

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of its true nature. We may combine or relate ideas as we please, as in speaking of a golden mountain, the father of a hundred children, a friend of science ; but as long as nothing further takes place there can be no judgment. Equally true is it that an idea always forms the basis of a judgment, as also of a desire ; but it is not true that, in a judgment, there are always several ideas related to one another as subject and predicate. This is certainly the case when I say : " God is just," though not when I say : " There is a God."

What, therefore, distinguishes those cases where I have not only an idea but also a judgment ? There is here added to the act of presentation a second intentional relation to the object given in presentation, a relation either of recognition or rejection. Whoever says : " God," gives expression to the idea of God ; whoever says : " There is a God," gives expression to a belief in him.

I must not linger here, and can only assure you that this, if anything, admits to-day of no denial. From the philological standpoint Miklosich confirms the results of psychological analysis.<sup>23</sup>

The third fundamental class consists of the emotions in the widest sense of the term, from the simple forms of inclination or disinclination in respect of the mere idea, to joy and sadness arising from conviction and to the most complicated phenomena as to the choice of ends and means. Aristotle long since included these under the term *ῥεξις*. Descartes says this class embraces the *voluntates sive affectus*. As in the second fundamental class the intentional relation was one of recognition or rejection, so in the third class it is one of love or hate, (or, as it might be equally well expressed,) a form of pleasing or displeasing. Loving, pleasing,

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hating, displeasing, these are given in the simplest forms of inclination or disinclination, in victorious joy as well as in despairing sorrow, in hope and fear, and in every form of voluntary activity. "Plait-il?" asks the Frenchman; "es hat Gott gefallen," one reads in (German) announcements of a death; while the "Placet," written when confirming an act, is the expression of the determining fiat of will.<sup>24</sup>

21. In comparing these three classes of phenomena it is found that the two last mentioned show an analogy which, in the first, is absent. There exists, that is, an opposition of intentional relation; in the case of judgment, recognition or rejection, in the case of the emotions, love or hate, pleasure or displeasure. The idea shows nothing of a similar nature. I can, it is true, conceive of opposites, as for example white and black, but whether I believe in this black or deny it, I can only represent it to myself in one way; the representation does not alter with the opposite act of judgment; nor again, in the case of the feelings, when I change my attitude towards it according as it pleases or displeases me.

22. From this fact follows an important conclusion. Concerning acts of the first class none can be called either right or wrong. In the case of the second class on the other hand, one of the two opposed modes of relation, affirmation and rejection, is right the other wrong, as logic has long affirmed. The same naturally holds good of the third class. Of the two opposed modes of relation, love and hate, pleasure and displeasure, in each case one is right the other wrong.

23. We have now reached the place where the notions

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of good and bad, along with the notions of the true and the false which we have been seeking, have their source. We call anything true when the recognition related to it is right.<sup>25</sup> We call something good when the love relating to it is right. That which can be loved with a right love, that which is worthy of love, is good in the widest sense of the term.

24. Since everything which pleases does so, either for its own sake, or for the sake of something else which is thereby produced, conserved or rendered probable, we must distinguish between a primary and a secondary good, i.e. what is good in itself, and what is good on account of something else, as is specially the case in the sphere of the useful.

What is good in itself is the good in the narrower sense. It alone can stand side by side with the true. For everything which is true is true in itself, even when only mediately known. When we speak of good later we shall therefore mean, whenever the contrary is not expressly asserted, that which is good in itself.

In this way we have, I hope, made clear the notion of good.<sup>26</sup>

25. There follows now the still more important question: How are we to know that anything is good? Ought we to say that whatever is loved and is capable of being loved is worthy of love and is good? This is manifestly untrue, and it is almost inconceivable that some have fallen into this error. One loves what another hates, and, in accordance with a well known psychological law already previously referred to it often happens that what at first was desired merely as a means to something else, comes at last from habit to be desired for its own sake. In such a way the miser is irrationally



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led to heap up riches and even to sacrifice himself for their sake. The actual presence of love, therefore, by no means testifies unconditionally to the worthiness of the object to be loved, just as affirmation is no unconditional proof of what is true.

It might even be said that the first statement is even more *evident* than the second, since it can hardly happen that he who affirms anything at the same time holds it to be false, whereas it frequently happens that a person, even while loving something, confesses himself that it is unworthy of his love :

“ Video meliora proboque,  
Deteriora sequor.”

How then are we to know that anything is good ?

26. The matter appears enigmatical, but the enigma finds a very easy solution.

As a preliminary step to answering the question, let us turn our glance from the good to the true.

Not everything which we affirm is on this account true. Our judgments are frequently quite blind. Many a prejudice which we drank in, as it were, with our mother's milk presents to us the appearance of an irrefutable principle. To other equally blind judgments all men have, by nature, a kind of instinctive impulsion, as, for example, in trusting blindly to the so-called external impression, or to a recent remembrance. What is so recognized may often be true, but it may equally well be false since the affirming judgment contains nothing which gives to it the character of rightness.

Such, however, is the case in certain other judgments, which in contradistinction to these blind judgments may be termed “ obvious,” “ self-evident ” judgments ;

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as, for example, the Principle of Contradiction, and every so-called inner perception which informs me that I am now experiencing sensations of sound or colour, or think and will this or that.

