

[143]Chapter 6

Pseudo Principles of Practical Philosophy

(A Critique of Abstract Eudaemonism in Its Various Forms)

I

Reason defines the moral good as truth (in the broad sense), i.e., as the proper relation to everything. This intrinsically all-encompassing and logically necessary idea of the moral good may turn out to be, in the concrete sense, i.e., in practice, devoid of universality and necessity. The moral good, as the ideal norm of the will, then does not in fact coincide with the (real) good, that is, with the object of an actual desire. The moral good is what should be, but (1) not everyone desires what should be; (2) among those who do desire the moral good, not all happen to be able to overcome the bad urges stemming from their own nature; and finally, (3) the few who have achieved within themselves a victory of the moral good over evil—the virtuous, righteous people or saints—are unable by means of their goodness to vanquish the evil in which the whole world lies.¹ To the extent that someone does not desire the moral good, however, it *is not a good* for him or her. Even though rational consciousness claims to desire something, if this something does not act on the will it is only a conceptual but not a *real* good. Finally, if the moral good does not give a person the power to realize what should be in the entire world, even though it affects this person's will and thereby makes him or her inwardly better, it *is not a sufficient good*.

This threefold divergence of the (moral) good from the (real) good, apparently, renders the idea of the moral good intrinsically self-contradictory. [144]In addition to its ideal content, the very definition of the moral good, as what should be the case, involves a real demand, viz., that its moral content should be not merely theoretical but *realized* in practice. By its very concept, what should be the case *should be real-*

E] The original form of this chapter was first published with the subtitle “The pseudo principles of correct behavior (A critique of the various forms of eudaemonism).” In the first edition of the compiled work from 1897, Chap. 6 spans pp. 165–192.

¹ E] the evil in which the whole world lies.] Cf. “...the whole world lieth in wickedness.” 1 John 5: 19. However, it should be recalled that Kant too opens his work *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason* quoting these words. Kant 1996d: 69.

ized. A moral good that is impotent is not a moral good. Moreover, it is impossible to acknowledge as proper, as the way it should be, the fact that only a *part* of humanity desires what should be, that very *few* live as they should and that *no one* can lead the world to the proper state of affairs. Conceptually, the moral good and the real good ought to coincide with each other. The latter ought to be the direct, universal and necessary outcome of the former and ought to represent the unconditional desirability and reality of the moral good. In fact, though, they do not coincide. The real good is distinguished from the moral good and, taken in isolation from the latter, is understood to be a *sense of well-being*. The real inadequacy of the idea of the moral good leads us to turn to this principle of well-being, a principle which, apparently, has, as an inducement to act, the factual universality and necessity that purely moral demands lack. The goal of any action that someone sets for oneself certainly has, either directly or indirectly, the characteristic that the attainment of the goal will satisfy the one who acts or will improve one's sense of well-being. On the other hand, it is certainly not the case that the goal of every action bears either directly or even only indirectly an indication of the moral good. Every desire, as such, is apparently only a desire for satisfaction, i.e., for a sense of well-being. To desire a calamity or dissatisfaction would be the same as to desire deliberately the undesirable, which is a straightforward absurdity. If it is the case that in order to be actually realized the moral good must itself become something desired, then the ethical principle depends on the practical (in the narrow sense) idea of the real good or a sense of well-being, which is set as the supreme principle of human action.

This eudaemonistic principle (from the Greek *ευδαιμονία*—state of bliss, a sense of well-being) has the obvious advantage that it does not raise the question: *Why?* We can ask why I should strive for the moral good when such striving conflicts with my natural inclinations and causes only pain in me. However, it is impossible to ask why I should desire my own well-being, because by my nature I cannot help but desire it. [145]Such a desire is inseparably a part of my existence and is a direct expression of it. I exist as someone who desires, and I certainly desire only what satisfies me or what pleases me. All of us think our sense of well-being is to be found either in what immediately provides satisfaction or in what leads to it, i.e., what serves as a means for achieving pleasing states. Therefore, the sense of well-being is best defined through the concept of *pleasure* (from the Greek *ἡδονή*, hence the doctrine of *hedonism*).

II

When what morally should be the case is replaced by what is desired, the goal of life or the highest good is reduced to pleasure. Although it has apparent clarity, simplicity and reality, this concept meets insuperable difficulties when applied in real situations. From the general fact that all of us want what is pleasing to us, no general principle or rule of action can be deduced. The fact is that the universality in the concept of pleasure is only of a formally logical or abstract nature and does not express any actual unity. The assertion that the ultimate goal of all actions (directly

or indirectly) is pleasure, i.e., the satisfaction of the person who acts, is indisputable. However, it is also as empty as, for example, the assertion that all actions end in something or that all actions are directed to something. In today's world, it is impossible to find a single universal pleasure,² but only an indeterminate number of all sorts of pleasures, which have nothing in common between themselves. One person finds the greatest delight in drinking vodka, while another seeks "the bliss for which there is neither name nor measure."³ However, even the latter forgets about all ulterior goods and wants food and drink above all else when he feels the pangs of extreme hunger or thirst. On the other hand, under certain conditions everything that once gave pleasure or seemed pleasant ceases to be attractive and even life itself loses all value.

