

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus.* by John Dewey

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idea, which has only been won by process of abstraction from inner experience.*

But even if these psychological deductions should not always commend themselves to entire approbation, no one can read this book without finding in it much to stimulate his own critical thinking and to incite him to further effort in the same direction.

J. HIMMELBAUR.

VIENNA.

THE STUDY OF ETHICS: A SYLLABUS. By John Dewey. Printed for the Author by the Inland Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1894. Pp. 151.

In a prefatory note Professor Dewey explains that this Syllabus was prepared for the use of his students, the edition of his "Outlines of Ethics" having been exhausted. Informal as is this publication, which is precisely what the title indicates, viz., a syllabus of lecture-notes, the value always attaching to our author's work, however got into shape, justifies some account of the little book here. It supplements and extends the "Outlines," which were reviewed in this JOURNAL at their appearance.

The subject-matter of ethical theory is defined as "judgment concerning the value of conduct." This value must not be judged, however, according to any "absolute or separate ideal" (p. 34). A customary defect of the moralist has been to "split the self into two selves, and attribute the impulses and appetites to one, the actual urgent self, and the ideal to another self, a higher or rational or spiritual self in general." This is what Kant did. Green, although recognizing "the objection to splitting the self," was still guilty of separating too much the "whole self" as the ideal from "any possible development of the particular impulse as such." But all such theories make "a dualism, practically unbridgeable, between the moral and the scientific phases of our experience." But fact and ideal must not be thus sundered. "Recognition of value is not denial of science,"—*i. e.*, the ethical point of view is not essentially opposed to the physical point of view, but is merely a fuller account of the whole truth about those very facts of experience of whose contents the physical sciences give their own relatively abstract description.

* And here, too, our author travels along lines the purely subjective validity of which he has just been setting forth.

Professor Dewey, in the earlier chapters of his Syllabus, gives an interesting "psychological examination of the process of active experience,"—*i.e.*, a summary of the psychology of the will, as a basis for his own statement of this relatively realistic ethical doctrine. The psychology is here not very novel, but its prompt application to the definition of the ideal is stated in a very attractive form, despite the somewhat Aristotelian brevity of these very business-like notes. Character develops by the organization of impulses. Impulses have their primal character as responses to the environment. But all such responses "induce experiences," which in consciousness thenceforth get woven into the web of the original impulses. These impulses can now no longer be aroused in their primitive and untutored way, for whenever circumstances arise which tend to make them once more nascent, one is conscious of the consequences that will follow upon their being carried out. This consciousness of the "induced experiences" that have in the past attended the impulsive acts, is, however, as Professor Dewey very ingeniously reasons, not a separate sort of consciousness, arising over and above the consciousness of the primal impulses themselves; but, on the contrary, as I recall the results of my former more impulsive deeds, my recall is itself the conscious accompaniment of a physical activity; and in my whole active state, at the moment of the recall, the old impulse, and my past experience of its results, appear in an organic union, as the conscious aspect of a really transformed activity, which is neither the old impulse, nor yet merely this old impulse plus a disposition to check it, but which is rather a resultant of numerous factors, and so not any mere summation of primitive impulses and acquired inhibitions. The old impulse really gets submerged in the larger whole which experience has mediated. The impulse is "idealized" (p. 15). "The impulse mediated, that is, given conscious value through the reference into it of the other experiences which will result from its expression, constitutes volition proper."

"The worth of an impulse is, psychologically, the whole set of experiences which, presumably (that is, upon the best judgment available), it will call into being. This, *ethically*, constitutes the goodness (or badness) of the impulse,—the satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) which it carries" (p. 17). One must thus estimate and modify "any particular expression of impulse by the whole system of which it is one part." As to the concrete act which expresses impulses thus fully "mediated" by a consciousness of their prob-

able consequences, Professor Dewey asserts (p. 17) that "In its complete character, as affording satisfaction, and, at the same time, fulfilling its organic interactions," this act "is *right*, and the agent which it expresses is *free*."

But the consciousness of the value of our impulses, while it thus accompanies the gradual transformation of our impulses through the workings of experience, is not identical merely with the conscious aspect of our acquired habits as such. Habit means completed transformation of primitive impulse through the "reaction" of experienced consequences upon primitive impulses. But in our lives the most important deeds are those accomplished in situations too complex to be completely dealt with in a merely routine fashion. Where expected consequences and present impulses are not yet finally woven into the unity of our wholly settled habits, but stand apart in such relatively undetermined relations that we have to become conscious of our general plans, and to "think over" the situation, before we can express ourselves with any unity, there is the sphere of moral conduct. "It is the tension between the habitual and the more variable factors that constitutes the significance of our conduct morally" (p. 19).

A moral judgment is itself, as follows from the foregoing, a moral act, since, as Professor Dewey throughout insists, we are always active while we are conscious, and all our conscious activity, except the primitive impulses and the finally settled habits, involves a process of weaving into one whole our original impulsive tendencies and the modifying results of the "induced experiences." But the particular character of the moral judgment depends upon the fact that, as we thus reflect on the relation of partial impulse and whole experience, we observe (p. 22), "That some acts tend to narrow the self, to introduce friction into it, to weaken its power, and in various ways to *disintegrate it*, while other acts tend to expand, invigorate, harmonize, and in general organize the self." Here is the sole moral criterion. It is impossible (p. 23) to classify "the impulses into a hierarchy of higher or lower." "When an act is right there is no higher or lower as to the impulse from which it proceeds." "The good man, in a word, is his whole self in each of his acts; the bad man is a partial (and hence a different) self in his conduct."

"Self-realization" is thus indeed the moral goal, only the self to be realized is not a "purely general self," whose "blank scheme" is to be filled in. The self to be realized is the actual self of this

individual, with these impulses and "induced experiences," and consequently with just this real opportunity to weave his life into one whole. He must note his situation, and his qualities,—*i. e.*, he must be aware both of his impulses and of the consequent experiences; and his moral consciousness, like his moral conduct (for the latter is the expression of the former), might be embodied in the rule: Live this your life as the life of one whole self. The following of this rule will satisfy, not the desires of every moment, but precisely the reflective decision of the whole man himself.

This must suffice for a sketch of the fundament of Professor Dewey's doctrine as here stated. The contrast with the various forms of the "abstract ideal" is sketched; the contrast with hedonism, a doctrine which, in every form, Professor Dewey altogether opposes, is more fully and very skilfully developed. Extremely interesting is also the discussion of the problem of freedom.

That our author may soon give himself a completer expression, in place of these rough-hewn and fragmentary notes, as well as in place of the too brief "Outlines," is the earnest wish of the present reviewer, who both agrees and disagrees with Professor Dewey in too many and too varied respects to make a discussion of the *pro* and *contra* here possible. Ethical realism seems to the present reviewer an essentially partial doctrine, and not the "whole" for which Professor Dewey so frequently contends. But of great value, in the present state of controversy, is a statement of a decidedly realistic form of ethical doctrine which is still in a sharp and conscious contrast to the hedonistic interpretation of the facts of the moral consciousness. As a sketch of such a theory, the present volume, despite its hasty form, seems worthy of this somewhat extended notice.

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THE ELEMENTS OF ETHICS. By James H. Hyslop, Ph.D. Instructor in Ethics in Columbia College. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895. Pp. ix., 470.

In sharp contrast with Professor Dewey, Dr. Hyslop, in his decidedly minute and extended work, proceeds upon the basis of a definition by virtue of which (p. 5) "The chief function of Ethics is to do this, to determine what is an ideal existence, and to promote its realization." The preface announces that "the present work is designed as an introductory treatise upon the fundamental

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