A study of the influence of custom on the moral judgment

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Chapter V - An examination of objections

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CHAPTER V

AN EXAMINATION OF OBJECTIONS

Various objections will undoubtedly be urged against the conclusions with regard to both immediacy and authority that have been drawn from the preceding study. Those that I have heard during the progress of this inquiry are reducible to four classes. They are: I, objections based upon a belief that the results are due to the influence of the University, including under this influences that have come directly or indirectly from the investigator himself; II, objections based upon the alleged insincerity of the reasons assigned by the students for their answers; III, objections based upon an alleged difference between the conditions under which these questions were answered and the conditions under which similar questions would be answered in real life; IV, those due to a misunderstanding of the conception of the process of moral judging here presented for acceptance. I shall take up the first, second and third, in order, reserving the fourth for the following chapter where the positive results of our study will be presented and with them a sketch of the *modus operandi* of the eudaemonistic judgment of every-day life.

We may proceed then to the first objection, viz., that the results obtained are due to influences arising from the connection of these young people with the University. (a) For the students of the College of Letters and Science this alleged source of error may be found in the influence direct or indirect of the faculty, or in influences emanating from my ethics classes, carried by my former students, or finally in influences passing from student to student. Direct passage of my views to these students is, however, practically excluded, for none of them had ever been in any of my classes before, and the main body of our results were obtained not through the interviews but

through written answers. (b) Among the Agricultural students the results might be supposed to be due to hints conveyed by me in the interviews, together with the transmission of these and of other items of information from one student to another. This might also be supposed to be a subordinate factor among the "Hill" students.

We may begin with (b). It may be thought that the interview offers peculiarly favorable opportunities for the transference of ideas from investigator to student. And since this was the principle method employed with the Agricultural students, that the results obtained from them are vitiated to an indeterminable degree by this fact. In the first place, I must point out that a goodly supply of eudaemonistic judgments were obtained from the written papers. As regards the interview itself, it will be remembered that I asked no leading questions beyond those specifically mentioned. Furthermore I expressed no opinions as to the correctness or incorrectness of any judgment whatever its character except inferentially at one point, specified just below. At the close of the interview I asked a number of the Agricultural students whether they had obtained any hints from my expression, manner, or anything else, as to the way in which I thought the questions should be answered. With one exception they replied in the negative, most of them asserting that they were too busy thinking about the question to notice me; the one student who thought he could detect my opinions from my manner as a matter of fact answered the majority of the questions differently from what I should. There were, indeed, occasional instances of apparent partisanship on my part, indulged in, I hasten to add, only at the close of the interview, from which the student might have extracted a hint, had he been seeking for one, but unfortunately for the objector their influence was in each case zero. This was when I made an attack upon a position once taken, to see how it would be defended. The following illustration of the outcome is thoroughly typical. 204 answered II 4 rigoristically and II 5 in latitudinarian fashion. I asked what the difference was between 4 and 5. "In 5 the woman could go to town any other day." I replied that the situation was not so simple as all that, suggested various inconveniences that would result from postponement, and—as

these considerations produced no effect—ended by asserting that it was a promise anyway. He hesitated a moment and suggested that in 4 the poor man *might* get upon his feet in some other way. Thereupon I reshaped the question so as to make this improbable in the extreme. He could suggest no farther difference, but clung to each answer with undiminished tenacity. The same thing happened when there was a conflict with the authority of the Bible. In all cases of insubordination, I, in so far as I took any attitude, backed the commandments. This was a liberty I could permit myself because the discussion of the subject came at the end of the interview. In only one instance—as has been already seen—did this partisanship produce any effect.[1]

This matter is of such vital importance that I shall venture to attempt to fortify my statements by introducing an account of a deliberate attempt made this winter to browbeat some of the members of this year's entering class in the same course. It occurred in the progress of an investigation undertaken by Mr. Otto, fellow in philosophy, into their conceptions of justice. The question he is dealing with is IV in the original numbering as found in the Appendix,—the question of the settlement besieged by Indians which can only be saved by sacrificing the life of one of its inhabitants. He shall tell his story in his own words.