In reality, the idea of pleasure has to do with a vast chaos of contingent inclinations, which differ depending on the characters and tastes of the individuals, their degrees of personal development, their [146]ages, social standings and present moods. What specific expression can be given to pleasure as a general practical principle? Could it be, perhaps, "Let everyone act in order to attain for himself as far as possible what is agreeable at the moment?" Generally speaking, although firmly established and more or less successfully employed in the animal kingdom, such a rule is awkward in human practice thanks to two circumstances: (1) the presence in humans of unnatural urges, which when satisfied yield the desired pleasure but also lead to clear and certain ruin, which for everyone is highly undesirable, and (2) the presence of human reason, which compares various (natural) inclinations and pleasures to each other and evaluates them with respect to their subsequent consequences. We find, by the way, such an evaluation in a rudimentary form in animals, which act or refrain from acting not only based on the incentive of an immediate pleasure or displeasure but also by considering further pleasing or displeasing consequences, which follow from this or that conduct. In animals, however, this consideration extends no further than simple associations. For example, the idea of a morsel of beef taken without permission is associated with the idea of a whipping, etc. Despite such quite simple considerations, owing to its more abstract character human reason can make general comparisons between the immediate motives of pleasure and its remote consequences. Following this train of thought, the most courageous representative of pure hedonism in ancient philosophy, Hegesias of Cyrenae, concluded that from the viewpoint of pleasure life in general is not worth living. He reasoned that seeking enjoyment is either unsuccessful, and thus painful, or having attained the goal the situation proves to be deceptive, since after a momentary feeling of satisfaction boredom and a new pursuit for deception inevitably follows. Since it is impossible to attain genuine pleasure, we should strive to free ourselves of displea-

² C] universal pleasure,] thing that everyone finds pleasurable, **AB**.

³ E] Fet 1901, vol. 2: 148. The poem is entitled "O, ne zovi!" Solov'ev provided the same quotation from Fet in the second of his *Lectures on Divine Humanity*. See PSS, vol. 4: 24, and cf. Solovyov 1995: 17.

sure, and the surest way to do this is to die. Such is Hegesias's conclusion,⁴ and for it he was nicknamed "*the advocate of death*" (*πεισιθνατος*). Even apart from such extreme conclusions, however, the inadequacy of "pleasure," as a principle, is clear from an analysis of the concept itself.

[147]III

Simply seeking pleasure cannot be a principle of action, because by itself it is indefinite and lacks content. What real content it does have lies only in the contingent objects that arouse it and thus is quite unstable. The only universal and necessary element in the infinite variety of possible pleasant states⁵ happens to be that the attainment of any goal or object of desire whatever is certainly felt and presented beforehand to be a pleasure, i.e., to be a satisfied or fulfilled desire. This extremely elementary psychological truth, however,⁶ contains neither the slightest indication of the nature of the object desired nor of the means to attain it. Both retain all of their empirical diversity and contingency, and the point of view of pleasure does not by itself give us any actual definition of the *highest good* to which all others should be subordinate. Consequently, it provides us with neither a principle nor a rule for action. We can clarify this matter even further if we look at pleasure not in its general sense as a satisfied desire, but in concrete instances, i.e., at particular pleasant sensations. Being merely the consequence of an urge, of an attained goal, and not the goal itself, these states do not happen to be desired in themselves. What is desired are certain, specific realities and not the pleasant sensations that arise from them. For someone who is hungry and thirsty, bread and water are the immediately desired objects, and not a means to obtain gustatory pleasures. Certainly, we know from experience that it is very pleasant to eat when hungry, but a baby craves to suck before having any experience of it. And even after having reached a certain age there arises in him a very powerful desire for objects, whose actual pleasantness he has not yet come to know. It is quite useless to resort in this case to "heredity," because we would then have to go as far back as chemical molecules. Yet hardly anyone would dare to claim that such molecules crave to form specific combinations simply because these molecules remember the pleasantness of similar combinations earlier.

