

**THE NEW ETHICS: AN
ESSAY ON THE MORAL
LAW OF USE, PP. 5 - 60**

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The New Ethics: An Essay on the Moral Law of Use, pp. 5 - 60 by Frank Sewall

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FRANK SEWALL

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Sewall's New Ethics

THE NEW ETHICS

AN ESSAY ON

THE MORAL LAW OF USE

BY

FRANK SEWALL

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THE NEW ETHICS.

THE obscurity attaching to the subject of ethics as a science and to ethical education as a practical achievement, is owing, doubtless, to the vagueness of the notions entertained as to what man's moral nature is, if indeed there be any such thing, and then as to what can be done with it by that process which we term educational. Education as applied to the bodily or intellectual faculties is an intelligible term. Let us accept the definition of it which seems most commonly approved, that it is, namely, the awakening and calling into exercise of the faculties that are in man and their adaptation to his surroundings. What, in the case of ethics, is the moral faculty, and is there a moral surrounding to which it is, by

CHAPTER
I
Object
of the
ESSAY.

education, to be harmoniously fitted? It is on these questions that the author hopes in the following pages to throw some light.

Difficulty
in defining
the moral
nature.

It is not so strange as might at first appear, that while the physical training and the intellectual education of man have been for so long a time reduced to a science and to practical methods, the training of the moral part of our being is still a thing of doubt and guesses and only half-admitted conclusions. When we reflect on the nature of the subject itself as being distinctly unintellectual, as belonging rather to the substantive than to the formative part of our nature, as being a thing of feeling and not of definite, formulated thought, we can partially comprehend how it is that while all men feel conscious of a moral nature, of moral impulses from within, of moral influences from without, and of moral ends to be attained, still the moment we begin with our definitions and rules the matter itself slips mysteriously from our grasp, and we find that we are formulating

Will
confounded
with
intellect.

after all a science of dialectics, a science of thought and of reasoning, and not that of the will and its nature at all. We fall again into the old snare into which Socrates fell in declaring that virtue is a knowledge, and that knowing the right would be practically equivalent to doing the right. The human mind cannot thus legislate itself into virtue individually, any more than it can collectively or in the form of the State. It would seem that the first step of essential progress in the definitions of ethics is to be found in Aristotle's distinguishing between the will as the affectional part of the human mind and the intellect as the instrument of thought. With this grand dual division of man's nature acknowledged, and in the light which a more recent and profound spiritual science has thrown upon it, we are enabled to proceed upon comparatively solid and certain ground in our definitions and analysis of ethics as a whole. Man is before us as a being of twofold nature, a being of feeling and of thought, of

Error of Socrates.

Aristotle: first step in true definition.

Analysis of the mind: its twofold nature.