

Revised - Fine Punishment.

Joint Society. November 1921

Introduction.

As we are to discuss this evening as I shall show in the paper, the nature of the ultimate ideal of that which we say it is to ever striving after. But before coming to that discussion I should like to ask of what our merits, we hope to speak? How are we specially qualified to lay down the character of that men ought to seek?

It is the part of a philosopher to discover the most general features of the universe, and in doing this he will no doubt have much to say on ~~the nature of~~ ^{the nature of} ~~the good~~ ^{what we mean by good and right.} But when we come to consider what ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~the~~ ^{is} ~~good~~ ^{is} ~~or~~ ^{is} ~~right~~ ^{is}, I suggest that we require a special ~~kind of~~ ^{special} ~~wisdom~~ ^{wisdom} and training ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~are~~ ^{are} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~identical~~ ^{identical} with the philosophers. Plato would not agree to this. He holds that in the very process of discovering the nature of the eternal ~~good~~ ^{good}, we also become aware of the full nature of the good. I shall not say that Plato is wrong, but only that before we come into sight of the idea τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ not yet achieved. If the philosopher was able to apprehend the world as a set of self evident and necessarily connected principles he might possibly thereby learn fully the nature of the good. But ~~philosophy~~ ^{philosophy} it is only in the power of our philosophy to attain to a slender stock of first principles and a fuller grasp of the perplexing ~~of~~ ^{of} its problems than ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~achieved~~ ^{achieved} by other men. And yet the idea τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ is yet so far beyond us, judgments about the good are made, and I venture to say that some ~~to~~ ^{to} come nearer the truth than others, and that ~~the~~ ^{the} man may possibly ~~be~~ ^{be} more skilled than his fellows in making such judgments correctly. Is the philosopher more skilled? He ought to be infinitely subtle in apprehending the presuppositions of knowledge, the implications of facts and their mutual compatibility, but if at the end of a series of speculations on metaphysics or logic, he is asked if this or that is good, he must needs cast aside his old way of thinking and bring into play a different set of faculties, he may well ~~find~~ ^{find} it difficult to make this transition and ~~find~~ ^{find} that he has no fund of wisdom to fall back on. He may justly plead that it is unfair to ask him to make this volte face and that after all what ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~right or~~ ^{is} ~~good~~ ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{is} a question too little general to fall within his province. If you understand, they mean to express this same fact when Mr Bradley speaks of casuistry and a decent burial and Mr Prichard affirms that moral philosophy is based on a mistake. However it may be of grave interest and indirect importance to a philosopher to know what things are good. In this predicament how is he to proceed? He may be permitted on *importantia* to

charity. It is of ^{this} ~~my~~ direct intuition concerning the nature of the good of which I feel most sure. But I can do no more than state ^{ultimately} ~~that, in substance,~~ it and then go on to philosophical speculations which I hope ^{are} ~~are~~ irrelevant but which men ^{inured} of erroneous leave me where I was before, believing myself possessed of a direct intuition that retribution is wrong.