Let us remember another reason why we cannot identify the good with the fact of pleasure. Everyone knows from experience [148]that by no means does the degree of the desirability of certain objects or states always correspond to the real degree of sensual pleasure we attain from them. Thus, in the case of a strong erotic attraction

⁴ E] Hegesias's conclusion] Eduard von Hartmann briefly discussed Hegesias's ideas in Hartmann 1879: 35–36, a work with which Solov'ev was certainly familiar. The latter authored a short entry on Hegesias for the *Brockhaus-Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary*. See Solov'ev 1997: 56.

⁵ C] pleasant states] pleasant objects and states **AB**.

⁶ C] truth, however.] truth, that we sense the fulfilled desire or attained goal as pleasure, however, **AB**.

to a specific person of the opposite sex, possessing this particular person is seen as the highest bliss, and in comparison the desire to possess any other person vanishes. However, the real pleasure to be derived from an infinitely desired fact certainly has nothing to do with infinity and is approximately equal to the pleasure from any other satisfaction of the given instincts. In general, the desirability of particular objects, or of their significance as goods, is determined not by the subjective states of pleasure that subsequently follow, but by the objective interrelations of these objects with our corporeal or psychic nature. For the most part, we are not aware of the source and the character of these relations with sufficient clarity, and they manifest their activity only in the form of a blind inclination.

However, if pleasure is not the essence of the good, of the desired as such, it is in any case a constant feature of the latter. Whatever may be the fundamental causes of the desirability of the given objects or states that appear to us as goods, it is indubitable that the attained good or the fulfilled desire is always accompanied by a sensation of pleasure. Therefore, being inseparably connected with a real good in general, as its necessary consequence, pleasure can serve to determine the highest good, at least in the sense of a practical principle.

From this point of view, the highest good is the state that offers the greatest amount of satisfaction. This amount is determined not just directly through the addition of pleasant states, but also indirectly through the subtraction of unpleasant states. In other words, the highest sense of well-being lies in the possession of those goods which on the whole, or as the final result, deliver the maximum enjoyment and the minimum amount of pain.⁷ The principle of action here is not simply the seeking of [149]immediate pleasure, but *prudence*, which evaluates different pleasures and selects from among them those that are the most lasting and free of pain. The person who is recognized as having a sense of well-being or is happy is not the one who, at a given moment, experiences the most intense enjoyment, but the one whose life as a whole presents a constant preponderance of pleasant states over painful ones, in other words, one who in the end enjoys himself more than suffers. “A man of practical wisdom,” says Aristotle, “pursues what is free from pain, not what is pleasant.”⁸ This is the point of view of eudaemonism, in the proper sense, or *prudent eudaemonism*. Those who follow this doctrine will not “wallow in the mire of sensual pleasures,” which destroy the soul and the body. Rather, they find a sense of well-being chiefly in higher intellectual and aesthetic enjoyments, which, being the most enduring, are connected with the least amount of pain.

⁷ F] Independently of any pessimistic theory in principle, the eudaemonistic viewpoint attaches more importance to freedom from pain than to the positive fact of pleasure. The pain of an unsatisfied and powerfully individualized sexual passion, which not infrequently drives people to suicide, is incomparably more significant than the pleasure of its satisfaction. The latter can be recognized as a great good only insofar as it provides relief from these great pains.

⁸ E] Aristotle 1941: 1152b, 16–17.

IV

Despite its comparative plausibility, prudent eudaemonism shares the same fate as any form of eudaemonism: It too turns out to be only a pseudo principle. When the real good is defined as a sense of well-being, all that matters is attaining and securing it. No amount of prudence, however can either attain or secure it.

Our life and fate depend on causes and figures, which and who are independent of the decisions and measures taken by our worldly wisdom. Moreover, for the most part, the prudent egoist simply loses all opportunity for real, though fleeting, pleasure, without thereby acquiring any lasting sense of well-being. The precarious nature of all goods is all the more fatal because, in contrast to animals, humans know about it in advance. The inevitable collapse of every instance of happiness casts a shadow even over moments of genuine enjoyment. However, even in those rare cases when a prudent life-style actually does lead to a quantitative surplus of painless⁹ [150]states over sad and painful ones, the triumph of eudaemonism is merely illusory. For it is based upon an arbitrary exclusion of a *qualitative* character of our mental states (taking “quality” not in the moral sense—which for now can be questioned—but simply in the psychological or, more precisely, psychophysical sense, viz., the intensity of the pleasant sensations). Undoubtedly, the strongest, most captivating enjoyments, are, nevertheless, not those that prudence recommends but those connected with savage passions. Granted that here too in many cases the pleasure of satisfaction is disproportionate to the strength of the desire, but, nevertheless, it is incomparably more intense than all the sensations that a moderate and orderly life-style can yield. When prudence tells us that passions will lead us to ruin, we can, without disputing this truth in any way, simply recall another:

All, all that is threatened by fate,
Is for the heart of mortal weight
Full of inexplicable delight...¹⁰

From the eudaemonistic viewpoint, it is impossible to say anything against this. Why should I renounce “inexplicable delights” for the sake of some dull prosperity? Passions will lead to our ruin, but does prudence really save us from it? Where is the person who, by means of prudent behavior alone, has conquered death?