Where the student said, "I think they ought to fight it out," a deliberate attempt was made to get him to change his position by describing the situation in such a way that he would naturally suppose I did not agree with his answer. The interviews proceeded substantially as follows:

You know what a stockade is? [Here some explanation was at times necessary.] *I want to tell you what happened in connection with one down in New England, early in our history. Well, one forenoon, all of a sudden, this stockade was surrounded by a band of Indians,—about three hundred, I think it was. They came to get a white man who, they claimed, had done them a great injury. They claimed he had killed two Indians that morning, six miles from the stockade; had scalped them; and stolen all they had. Two squaws had witnessed the deed.*

[1] See above, page 99.

Now, as it happened, this man with several others had been busy three or four days on a piece of work inside the fort—making a map I believe—and had not been outside of the stockade in that time. So it was impossible for him to have done the deed. The captain knew this, of course, and so he told the chief that he could not give the man up. But the Indian chief said: "When an Indian kills a white man we have to give him up to be punished by you; this man has killed two Indians,—is it not fair that you give him up to us, to be punished as we think best?" You can see how the Indians would look at it. (Here the student would usually say, "Yes I can see; you can't blame the Indians.") *The captain, absolutely sure that the man was innocent, said: "If the man had done what you say, I would surrender him, that would be only fair; but he hasn't, and so I cannot give him up." The captain then explained to the Indians why this man could not have committed the deed, and tried to convince them that there was a mistake somewhere, but the Indians would not believe him.* (Here a number of the students interjected, "You can't blame them for that either, because the whites did lie to the Indians a lot.") *Well, there was a lot of talking on both sides, and then the chief told the captain he'd have to have that man. If they'd give him up willingly, they'd go away believing in his honesty and sense of justice, and there would be no further trouble. If he'd refuse to give him up, so that they'd have to lose a lot of men to get what they ought to have by right, then when they got into the stockade they'd kill the whole crowd of them. The captain knew he could depend on this chief to do as he said, so he was in a pretty bad fix.*

Now as this was in time of peace, there was little powder and food in the stockade, so they couldn't stand a siege. And since there were only about fifty men against three hundred Indians, a pitched battle was out of the question. It was either give up the innocent man to the Indians, or all die. Which do you think they ought to do? Wait a minute, I wish you'd try to look at it from an outside point of view. What would it be right for that captain to do,—command the one to march out and so save the rest, or command the rest to stand by this man

and die doing it? And remember the man will die either way you fix it. What do you say?

You say the man didn't do it? *Yes, it was perfectly clear that the man was innocent.* And couldn't they get help some way? *No; remember they are surrounded.* I'd never give him up! I'd say fight it out. *But you see that means a large loss of life, whereas, if you send the man out, all the rest may live.* Yes, but the man hasn't done anything. *The others haven't either, have they? Why should you make* FIFTY *innocent people suffer for nothing when by making* ONE *innocent man suffer you save so many lives?* Yes. I see that. And of course the Indians would certainly get that man if they ever got in. That's a bad one. [Then with renewed vigor] No, sir, I'd never give him up. One man is no better than another, therefore I think each man should take his share of the trouble. It doesn't look right to have all those people die; in another way it is mean and cowardly to put it all on one man, just because the Indians happen to want him. *You don't seem to want that man given up.* No, sir, I don't; that certainly doesn't seem right. *Have you thought of the women and children involved in this?* I didn't know there were any; you didn't say anything about that, did you? *No, but I thought you knew there were usually women and children in the stockades so I didn't mention it.* That makes it harder. *Then suppose we look at it again, and say there were fifty men and fifty women and children, all these would have to go if the captain didn't give up the man. The men would be killed, the women mistreated, the children carried into captivity. What would you say the captain ought to do then?* [Here a few said the man ought to be given up for the sake of the "innocent women and children," and they justified their change of position on the ground that new data had been introduced. In the majority of cases, however, the interview went on as follows.] *Well, what do you think the captain ought to do—say to the one "you must go," or to the rest "you must stand by this man and die?"* I don't think he ought to force the man to go if he didn't do the deed. If he's willing to go, all right, and I think it's his duty to offer himself. And if he were guilty I'd say give him up. But I can't see how anyone can have a right to give up an in-

nocent man that way. It seems tough, but the man is innocent and I think they ought to stand by him. *You see what that involves? You are willing to give up a hundred men, women, and children to save one man.* If he hasn't done it! *Yes, I understand you,—if he hasn't done anything. But now I can go right on increasing the number; make it two hundred, three hundred, and so on.* That's true; I saw that all right. That's what makes it such a hard question. *In the case of the train and the child*[2] *you thought it right to save the train because it was many lives against one. Why do you hold out for the one—as you do here, even at the expense of the many?* I don't know. It's inconsistent of course, but somehow it looks different. *Don't you want to change your answer then?* No, sir, I can't see how we have a right to make a man suffer for what he hasn't done.

