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cultivation to the discipline of one's daily work is like that of gymnastics to natural exercise. The latter is the true foundation of a good physique, but it does not bring every muscle into play. A man must train systematically if he would have all parts equally strong. So it is with the active citizen, who, having passed the stress of mastering his profession, finds himself with leisure for self-cultivation. In this matter no man can lack employment. Innate faults of character, faults contracted from the world, abound in every one and usually defy complete eradication. However diligently the field be cleaned, the weeds spring up year after year; while in æsthetic and intellectual culture there is literally no end to what one may do. But even in this quiet autumn of life, one need hardly say, the maxim of self-realization remains secondary. Man, in some sort, continues in harness to the end. He may have retired from business, his family may have grown up and gone out into the world, but at least the duties of citizenship and religion remain. So soon as he ceases to recognize the sway of duty and to serve an ideal which is something higher and wider than his own personal perfection, he ceases to lead a good moral life. If he does not actually work much, he must hold himself ready to work, or, at least, to suffer. Death is the only final manumission from the service of life.

HENRY STURT.

OXFORD, ENGLAND.

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## THE MORAL VALUE OF SILENCE.*

PYTHAGORAS, among the ancients, united men in voluntary association for the purpose of realizing, through such fellowship, the moral end of life. He made it a condition that every one who desired to join his Order, before he could be admitted, should attest his worthiness by preserving silence during five years. Nay, he allowed no one to see his face who had not successfully passed through this trying novitiate.

* An address to the Society for Ethical Culture of New York, Sunday, February 6, 1898.

In the Monastery of La Trappe, France, and in its affiliated Monasteries in this and other countries, there prevails the rule of perpetual silence, broken only by the voice of prayer and of brief and solemn salutation when the brothers meet.

Without going to any such lengths, without attempting to depreciate the kindly offices of human intercourse through the medium of the spoken word, I yet maintain that some of the holiest, loveliest things in life are best preserved when kept in the casket of reticence, when the seal of silence upon them remains unbroken.

If an instrument could be devised to record the words that are spoken on the face of the globe, this instrument would need to be in constant operation. For the stream of human speech is never still. When one half the world is quiet, the other half is talking. But, of all the words that are spoken, how few can be regarded as successful expressions of thought and feeling. How few are remembered after they have been uttered, or deserve to be. The art of using language is one which everybody practises from babyhood upward. And yet it is one in which only an exceedingly small number become proficient. To what precisely is the difficulty due? It is due not merely to our awkwardness in using the tool of language, but to certain defects in the tool itself. The difficulty consists in this,—that there are few words in language that express a particular thing and nothing else, but that words for the most part designate classes of objects, and that it is only by combining these class terms, by partly blocking the meaning of each by the help of the others, that we can indicate more or less satisfactorily the particular thing we wish to say. The trick of speaking is like a trick sometimes practised in the hunting of wild animals. The wood or thicket in which the animal is concealed is surrounded, a cordon of hunters is drawn closer and closer, the circle becomes smaller and smaller, until at last the quarry is brought to bay and transfixed with the spear. So, in endeavoring to find a suitable expression for our thought, we are engaged in a kind of mental chase, and the words we use are a series of concentric circles, growing narrower as we proceed, until at last the sense is trapped,

brought to bay, as it were, where it can no longer escape us, and transfixed on the keen point of speech. It is difficult enough to produce this specification of meaning, even where visible and tangible objects are concerned. If you read the account of a botanist about some species of plant that you have never seen, you will at once realize how hard it is to form a picture of what is described merely from the descriptive terms used. But the difficulty is immeasurably increased when an attempt is made to express, by means of language, something that is not tangible, not visible, a purely inward occurrence, an idea, a state of feeling. The vocabulary at our service for such purposes is limited indeed.

