

**AN EXAMINATION
OF THE UTILITARIAN
THEORY OF MORALS**

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An examination of the utilitarian theory of morals by F. R. Beattie

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BY THE

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PREFACE.

This little treatise is but an unpretending contribution in the department of Moral Science. Written by snatches amid the varied duties of ministerial life, it lays no claim either to be profound in matter, or complete in form. Much less does it pretend to any originality.

The practical importance of correct views on the questions of Moral Science may be underestimated. Sound ethical principles are closely related to religion, just as the Theistic position is vital to sound opinions touching ethical principles. An attempt is made to keep this in view in these pages.

The value of well-founded doctrines in morals, both to the individual and to society, is of great moment in this age of independent research, and almost restless enquiry, when some even venture to propose reconstruction in religion and morals. Reflection on such things led the writer to examine and compare the two leading opposite schools of Moralists, with a view to discover the merits of their respective claims to acceptance. The result, in the form of a brief summary, is contained in the following pages.

No one can be more sensible than the writer, of the many imperfections in the attempt he has made to carry out his purpose, yet it is felt that the careful reader can scarcely fail to be helped to see the inadequacy of the Utilitarian System, and the sufficiency of the Intuitional Theory, to answer all the demands of an ethical system. Ethical Empiricism is radically defective.

In regard to the plan of the work, it is proper to state that fault may be found with the *method* of treatment. It may be thought by some that to sketch the whole ground continuously in the first part of the treatise, and then to

review the same topics in the second part, is not in accordance with strict logical method. Some may have the feeling that it would have been better to have completed the statement and criticism of each topic by itself. Both methods were before the writer's mind, and after consideration he decided to adopt a plan which may be open to criticism, yet, which, it is believed, will best gain the end he has in view. If any reader prefers the other order, he can secure it by reading consecutively the corresponding chapters in the first and second parts.

This prefatory note would be incomplete without mention of the aid received, and of the thanks due to some of the kind friends whose assistance has done much to make this treatise what it is. Professor Young, L. L. D., of University College, Toronto, whose able teaching in Mental and Moral Science can never be forgotten, is mentioned, with grateful memory of profitable hours spent in his classes. Principal Caven, D. D., of Knox College, Toronto, whose valuable aid and wise counsel was so cheerfully given, deserves the warmest gratitude of the writer. To other friends who have encouraged him in various ways thanks are likewise tendered.

It may be added, that while the manner in which the topics are treated may render the book of interest chiefly to students in College or University, or to readers who have enjoyed some tuition in mental and moral science, it is hoped that the general reader may also be able to peruse its pages with intelligence and profit.

Such as it is, it is sent forth with the earnest hope that it may at least inspire in some minds a deeper interest in the great problems of Ethics.

F. R. BEATTIE.

The Manse, Brantford, Ontario,
January, 1885.

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THE UTILITARIAN
THEORY OF MORALS.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of these pages is to discuss, in a somewhat general way, those views in regard to the questions of moral philosophy which, taken together, are now usually known as the Utilitarian System. It is clearly impossible in the narrow limits of this little treatise to give detailed exposition of the different phases which this system has assumed, or to enter into elaborate criticism of its various positions. The hope is cherished, however, that though only a very general survey can be taken, yet a somewhat concise and intelligent view of the system, in its strength and weakness, may be presented.