Such facts seem to me to take the foundation from under the claim that the only data capable of satisfying the scientific conscience of any one not present at these interviews would be complete phonographic and kinematographic records. In the face of such a claim it may be asserted with confidence that the minor details which do not and can not appear in the preceding accounts make absolutely no difference in the results.

Precautions were taken to prevent leaking—assuming that there was anything to leak. With both sets of students I requested each one to say nothing whatever to any of his fellows about the interview. And from every Agricultural student I obtained an assurance that no one had communicated with him in any way concerning the interviews. Other influences from the University are excluded for the Agricultural students. They had been in the city less than a month when the printed questions were given to them. Their time was wholly occupied with learning how to handle and repair farm machinery, how to select seed corn, to plant alfalfa, to judge stock. They were kept at these things from early morning till late at night. If all this time their teachers were (without knowing it) weaning them from blind obedience to custom to loyalty to a reasoned

[2] This refers to Question IX of Series I: College of Letters and Science, for which see Appendix. It formed a part of the investigation under consideration.

code, then the boss superintending the repairs of the street railway below the University Hill is doing the same thing with the men wielding their picks and shovels.

If these considerations justify the conclusion that the Agricultural students were really using their own legs instead of being carried along by a concealed moving sidewalk, the case against the mental independence of the "Hill" students falls to the ground. For what reason is there to claim that the judgments of the latter were the mere reflection of the medium in which they happened to arise, when as far as immediacy and the attitude towards authority are concerned they are identical with those from the other college? However, even this is not all there is to be said on the subject. I questioned very carefully about a dozen of those "Hill" students whose answers were most completely eudaemonistic, with regard to the sources of their opinions. All asserted that they were aware of no influence emanating from their university life to account for their attitude. It so happened that none of them had had anything more than an elementary course in economics or political science, and from these they could trace no relations to my casuistry questions; they had heard nothing about my attitude towards ethical problems from my former pupils—students here do not discuss their work with anyone except their fellows in the same course—it is hardly "good form." The studied avoidance of all serious questions on the part of the undergraduate makes improbable the existence of any "eudaemonistic atmosphere" among the students, originating, I know not where, but abiding with generation after generation as a tradition. Some of the men and women were members of the literary societies. They had of course debated or heard debates upon the Philippine problem, the problem of government ownership, *et cetera*. But they were aware of no influences from that direction and indeed those not members of the societies were in these matters indistinguishable from those who were.

Some of the Chicago newspapers discussed V at considerable length during the winter of 1905–06. But the discussion was opened after the written returns from the class had come into my hands and most of my interviews had been held. While the debate was going on I asked a number of these students

whether they were following it. Not one of them had even heard of it.

II. It may be objected that it is easy enough for anyone to invent reasons on demand. But what evidence is there, it may be asked, that the reasons assigned were those which actually determined the answers? To this I feel tempted to reply: What evidence is there that the large number of persons who directly or by implication declared these to be their real reasons were deceiving either themselves or me? It is true we found evidence of self-deception in regard to the influence of the authority of the Bible. But then we found *evidence*, and found it easily and repeatedly, and no assertions have been made on the subject in this study that are not based on a large amount of such evidence. Similar grounds for suspicion concerning the reality of the eudaemonistic attitude were not discovered, though searched for with patience and care.