The voice of the passions can prove to be wrong only in the presence of something higher. It is silenced in the presence of heavenly thunder, but the dull speeches of prudence are powerless to drown it.

Certainly a satisfaction of the passions, which leads to ruin, cannot be the highest good. However, from the general point of view of eudaemonism, it can have a decisive advantage over the innocent pleasures of good behavior, *which do not save*

⁹ C] surplus of painless] surplus of pleasant or at least painless **AB**.

¹⁰ E] From Pushkin’s “Feast in a time of plague.” Cf. Pushkin 2000: 101, where the work is entitled “A Feast During the Plague.”

us from ruin. Let us assume that intellectual and aesthetic pleasures are not just innocent, but also noble. Their value, however, is connected with limitations that preclude these goods from being recognized as the highest good.

1. These “spiritual” pleasures essentially¹¹ are attainable only by people with a high degree of aesthetic and intellectual [151]development, or in any case only¹² to a few, whereas the highest real good necessarily should be universal. No progress in democratic institutions can give an ass the ability to enjoy Beethoven’s symphonies or enable a pig, which cannot even appreciate the taste of oranges, to enjoy the sonnets of Dante and Petrarch or the poems of Shelley.¹³
2. Even those to whom intellectual and aesthetic enjoyments are attainable find them to be insufficient. Since such enjoyments affect only specific mental faculties and powers and not the others, they cannot fill one’s whole life. Only the theoretical, contemplative side of human nature turns out to be more or less satisfied, while the active, practical life is left without any firm guidance.¹⁴ As objects of pure contemplation, the intellectual and aesthetic goods exert no influence on the practical will.

The stars we never long to clasp,
We revel in their light¹⁵

When, from the eudaemonistic viewpoint, people put science and art (i.e., the enjoyment derived from them) above everything, the practical will remains without a dominant determination¹⁶ and blind passions seize it unhindered. This shows the inadequacy of prudent eudaemonism as a guiding principle of life.

3. This inadequacy is demonstrated even by its impotence against theoretical skepticism, which undermines the value of the objects of intellectual and cultural activity. Let us suppose I genuinely enjoy¹⁷ contemplating beauty and investigating truth. However, my understanding—the highest authority for “prudent” eudaemonism—tells me that beauty is a subjective apparition¹⁸ and that truth is unattainable by human cognition. My enjoyment is poisoned by these considerations and simply becomes impossible for anyone who thinks consistently. However, even without such logic it is clear that enjoyment obtained through some notorious deception cannot rationally be held to be the highest good.

¹¹ C] essentially] *Absent in AB.*

¹² C] by people with ... any case only] *Absent in AB.*

¹³ C] No progress in ... poems of Shelley.] *Absent in AB.*

¹⁴ C] is left without any firm guidance.] remains without any guidance based in principle. **AB.**

¹⁵ E] Although unattributed, Solov’ëv most likely is here quoting lines from Goethe’s “Comfort in Tears.” See Goethe 2004: 91.

¹⁶ C] determination] motive **AB.**

¹⁷ C] I genuinely enjoy] I find the greatest enjoyment in **A.**

¹⁸ C] apparition] illusion **AB.**

4. However, let us suppose that our epicurean is free of such skepticism and instinctively indulges in the enjoyments of thought and creative work without asking about the ultimate significance of these objects. For him these “spiritual goods” may seem eternal, but, in any case, his own ability to enjoy them is far from being so. [152]At most, it can last only a little longer than his ability to enjoy sensual delights.

Nonetheless, the *endurance*, or longevity, of pleasures is precisely the fundamental claim of *prudent* eudaemonism. It is supposedly its chief advantage over simply seeking what is immediately pleasing. Certainly, if our pleasures were enduring realities that could be amassed like property, the prudent eudaemonist in his decrepit old age might still consider himself richer than some reckless profligate who died prematurely. However, *past* delights are, in fact, only memories. Thus, if our wise epicurean simply remains true to the eudaemonist viewpoint to his death, he definitely will regret that for the sake of faint memories of innocent intellectual and aesthetic joys he sacrificed opportunities for far more intense delights. *Since* he never *experienced* them, these opportunities arouse in him at this moment an unfulfilled and painful desire. Only the logically inadmissible confusion of two viewpoints supports the supposed superiority of prudent eudaemonism over simple profligacy. It must be one of these two: Either we have in mind the *present* moment of enjoyment—and in that case we have to give up the prudence that even animals share—or we consider the *future* consequences of our actions. In the latter case, one can ask: What precise moment in the future must we put as the basis of our calculation? Obviously, it would be absurd to take any moment other than the *last*, which expresses the *sum total* of the whole life. However, at the last moment before death the entire eudaemonistic calculation reduces to zero, and every possible advantage of prudent enjoyments over reckless ones (from the eudaemonistic viewpoint) completely disappears. Once they are over, all enjoyments cease to be enjoyments, but this we *knew beforehand*. Hence, the idea of “the sum of enjoyments” lacks real meaning: a sum of zeros is no greater than a simple zero.