In what, then, does the distinction between these lower and higher forms of judgment essentially consist? Is it a distinction in the degree of belief, or is it something else? It is not a distinction in the degree of belief; the instinctive blind assumptions arising from habit are often not in the slightest degree weakened by doubts, and we are unable to get rid of some even when we have x already seen their logical falsity. But such assumptions are the results of blind impulse, they have nothing of the clearness peculiar to the higher forms of judgment. Were the question to be raised: "What is then your reason for believing that?" no rational answer would be forthcoming. It is quite true that if the same inquiry were to be made respecting the immediately evident judgment here also no reason could be given, but in face of the clearness of the judgment the inquiry would appear utterly beside the point, in fact ridiculous. Every one experiences for himself the difference between these two classes of judgment, and in the reference to this experience, consists, as in the case of every conception, the final explanation.

27. All this is, in its essentials, universally known,<sup>27</sup> and is contested only by a few, and then not without great inconsistency. Far fewer have noticed an analogous distinction between the higher and lower forms of the feelings of pleasure and displeasure.

Our pleasure or displeasure is often quite like blind judgment, only an instinctive or habitual impulse. This is so in the case of the miser's pleasure in piling up, in

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those powerful feelings of pleasure and pain connected in men and animals alike with the appearance of certain sensuous qualities, moreover, as is especially noticeable in tastes, different species and even different individuals, are affected in a quite contrary manner.

Many philosophers, and among them very considerable thinkers, have regarded only that mode of pleasure which is peculiar to the lower phenomena of the class, and have entirely overlooked the fact that there exists a pleasure and a displeasure of a higher kind. David Hume, for example, betrays almost in every word that he has absolutely no idea of the existence of this higher class.<sup>28</sup> How general this oversight has been may be judged from the fact that language has no common name for it.<sup>29</sup> Yet the fact is undeniable and we propose now to elucidate it by a few examples.

We have already said that we are endowed by nature with a pleasure for some tastes and an antipathy for others, both of which are purely instinctive. We also naturally take pleasure in clear insight, displeasure in error or ignorance. "All men," says Aristotle in the beautiful introductory words of his *Metaphysics*,<sup>30</sup> "naturally desire knowledge." This desire is an example which will serve our purpose. It is a pleasure of that higher form which is analogous to *self-evidence* in the sphere of judgment. In our species it is universal. Were there another species which, while having different preferences from us in respect of sensible qualities, were opposed to us in loving error for its own sake and hating insight, then assuredly we should not in the latter as in the former case say: that it was a matter of taste, "de gustibus non est disputandum"; rather we should here answer decisively that such love and hatred were fundamentally absurd, that such a species hated what was



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undeniably good, and loved what was undeniably bad in itself. Now why, where the feeling of compulsion is equally strong, do we answer differently in the one case than in the other? The answer is simple. In the former case the feeling of compulsion was an instinctive impulse; in the latter the natural feeling of pleasure is a higher love, having the character of rightness.<sup>31</sup> We therefore notice when we ourselves have such a feeling, that its object is not merely loved and lovable, its opposite hated and unlovable, but also that the one is worthy of love, the other worthy of hatred, and therefore that one is good, the other bad.

Another example. As we prefer insight to error, so also, generally speaking, we prefer joy (unless indeed it be joy in what is bad) to sadness. Were there beings among whom the reverse held good, we should regard such conduct as perverse, and rightly so. Here too it is because our love and our hatred are qualified as right.

A third example is found in feeling itself so far as it is right and has the character of rightness. As was the case with the rightness and evidence of the judgment, so also the rightness and higher character of the feelings are also reckoned as good, while love of the bad is itself bad.<sup>32</sup>

In order that, in the sphere of ideas, we may not leave the corresponding experiences unmentioned: here in the same way every idea is found to be something good in itself, and that with every enlargement in the realm of our ideas, quite apart from what of good or bad may result therefrom, the good within us is increased.<sup>33</sup>

Here then, and from such experiences of love qualified as right, arises within us the knowledge that anything

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is truly and unmistakably good in the full extent to which we are capable of such knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

This last clause is added advisedly ; for we must not, of course, conceal from ourselves the fact that we have no guarantee that everything which is good will arouse within us a love with the character of rightness. Wherever this is not the case our criterion fails, and the good then, so far as our knowledge and practical account of it are concerned, is as much as non-existent.<sup>35</sup>

28. It is, however, not *one* but many things which we thus recognize as good. And so the questions remain : In that which is good, and especially in what, as good, is attainable, which is the better ? and further, which is the highest practical good ? so that it may become the standard for our actions.

29. We must first inquire : When is anything better than anything else and recognized by us as better ? and what is meant by " the better " at all ?

The answer now lies ready to hand though not in such a way as to render it unnecessary to exclude a very possible error. If by " good " is meant that which is worthy of being loved for its own sake, then by " better " appears to be meant that which is worthy of being loved with a greater love. But is this really so ? What is meant by " with greater love " ? Is it spatial magnitude ? Hardly ; no one would propose to measure pleasure or displeasure in feet and inches. " The intensity of the pleasure," some will perhaps say, " is what is meant in speaking of love as great." According to this " better " would mean that which pleases with a more intense pleasure. But such a definition closely examined would involve the greatest absurdities. According to this view, each single case in which joy is