But what will probably be more convincing lines of argument are at our disposal. The reasons found in the papers and interviews are too often an organic part of the answers to be an afterthought. Illustrations of this are 9 (I. d, on page 25), and 23 in II, and 110 in III, which follow. 23: "I think the young man would be justified in abandoning the business career. His father was selfish and exacting, I think, to make his son make a promise which would so needlessly spoil the pleasure of his life. Sacrifices made to help some one else or to raise the standards of a community which will be for the betterment of humanity in the end are highly honorable but such an unnecessary sacrifice under the circumstances is not." 110: "Yes. The belief in a Santa Claus is one of my happiest recollections, as I look back to my childhood. It caused me a great amount of pleasure and never did me a whit of harm. The more such harmless and delightful illusions man can cherish, the happier will his life be." With this last should be compared the rigoristic answers to III above, page 26.[3]

Moreover the verdict itself varies according as conditions affecting welfare vary. This appears unequivocally in the latitudinarian answers of the "Hill" students to IV and V. (See

[3] *Cf.* above, page 84.

above pages 24 and 25). It appears also in the answers of the Agricultural students to the supplementary questions as found on page 73 and following. If we compare the reasons put forward not merely for these but for all the answers with the reasons against taking interest quoted in Bacon's essay on usury we shall feel the difference instantly between what are manifestly artificial reasons raked together to persuade others of what one is himself convinced on other grounds and the reasons that really determine the conclusions of the person judging.[4] And these reasons are not merely good *per se*, they are just those which would naturally present themselves in the consideration of the different problems, if the persons were looking at them from the eudaemonistic point of view. This is clearly shown, it seems to me, in Tables II and III in the next chapter.

Once more, if these reasons had no part in determining the answers, it is curious that one hundred and fifty persons should all hit upon the same principle. There is variety enough in the answers as we shall see when we come to classify them in the next chapter. But in all this variety there is a striking, or rather, if the objection under consideration be valid, a miraculous unity, a unity which exhibits itself, through all the diversity of its application, in the presence of a single point of view—the eudaemonistic. Can such a phenomenon be due to accident?

Another line of evidence leads straight to the same conclusion. During my interviews with both sets of students I noticed that the statement of the reason usually followed immediately upon my inquiry, Why? even when considerable time had been spent in deciding the question itself. If this could be shown to be anything more than a mere impression it seemed to me it would be decisive, for it would mean that the reason had emerged during the process of reaching the decision. I accordingly asked Mr. Otto to make a careful investigation of the amount of time elapsing between answer and reason in the replies of a group of

[4] "Many have made witty invectives against usury. They say that it is pity the devil should have God's part, which is the tithe. That the usurer is the greatest Sabbath-breaker, because his plough goeth every Sunday. That the usurer is the drone that Virgil speaketh of: *Ignavum fucos pecus a præsepibus arcent.* That the usurer breaketh the first law that was made for mankind after the fall, which was: *In sudore vultus tui comedes Panem tuum;* not: *In sudore vultus alieni.* That usurers should have orange-tawney bonnets, because they do Judaize. That it is against nature for money to beget money; and the like." Bacon, *Essays*, xli.

students of the same general character as the members of the "Short Course," the students, namely, in the Winter Dairy Course. His account of the results follows:

In the results here given the printed questions distributed play a very small part. It happened to be impossible, at the time, to get the students to give the matter much thought, and consequently at the interview the majority had forgotten the questions. Even after these were repeated to them many failed to recall the attitude they had taken originally. Moreover, some of the students included in this list had answered a different set of questions than the one used by me, and others had not been reached at all until the time of the interview. One thing, at any rate, was perfectly obvious, namely, that the men came without a program of answers and reasons.

The method of procedure was as follows: Seated in ordinary school seats in a quiet room, we began with perfectly general conversation regarding the nature of their school work, opportunities in the line they had selected, mutual acquaintances, *et cetera,* until a basis of easy, familiar conversation had been reached. This was usually brief, but it sometimes lasted as much as ten minutes. When the transition seemed easy and natural we took up the basal questions of page 65 and following, but with no regard to order. The time required for answers to appear either spontaneously or in answer to the question, Why? was measured in pulse beats as obtained by holding the thumb and first two fingers of the left hand in contact. To each question a number or letter had been assigned, and as reasons were given the number of beats was recorded with the right hand. Absolute accuracy of course was not aimed at, but the method seems sufficiently reliable for the purpose in hand. Twenty-five men were interviewed; of these one discovered that a record was being taken, and while his time is not strikingly different from the rest, he is not included in the summary of results. The interview was written up immediately after its conclusion, while details were fresh in mind.