V

The possession of *material* goods—both in the form of an enjoyment at the present minute as well as in the form of a more enduring happiness [153]supposedly guaranteed by prudence—proves to be deceptive and inadequate. Therefore, does not a true sense of well-being, the highest real good, consist in *freedom* from the superficial desires and affections that deceive and enslave and make us miserable? All material goods either turn out to be not worth desiring or even before their essential unsatisfactory nature is discovered, these pseudo goods, being dependent on external factors beyond human control, are taken away from us, making us doubly miserable. Consequently, no one can escape misery and be happy, as long as the human will is attracted to objects, the possession of which is for us contingent. If the true state of well-being is one of enduring satisfaction, then the truly happy person can only be one who finds satisfaction in what cannot be taken away, viz. oneself.

Let a person simply be free within from any attachment to external and contingent objects, and this person will be permanently satisfied and enjoy a sense of well-being. Not yielding to anything extraneous, fully in possession of oneself, such a person has everything and even more than everything. If I have no desire for a certain thing, then I am a master of it to a greater degree than the person who wants and owns it. If I am indifferent to power, I am more powerful than the ruler who craves it; if I am indifferent to the whole world, I am above the master of the universe.

This principle of *self-sufficiency* (*αυταρκεια*), expressing as it does an unconditional demand, is in fact merely negative and conditional. In the first place, its force is dependent on the same superficial goods that it rejects. As long as someone is attached to such goods, freedom from this attachment is *desirable* for the sake of one's higher consciousness and gives meaning to one's activity. In the same way, as long as the human being is sensitive to the contingent sufferings of external life, a triumph over them and remaining steadfast in the face of adversity can give the greatest satisfaction. However, when one rises above an attachment to external goods and above the fear of external misfortune, what will be the positive meaning of life? Can a sense of delight in this victory alone really be enough? However, in such a case the principle of self-sufficiency becomes a vain self-complacency and acquires a comical rather than a majestic character. [154] The dissatisfaction with the final result makes it unnecessary to insist that the spiritual force needed to attain it is not given to everyone, and even when it is given it is not always preserved to the end. Thus, the principle of self-sufficiency does not inherently possess sufficient power to realize itself, showing itself in this respect to be only a pseudo-principle. Freedom from enslavement to lower, contingent goods can only be a *condition* for the attainment of the highest good but cannot itself be this good. A temple cleared of idols that had once filled it does not alone become more holy to God. By itself, it remains simply an empty place.¹⁹

VI

The human individual finds final satisfaction or a sense of well-being neither in worldly material goods nor within oneself (i.e., in the empty form of self-consciousness). The only conclusion one can draw from this seems to be that a person is not just a particular individual, but is also part of a collective whole and that one's true well-being, i.e., the positive interest of one's life, lies in serving the common good or what is to the common benefit.

¹⁹ F] When applied in practice, the principle of self-sufficiency coincides partly with the moral principle of asceticism. However, the essential difference between them lies in their respective starting points or original motives. Asceticism is the desire to have the spirit prevail over the flesh in the sense of the *proper* human attitude towards what is lower. On the other hand, the demand for self-sufficiency arises from a desire for happiness. In this way, the principle of *αυταρκεια* can be correctly designated as *eudaemonistic asceticism*.