Here, then, we have one reason why silence is often better than speech, because certain things—and these the greatest, the highest, and the most inward—are actually inexpressible, incommunicable, ineffable in their very nature, and because the attempt to clothe them, nevertheless, in words belittles them. I mention, as a first instance of the unspeakable, gratitude. Of course, we can express our thanks for the lesser benefactions which we receive at the hands of our fellows; to one who has helped us by a timely loan, for instance, when we happened temporarily to be in need of financial assistance; to one who testifies, honestly and truthfully, in our favor, without, however, incurring any great sacrifice himself by so doing; to one who lends us his influence in procuring employment, to which, by our talents and attainments, we are entitled. To these and such as these we can express our thanks, and we can, occasion offering, return their favors by similar services on our part. But the moment the benefactions, of which we are the recipients, involve self-sacrifice on the part of our benefactors—especially great self-sacrifice—we are speechless, utterly unable to find words in which to express our thankfulness. That is to say, when infinite thanks are called for, we find ourselves to be poor in thanks, not because we do not feel the gratitude, but because the instrument of human language cannot convey what we feel. And at such times to use the current phrases in which thanks are apt to be expressed seems to us like a profanation of our feeling, so far

short do they fall of what we should like to say; so paltry and pitifully inadequate do they seem. We are reduced to the necessity of falling back on the language of gesture, and of indicating by signs and tokens, by the pressure of the hand, by the eloquence of the eye, what the tongue is incompetent to frame into words. Can you thank the physician who, by constant attendance, by unremitting watchfulness and solicitude, by the exercise of his highest skill, by self-forgetting patience and care, has saved the imperilled life of your child? You can indicate your gratitude by signs. For the acts in which you try to express it are only valuable as signs of what you feel. But you can never express it in any set form of language. All the forms of speech that suggest themselves for the purpose are at once rejected as cold, trivial, worthless. Neither can a child ever thank its parents in words for all that they have done for it. Nor can lovers thank one another for the infinite tendernesses, delicacies, and ministries of love. Gratitude of the deep sort, then, is one instance of a content too volatile to be confined within the forms of words; or, better, of a freight too heavy for the vehicles of language to transport without their giving way beneath it. Our richest spiritual joys and our profoundest sorrow are other examples. Indeed, all our deepest feelings have about them this characteristic,—of being incommunicable. We try, in stammering utterance, by tokens and symbols, to give a hint of what we feel; but when the feeling has become so profound as to take complete possession of us, even that resource fails us, and then the realm of utter silence is our only refuge. We think with contempt of the chatterer who can talk glibly of his gratitude or his love; we judge that his nature is shallow, that his emotional life is superficial. The very fact that he talks so freely about what he feels is proof of that. We say of the grief that vents itself in sighs and groans, in cries and lamentations, that though it may shake the soul like a tempest, like a tempest it will pass away. Those who mourn their friends loudly and violently, as a rule mourn briefly. A year, perhaps, will pass, and we shall find that they have formed new friendships, new affec-

tions. On the other hand, we stand in awe of speechless sorrow, for we know that it has taken hold of the roots of the soul, and that a long time must pass before its poignant pangs can be mitigated. Silence, then, is forced upon us by the defects of language as an instrument of expression. It is forced upon us because there are certain inward experiences that simply cannot be put into words.

In the next place, silence is the right attitude in the case of those things which might, indeed, be spoken, but ought not to be. Of these, I mention the following examples. First, charity. The violet of charity blooms in hidden nooks, and its charm is inseparable from its secretiveness. "Charity," it is said, "vaunteth not itself." And why not? Because its value is altogether dependent on the motive by which it is inspired,—the motive of pure, unselfish love for another being like ourselves. The publication of one's charities to the world is so unpleasing and repellent because it gives color to the suspicion that the actuating motive was the vainglorious desire for admiration and praise. A frankly selfish act is revolting indeed, but is by no means so obnoxious as selfishness parading under the mask of unselfishness self-love, that pretends to feed another's need, but in reality aims only at pampering its own conceit. "Charity vaunteth not itself;" for the moment it vaunteth itself it ceases to be charity. Charity executes its mission of mercy under the ægis of silence, in such a manner that its own right hand shall not know what its left hand doeth. Secrecy is the bloom of charity. If you brush that away from it, you have despoiled it of its richest beauty. The silence that marks true charity is required to guard the purity of the motive. Any act is capable of manifold interpretations. A seemingly kind act may be prompted by an evil motive; and a seemingly unkind act may be prompted by a lofty motive. It is only the spirit that inhabits the act that makes it fine. But how shall we judge of the spirit? In the case of charity we have a sufficient mark to go by. If the act is obtruded upon the attention, the spirit is not fine. If the act is withdrawn from view, performed almost shamefacedly, the spirit *is* fine.