At the outset a difficulty was encountered which had not been in the least anticipated. While an explicit 'because' formed an organic part of fewer answers than I had expected, the rea-

son in many cases was given so quickly in answer to the question, Why? that counting was practically impossible. This, for example, was the case in almost every instance where the student considered it right to take the loaf of bread. No record runs over three beats, and only four reach that figure. The rest are between zero and two beats, but the majority of the two's are arbitrary and mean that the time was appreciable but too short to be measured. The reasons in Question I were usually of this nature: "Life must be preserved at all hazards," or, "It cannot be right to let people starve." It may be objected that such reasons are ambiguous, but the matter was not allowed to rest there, as examples given below will demonstrate.

The men who in Question I took the other side, namely, that it was wrong to take the loaf of bread, required more time. They usually began by offering as a reason, "because it's stealing," which at once led to the question why stealing is wrong. The same question was asked of those who did not object to the taking of the bread, because the number who did object was too small to base conclusions upon. A eudaemonistic answer to this question made its appearance in every case in a period ranging from zero to twelve pulse beats in duration. The average was a little under four pulse beats. A few of the answers will illustrate. The first is by the man who, on the whole, was the slowest in giving reasons. He had had practically no education, had thought little about anything, and was slow of speech. The figures in brackets indicate the time required for the reply.

No. 6. [I repeated the story.] *Did he do right or wrong?* He did right to take it. *Why do you say so?* (0) "Gee, we can't let people starve." [Then he added:] "Of course it's stealing, and that's wrong." *You really consider stealing wrong, do you?* (0) "Gee, how kin a fellow answer a question like that,— sure it's wrong." *Why is stealing wrong?* (8) "We have always been teached by all the holy books, haven't we?" *Is that what makes it wrong, because we have always been teached by all the holy books?* (0) "Well, I don't know." *Supposing the holy books of some country taught it was right to steal, would it be right for those people to steal?* [Immediately and emphatically.] "No, sir." *But why not?* (9) "Well, this is my idea, you can't let people steal." *What do you mean?*

(3) "Why if stealing was right, then pretty quick nobody would have nothing." [and after about eight beats] "Gee, that would be a fine world, that's what I think!"

The following are typical replies. No 11 [after I had repeated the story]. Under the circumstances I would not blame him. *That doesn't quite answer my question. Do you think he did right?* Yes, under the circumstances, I think so. *Why?* (3) "Well, he helps a person in great need." *But he steals.* "Yes, and stealing is wrong, I know." *Always?* "No, not always, but most always." *Why so?* (3) "O you couldn't let people steal, because then no one would do nothing in a little while." *What do you mean?* (0) "Why supposing you worked and got something together; someone would steal it, and if that was right to do, and you couldn't do nothing, what would be the use of working at all? That wouldn't work." [In a tone of surprise and some reproach] *Then you mean to say that stealing is wrong because we could not get along that way?* (5) "That's the only reason I can think of."

No. 12 [after my telling the story]. *What do you think of this action?* I think it's right. *Why so?* (0) "You can't let people suffer like that; what kind of a world would that be?" *Then why not say stealing is right?* [At once and with vigor] "Great Lord! that would make an awful mess." *What do you mean?* (2) "Stealing's got to be wrong or we'd have an awful mix-up." *Still I am not sure I understand you.* (2) "Well it's like this. One man would steal all he could, another would steal from him, and where would the thing end? The biggest bully would get along best of all."

The next question here reported upon had to do with the keeping of contracts (IV), various complications being introduced by means of sub-questions. Two men, of the twenty-four, stood out for keeping their agreement under any and all circumstances, and they were slowest in giving reasons, requiring as high as seven beats. Of the remaining twenty-two one took six beats; two, five beats; five, three beats; the rest from two to zero. The average was about two and five-tenths.

Two typical sets of replies follow:

No. 4 [I repeated the question]. He should have kept the room. *Why so?* (0) He had promised, and a promise must

be kept. *Always?* (0) "Well, in a case like this the hardship he was put to was not great and certainly less than the widow." *What would you say in the case of the woman comfortably situated?* (0) There it would still be wrong to go, for we must keep promises. *You seem to feel that a promise is pretty binding.* I do. *What makes you feel so strongly about that?* (5) "Everything would stop if you couldn't depend on people." *Did you say it always was wrong to break promises?* No, I wouldn't say that, but a man should go slow about breaking a promise; "it's just like lying." *I fear I don't understand you.* (3) I mean promises should be kept where it's possible; "unless it costs us more to keep them than it does the other fellow good."