Such is the principle of *utilitarianism*, which obviously corresponds to the moral principle of altruism. It demands that we live for others, help everyone as much as possible and work for the good of others as if it were our own. According to the representatives of utilitarianism, their ideas and teaching, in practice, should coincide with altruistic morality or with the commandments of justice and mercy. Mill, for example, writes, “I must [155]again repeat what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent’s own happiness but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. ‘To do as you would be done by,’ and ‘to love your neighbor as yourself,’ constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.” (J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 5th ed. Lond., 1874, pp. 24–25).²⁰

Mill does not appreciate that²¹ the distinction between these two principles—the utilitarian and the altruistic—lies in the fact that altruism holds the rule to live for others to be the expression of the *proper* relation of human beings to those similar to us, or as a moral duty that follows from the pure idea of the moral good. On the other hand, according to utilitarianism, human beings should serve the common good and impartially judge between their own interests and those of others ultimately only because²² such an attitude (allegedly)²³ is the most beneficial or advantageous to us. In this way, moral activity has no need of a special independent principle opposed to egoism but, rather, is a consequence of the same egoism, though correctly understood. And since there is egoism in all of us, utilitarian morality is fit for everyone without exception. Therefore, in the eyes of its followers²⁴ it has an advantage over the morality of pure altruism, regardless of whether the latter is maintained because of a simple sympathetic feeling or maintained in the name of pure duty. In this connection, another advantage of utilitarianism, according to its supporters, is that the utilitarian principle corresponds completely to the actual historical origin of moral feelings and ideas. All of these appear to be simply the result of consistently expanded and developed considerations of what is one’s own benefit. Thus, the highest system of morality is simply the most complex transformation of original egoistic motives. Even if this assertion were [156]correct, the advantage for utilitarianism that follows from it would still be merely illusory. From the fact that an oak tree originates from an acorn and acorns serve as feed for pigs, it does not follow that oak trees can serve as food for pigs. Likewise, from the supposition that the highest moral doctrine is *genetically* connected to egoism, i.e., that it originated from it through a succession of alterations in the past, we have no right to conclude that this highest morality in its present, perfect form can also rest on self-interest or

²⁰ E] Mill 1874.

²¹ C] Mill does not appreciate that] *Absent in AB*.

²² C] ultimately only because] because **AB**.

²³ C] (allegedly)] *Absent in AB*.

²⁴ C] in the eyes of its followers] *Absent in AB*.

is useful for egoists. Experience provides an obvious example that contradicts this conclusion: the *majority* of people—both in the present as well as in the past—have found it more *beneficial to divorce their own benefit from the common benefit*.²⁵ On the other hand, the very²⁶ assumption that the original significance of selfishness is the *sole* basis of all activity contradicts the truth of the matter.

The view that the origin of morality lies in individualistic egoism is adequately refuted by the simple fact that *originally* a generic and not an individualistic self-assertion plays the predominant role in life. In particular individuals, this generic self-assertion takes the form of *self-sacrifice*. What benefit can there be in it for a bird to give its life for its nestlings or for a worker bee to die for its queen? How is its individual egoism satisfied?²⁷ A decisive predominance of individual motives over generic ones and, at the same time, the possibility of a fundamental and consistent selfishness appears in humanity only at a certain stage in the development of personal consciousness. Therefore, since it demands self-renunciation and self-sacrifice from a person not in the name of higher principles but only for the sake of its own properly understood selfishness, utilitarianism makes sense as a practical doctrine only for individuals at a given stage of human development. It is from this point of view alone that we should look at utilitarianism here, especially since questions concerning the empirical origin of any set [157] of feelings and concepts have nothing directly to do with the object of moral philosophy.

VII

“Everyone desires what is to his own benefit; but it is to everyone’s benefit to work for the common benefit. Consequently, everyone should work for the common benefit.” Only the conclusion is true in this formula of pure utilitarianism, but its real bases are not contained in the two premises from which that conclusion is deduced. By themselves these two premises are incorrect and are therefore falsely juxtaposed to each other.

It is not true that everyone desires his own benefit. For a great many desire only what brings them immediate pleasure and find this pleasure in things that are quite useless and even harmful, e.g., in drinking, gambling, pornography, etc. Certainly we could lecture these people on the common good, but it has to be based on something other than their own²⁸ desires.

²⁵ C] Experience provides an ... *common benefit*.] *Absent in AB*.

²⁶ C] On the other hand, the very] However, the **AB**.

²⁷ F] On the original character of self-sacrifice, or the “struggle for the life of others,” cf. in particular Henry Drummond, *Ascent of Man*. From the fact that real generic solidarity is the basis of the self-sacrifice of an individual for the benefit of the species, it does not follow that self-sacrifice is the same as egoism. E] See, for example, Drummond 1895: 30—“In other words without the Struggle for the Life of Others there can be no Struggle for Life, and therefore no Evolution.” C] From the fact ... same as egoism.] *Absent in A*.

²⁸ C] own] factual **AB**.