I have used the word "shamefacedly;" and this leads me to suggest another reason why charity deserves to be called the Daughter of Silence. There is really a distinct feeling of shame mingled with our charitable deeds. Shame is a complex attribute. It by no means always implies the sense of guilt. It is often the sensitive protest against the unveiling of sanctities, the sign of innocence and not of evil. And so, we often feel ashamed when we bestow our help upon a worthy object of charity, not on our own account, but on his account; we are vicariously ashamed for his sake. For we cannot help regarding it as something pitiful, something to be covered up, that a being invested with the dignity of humanity, a being so great in destiny, so worthy of reverence as every human being ought to be, should have fallen to so low an estate as to be deprived of food or shelter, or other necessaries of life, and dependent for these upon the aid of his fellow-beings. It is this pathetic sense of the contrast between what the man's condition ought to be, and the actual condition in which we find him, that awakens in us the desire to shield him as far as possible from the exposure of his needs to the world's eye, and leads us to throw the mantle of silence—in this case the mantle of true charity—over his nakedness. He who is not silent as to his charities is deficient in a fine moral sense. His charity is of a questionable sort.

There are these two reasons for reticence in the case of charity: the one relating to the purity of our own motives, the other to the protection of the self-respect of those whom we assist. I wish to add that what I have said applies to private charity. There are, however, certain forms of collective effort in charity, in which publicity of action is not open to the same objections. A body of people acting in concert for the support of philanthropic institutions have a right to make known to the public what they are doing, or propose to do, for the sake of obtaining the public support. And, for the same reason, it is often best that those who contribute should do so openly, for the sake of influencing others to follow their example. The distinction between collective and private charity appears to me to be a valid one, inasmuch

as the former is rather an act of public spirit than of charity proper, and is directed to the public well-being rather than to that of particular individuals, while the latter is, or should be, the outgrowth of a relation between individual and individual, a ray of sunshine, falling from one human face upon another.

The silence of gratitude and the silence of charity have been mentioned. Let us consider next the silence of privacy; the law of silence that protects whatever specifically concerns ourselves from the prying curiosity of others. There are certain intimate thoughts which we express only to our intimate friends; nay, certain thoughts which perhaps we do not divulge even to these, which even our nearest ones must content themselves to guess at, to divine. There is, or ought to be, for every one, a certain territory which he may properly fence in against all comers. The right to be uncommunicative, with regard to certain matters, has been slowly acquired, and the extent to which it is conceded may be regarded as a measure of civilization. Children, among themselves, do not tolerate incommunicativeness at all. To keep anything secret they consider an offence. Among primitive races there seems to be the same lack of seclusion, the same denial of the right to be incommunicative. As property is often held in common, as many families often live under the same roof, so the inner life of each member of the tribe is the common property of all. Under the existing law in the State of New York it is provided that, on Sundays, in the liquor-shops, the shades shall be raised and the windows shall be free from obstruction, so that the police-officer may, at any time, look in and see what is going on. So, among uncultivated people, the windows of the mind are required to be kept free from intervening curtains or obstructions of any kind, in order that the public, if it choose, may look in at any moment and see what is going on within. Slowly, gradually, with much difficulty, the right to curtain off our inner world has been won in civilized communities. And even in these communities the subjects to which the benefits of the rule of privacy apply require to be further extended. This precious privilege of keeping one's