No. 5. If the woman is poor he should keep his promise. *Why so?* (3) "He can work some other way and it won't hurt him." *Why do you say that?* (6) "Well I don't know why, but it's easier for him than for her." *How about the woman comfortably situated?* (0) That's different, still he ought to keep his promise if he could. *What do you mean?* (0) "She don't need it like the poor widow,—but he gave his promise." *You seem to think that a promise is pretty binding.* "That's what I think, too." *Why are you so set on that?* (2) "Well, now, how could you do anything if men didn't keep their promise?" A man would promise to give you $5,000 for a house, and after he got it he wouldn't do it; and you wouldn't be sure of wages or anything. "I think we couldn't do that way very long."

In connection with the question about Santa Claus reasons were given with greatest rapidity. Only two required as high as three beats, while the majority either gave their reasons as part of the answer, or immediately upon being asked for them. The record is,—sixteen, zero; five, two beats; two, three beats. The average is about eight-tenths.

Typical replies:

No. 17. "It's all right to tell children there is a Santa Claus because it's done for their pleasure and not to deceive them." *But isn't it a lie?* (0) "I suppose it might be called a lie, but if we only told lies to give people pleasure I guess we wouldn't call lying wrong at all."

No. 2. "I think it's wrong to tell children there is a Santa Claus because it makes them nervous." *What do you mean?* (0) "I've seen lots of children who were afraid of the dark, and a noise, and things like that, because they were told such stories." *And that's why you consider it wrong?* (2) "Well, yes. Some folks consider it a lie I suppose, but I don't think it's much of a story because it's told to give the children pleasure." I think it does a lot of harm though to tell such stories; that's why I think it wrong, because it makes the children nervous.

The results in the case of the other questions do not differ from those given. Whenever the questions became more complicated of course more time was required, and some men were more rapid than others; but the readiness with which reasons were given was a continual surprise.

III. Admitting that the reasons alleged in these responses were really determining factors in their formation, it may be further objected that the differences between an exercise in casuistry like the present and the process of dealing with problems of conduct in everyday life are too numerous and too great to justify an inference from one to the other. Four such differences may be asserted to exist. First, a reason for the answer is demanded. At the head of the paper stood the words: "Please give reasons for answers to all questions as far as possible." The challenge, then, to produce reasons may have brought them to the mind, where otherwise they would never have been thought of.

I might begin by denying the assumption involved in the objection. It is not true that life never raises for us the question, Why? It does so many times when we pass judgment upon others; it does so still more insistently often when we find ourselves at the crossroads, where the demand can not be ignored as my printed request frequently was. But waiving this, let us remember just what is meant by the reason for an answer to a problem in casuistry. When applied to the answers of these five questions which we are alone studying at present it means, as we saw on pages 16 and 17, that the action is judged right or wrong according to its relation to the welfare of certain or all of those affected. The real problem therefore is:

Is the demand for a reason capable of making a person pass from the blind worship of custom or any other form of authority to the eudaemonistic standpoint? I think no one who understands what he is saying will assert it. If the foreign pressure theory were true the demand for a reason would simply bring the general rule to mind, as a result of which we should find in the latitudinarian answers to I, for instance, the words "Right, because to let them starve would be murder," throughout instead of only twice (see above, page 47); and in the rigoristic answers, instead of such statements as that of I d (page 25), a bare recital of the rule.

The second alleged difference may be dealt with in the same way. In deciding these questions, it may be urged, plenty of time was allowed for reflection; to this may be attributed the constant use of the eudaemonistic standard. Again we may deny the implied assumption. In forming many moral judgments, especially upon our neighbor, we often have all the time we want to take. On the other hand, generally speaking, not a great deal of time was given by these young people to any one of my questions. Unfortunately I have nothing but impressions upon which to base this assertion for the "Hill" student, but the time spent in this exercise by the Agricultural students was determined as accurately as they were able to estimate it. Omitting two men who said they spent three or four evenings upon them, the average time expended by the remainder for reading over the ten questions which I gave out, deciding them, and writing out the answers (for some of these men not the easiest of tasks) was a few minutes less than one hour. Of this entire number only four required over an hour, and three decided all (or in one case almost all) questions instantaneously. Still more conclusive are the results obtained by Mr. Otto from the Dairy students, just reported. As far as I have been able to discover the only significant difference anywhere produced by reflection is the appearance of a tendency to decide somewhat more consistently in accordance with the demands of the greatest balance of good over evil, in particular to restrain the first impulses of sympathy and to look to the more remote effects. It is impossible to see how five or ten or even fifteen minutes' reflection upon one of these problems (or, for that matter, an indefinite