Furthermore, even those who recognize the advantage of utility or of lasting satisfaction over momentary enjoyments do not think their benefit lies where utilitarianism indicates it to be. A miser understands perfectly well that all fleeting satisfactions are dust and decay in comparison to the real lasting goods that he locks up in a durable, fireproof trunk, and the utilitarians have no arguments at their disposal that would make him empty this trunk for philanthropic goals. Do they say to him that his own benefit demands that he coordinate his own advantages with those of others? But he has met this demand. In fact, let us suppose that he acquired his wealth by lending money at interest. This means that he rendered a service to his neighbors and helped those in need, by lending them money. He risked his capital and for doing so received a certain profit. They, on the other hand, lost their profit but used his capital when they had none of their own. Everything was arranged for mutual advantage, and both sides judged impartially their own and the other's respective interests. Why, then, will neither Mill nor any of his followers recognize the behavior of this prudent money-lender to be a true example of utilitarian [158]morality? Is it because he made no use of the money he accumulated? This is not correct. He did use it to the utmost, getting the greatest satisfaction in possessing his treasures and in an awareness of his power (cf. Pushkin's "The Covetous Knight").²⁹ Besides, the more wealth accumulated, the more benefit it can bring afterward to other people. Thus, from this perspective too one's own advantage and that of others turn out to be evenly balanced.

If utilitarians will not agree to accept the activity of the prudent money-lender as a normal human activity, it can only be explained by the fact that their demands essentially amount to much more than for the simple *harmonizing* of what is in one's own benefit with that of another's. They demand that a person *sacrifice* one's personal advantage for the sake of the common good and one's true benefit is to be found in this. Directly contradicting the concept of "one's own benefit," such a demand depends on metaphysical presuppositions quite foreign to the doctrine of pure utilitarianism and is, in spite of them, completely arbitrary.

Actual cases of self-sacrifice arise owing either to (1) an immediate stirring of a sympathetic feeling, when, for example, someone without hesitation³⁰ risks one's own life to save another who is dying; or (2) a compassionate nature as the constant dominant character trait, for example, in people who are personally inclined to devote their lives to serving the suffering; or (3) a highly developed sense of moral *duty*; or, finally, (4) a religious inspiration through some idea. None of these motives depends in the least on considerations of benefit. Those individuals whose wills can be sufficiently influenced by these motives, whether separately or as a group, will sacrifice themselves for the good of others, without the need for motives of any other sort.³¹

²⁹ E] Pushkin's "The Covetous Knight"] For an English translation under the title "The Miserly Knight," see Pushkin 2000: 37–54.

³⁰ C] without hesitation] *Absent in AB*.

³¹ F] There is still a fifth possible motive—an interest in life beyond the grave, the desire to obtain eternal heavenly bliss. Although this motive is utilitarian in the broad sense, it is repeatedly con-

However, there are many people who are not naturally kind, who are morally and religiously indifferent, who lack a clear sense of duty and who lack a sensitivity to the voice of conscience. These are precisely those to whom utilitarianism would have to show [159] its power, convincing them that it is truly to their own benefit to serve the common good, even to the point of self-sacrifice. However, this is obviously impossible, because these people distinguish themselves by finding that their own benefit lies not in the good of others, but exclusively in their egoistic well-being.

By *benefit*, as distinct from pleasure, is meant *enduring* or secure satisfaction. It would be quite absurd to try to prove to the practical materialist that by putting the lives of others or even an idea ahead of one's own life he or she thereby secures for oneself the enduring satisfaction of *one's own* interests, i.e., one's material interests.

Clearly, the connection claimed by utilitarianism between the benefit everyone desires *for himself* and that which this ethical system considers genuine or true is only a crude sophism, based on the ambiguity of the word "benefit." First, we have the axiom³² that everyone wants what satisfies him or her; then the general term "benefit" is used to designate the entire factual gamut of objects and the means of satisfaction that in fact exist. Next, this term is replaced by the completely new concept of *common* good, which is also given the designation "*benefit*." On the basis of this one single term covering distinct and even opposed concepts, the conclusion is made that since everyone desires one's own benefit and the benefit lies in the common good or the greatest happiness of all, everyone must desire the common good and work for it. In fact, however, the benefit that *everyone* wants for oneself has no *necessary* relation to a universal sense of well-being, and the benefit that lies in general happiness is not what everyone wants. A mere substitution of concepts is not enough to dissuade someone from wanting what he or she in fact does want or to find one's benefit some place other than where it actually is found.

The various modifications made to the utilitarian formula do not make it more convincing. Thus, taking the concept of benefit as *enduring* satisfaction, one could claim that personal happiness does not provide enduring satisfaction. For such happiness is connected with contingent and transitory objects. On the other hand, to the extent that it relates to all future generations the common good of humanity is a permanently abiding object. This is why working for it can provide enduring satisfaction. If the argument is directed to just [160] "anyone," then anyone can reply by saying: "Let us assume that although my personal happiness does not provide me with a sense of *enduring* satisfaction, a concern for the happiness of future generations does not provide me with *any* satisfaction whatsoever. For there is no way such a good can satisfy me. If it would someday exist, it would, in any case, *not* be *my* good, since I definitely will not exist. Therefore, if there is no benefit for me in a personal sense of well-being, then there is all the less for me in a universal sense of well-being. How can I find *benefit* in something that will certainly never *benefit* me?"

nected with assumptions of a different order, which are fundamentally rejected by the contemporary doctrine of utility.

³² C] axiom] indisputable fact AB.

The best representatives of utilitarianism have gravitated to the true idea of human *solidarity*, a consequence of which is that each individual's personal sense of well-being is connected with a universal sense of well-being. However, the roots of this idea are not planted in utilitarianism, and as a practical principle this idea has no place within the utilitarian or the eudaemonistic way of thinking in general. One can fully recognize even the truth of universal solidarity and the consequences that follow from it in the natural order of things without, however, concluding from it any moral³³ rule for one's conduct. So, for example, the licentious rich man who lives solely for his own pleasure and never makes the good of others the goal of his actions can, nevertheless, correctly point to the fact that because of the natural order of things³⁴ his refined indulgence promotes the growth of industry and commerce, of the sciences and the arts, and provides jobs for a number of poor people.

Universal solidarity exists as a natural law and acts through separate individuals independently of their will and conduct. And if I, concerned only with personal benefit, unintentionally contribute to the common benefit, what more³⁵ is demanded of me from the utilitarian viewpoint? On the other hand, universal solidarity is by no means the same as a universal sense of well-being. It does not follow from the fact that humanity is united in solidarity that humanity must certainly be happy. It may be united in distress and disaster. Let us assume I make the idea of universal solidarity a practical rule of my conduct and, as a consequence, sacrifice any personal advantage³⁶ for the sake of the common good. However, if humanity is doomed to destruction and its [161]"good" turns out to be illusory, what *benefit* will my self-sacrifice prove to be either to me or to humanity? Therefore, even if the idea of universal solidarity were possible in the sense of a practical rule, intimately connected with the principle of utilitarianism, this idea would be quite *useless* to the latter.

Utilitarianism is the highest form of eudaemonism, and its insolvency is a condemnation of all practical philosophies that posit the good, taken as a sense of well-being or self-interested satisfaction, as their highest principle. The apparent real universality and necessity of this principle, which lies in the fact that everyone certainly desires a sense of well-being, turns out to be completely illusory, because: (1) the general designation "the good" or "well-being" refers in reality to an infinite number of different objects that are irreducible to any inner³⁷ unity, and (2) such a universal aspiration for one's own well-being (whatever sense we ascribe to this word)³⁸ contains, in any case, neither a guarantee that the goal can be attained nor even the conditions for that attainment. Therefore, the principle of well-being remains only a *demand* and consequently has no advantage over the principle of what should be, or the moral good. Surely, the sole deficiency of the latter is the fact that it remains only a demand, itself lacking the power necessary for its realization. On the other hand, despite this general deficiency the moral principle has over the

³³ C] concluding from it any moral] making this truth a **AB**.

³⁴ C] order of things] solidarity **AB**.

³⁵ C] more] *Absent in A*.

³⁶ C] advantages] interests **AB**.

³⁷ C] inner] fundamental **AB**.

³⁸ C] word)] last term) **AB**.

eudaemonistic principle the enormous advantage of an *intrinsic* dignity, an *ideal* universality and necessity. For whereas everyone has a right to understand “well-being” as anything that one pleases, the moral good, defined not as an arbitrary personal choice but as universal reason and conscience, is necessarily one and the same for everyone.

Thus, for now we have only two demands: the rational *demand* of duty and the natural *demand* for a sense of well-being—(1) *all people must be virtuous*, and (2) *all people want to be happy*. Both of these demands have natural footholds in the human essence, but neither contains in itself sufficient grounds or conditions for its realization. Additionally, they are in fact unconnected and usually contradict each other. And the attempt (in utilitarianism) to harmonize the two fundamentally does not stand up under criticism.

[162] These demands are of unequal value. However, if we had to choose a principle of practical philosophy between either the clear, definite and exalted idea of the moral good, though insufficiently powerful, and the equally impotent but unclear, indefinite and lowly idea of well-being, then certainly all rational arguments would be in favor of the former.

However, before claiming the sad necessity of such a choice, we must have³⁹ a deeper understanding of the general moral basis of human nature. Up to now, we have examined this moral basis primarily only with respect to the separate development of its three particular manifestations.⁴⁰

³⁹ C] must have] will attempt to gain **AB**.

⁴⁰ C] the separate development ... manifestations.] their formal development. **AB**.