amount of it) could do more than this. It would indeed be a new formulation of the doctrine under criticism which should read: "Moral laws arise in consciousness as categorical imperatives and remain in that state for from five to ten minutes. After this amount of time has elapsed they drop the mask of absolute commands and prohibitions and counsel us to promote individual or universal happiness."[5]

Thirdly, it may be alleged that the results we have obtained are due to the fact that a considerable number of problems were presented at the same time. This may be supposed to have lead the mind away from authority to the use of the eudaemonistic standard in the following way. This standard may have appealed to the student as the one possessing jurisdiction in one or two places; whereupon the demands of consistency made him feel he must apply it throughout. To this may be replied that consistency can work both ways. If obedience to a blind impulse was the rule for eight cases out of ten, why was not the idea of a change of allegiance treated as a suggestion from the devil of inconsistency? But aside from this, the fact remains that my students do not take this matter of consistency so seriously. Of course they do not deny its validity. But they are not on the outlook for inconsistencies and accordingly often fail to see them where they actually exist. Thus in VIII and IX of Series I[6] many cheerfully decided in favor of the greater good in IX and in favor of the less in VIII. The interviews quoted in the preceding chapter also show some startling and oftentimes unaccountable leaps from Yes to No and No to Yes. When a student feels that a change in the point of view is in order he forthwith changes it. Otherwise, starting with questions calculated to bring out the eudaemonistic standard, we should have found no examples of the use of the dysdaemonistic or the aesthetic. That this happens not infrequently will be set forth in a study which is to follow this one. The effect of the massing of questions was like that of allowing time for reflection; it brought out more clearly in the minds of a few thoughtful students the necessity of choosing the alternative that promised the greater good if a breach of consistency was to

[5] *Cf.* above, page 9.
[6] See Appendix.

be avoided. In this way it led to a more perfect application of the eudaemonistic standard. But even this effect seems to have been limited in range and neither *a priori* considerations nor observation justify the belief that it can lead to a passage from one point of view to the other.

Finally it may be urged that the entire situation in which my students are placed by this exercise is an artificial one, and therefore they might have answered these questions very differently if confronted by them in real life. In reply I must point out that in these chapters at least I care nothing about their Yes or No, but only about the method by which it is reached. There is nothing about these questions in themselves considered, or the device by which they are brought to the attention of the student, to call into existence a method foreign to that of daily life. The attitude he must take towards them is identical with what it is when he passes judgment upon the conduct of anyone with whom he is not personally acquainted. If it be said that such judgments are different in kind from those that we pass upon our own past or prospective conduct, I reply: (1) No evidence has ever been offered for such an assertion; (2) that one would expect the question *cui bono* to be raised about our own sacrifices and efforts more readily than about those which we demand from others; and finally (3) at the lowest the statement admits the truth of our description for a large part of our moral judgments and places upon the objector the obligation of showing that it does not hold for the rest.

In one respect, to be sure, certain of these questions may have produced a change in attitude, in that they explicitly raised a problem which hitherto perhaps had never been faced. Thus most of the large number of Agricultural students who disapproved of lying to children about Santa Claus were asked if they had ever thought of the matter before. The great majority had not; they had been helping to deceive their little brothers and sisters and their child friends about the source of their Christmas gifts in perfect good faith. In the same way, of course, the housewife orders a leg of mutton for dinner without ever pausing to consider the claims of vegetarianism. But such facts are nothing to the point. They are instances, not of judging, but of the absence of judgment. If the latter is iden-

tical with an actual judgment of approbation, then your dog is an atheist because he does not believe in the existence of God. Here is a fine illustration of the way—or rather one of the ways—in which custom actually works upon the conscience; it "puts the critical faculty to sleep." But in the unconsciousness of sleep, be it observed, the powers of judgment are, by definition, not at work.