own counsel as to matters which others have no right to know, simply because they cannot comprehend, because they cannot be expected to have the insight, the intellectual sympathy, necessary to enter understandingly into the niceties of our feelings and our way of thinking,—this precious privilege, I say, requires to be further extended. That it would be an impertinence to ask a man how large his income is, or to touch on other private subjects of like nature, is conceded by everybody. But, in regard to one subject, the right to remain incommunicative has not yet been established, particularly in the United States. Persons otherwise fairly well-bred have no scruples in asking a comparative stranger to what church he belongs; that is to say, what opinions he may hold on the very highest questions of life; opinions which he may find it extremely difficult to express to others in such a way that they shall comprehend, and which he ought, therefore, to be particularly privileged in withholding. The reason why a question which is so intimately related to the very core of personality can be thus abruptly put, why there is such want of delicacy in regard to religious opinion, is probably to be found in the circumstance that certain cut-and-dried doctrines have hitherto formed the basis of religious fellowship, and that the right of individual difference in matters of religion has not been recognized as it ought to be. The more Ethical truths are recognized as the foundation of the spiritual life, the more religious opinions are relegated to the sphere of individual intuition and insight, the more, we may hope, will a reverent reticence in regard to religious convictions come to be regarded as a mark of genuine culture.

The rule of silence applies to the things that cannot be communicated, to the things that might be said but ought not to be. It applies also to those things which may be ripe for communication after a time, but are not yet ripe. Under this head are included our intentions, our plans for the future. The dignity of a rational being is compromised by the premature announcement of what he intends to do. And the reason is that what he proposes or resolves to do he may never be able actually to carry out, and that he will then appear

in the unenviable light of a maker of vain speeches which he has not had the ability to convert into corresponding facts. But, just as we are bound to speak the truth,—that is, to make our words correspond to facts,—so also are we bound, as far as is at all possible, to make the facts correspond to our words, and to say nothing, to make no announcement of which we have not a reasonable expectation that we shall be able to translate it into reality. For the world we live in is a real world, and our mission is to be real factors in it, and the worth of life is proportionate to the amount of reality which we import into it.

The wisdom of mute lips furthermore appears in those situations when right, justice, and reason are assailed by passion, by prejudice, by fanatical hate that is too deaf to hear, too blind to see. The rule I have tried to indicate is that reticence should be observed when the likelihood is wanting that what is said will have its due effect. And from this point of view we can understand the silence of Jesus in the presence of his enemies. We read in the Gospel that when he was accused of the chief priests and elders he answered nothing. "And Pilate said unto him: Hearest thou not how many things they say against thee? And he answered him never a word, insomuch that the Governor marvelled greatly." He wrapped himself round with silence. He could not doubt, indeed, that the power of truth would assert itself in the long run, even over the hostile forces then arrayed against him. But he knew that at the time when the tempest of the passions is raging in men's breasts they cannot, if they would, understand the truth. Truth reflects itself upon the mind only, then, when the surface of the inner waters is smooth: in the stillness of the soul we see it.

But the principal thought I have wished to place before you remains to be stated. The highest moral value belongs to those ellipses, or intervals, during which is being revolved and matured in the mind the right utterance that is to come afterwards. The enemy of morality is impulse. Only to a very limited extent do we ever succeed in rationalizing our impulses, —that is, in training them to move along the grooves which

reason prescribes. Even when we applaud impulse, we do so only when, by consummate training, it has ceased to be wayward. The really moral person is one who keeps perpetually before his eyes the outspread world of the moral relationships,—that is to say, who sees what his relations ought to be as in an ideal landscape; who sees especially the striking differences that distinguish the duties which he owes to different persons; sees how differently he ought to act towards a superior and towards an equal, towards a person of the same sex and a person of the other sex; towards a person of the same age and a person of tender age; towards members of the same social class and members of a different social class. The moral man, I say, is one who sees before his eyes the chart of his relationship to others, and especially the differences of the duties which he owes to others, and who tries to conform his speech and his action to the directions of this chart. And it is evident that a man who tries to do this often must allow intervals of silence to elapse before he acts or speaks, during which he considers the actual situation in the light of his ideal chart. So that it is not too much to say that the morality of a person can be gauged by his reflectiveness, by the degree to which he has acquired the habit of seeing the invisible moral entities, and deriving thence his bearings.

And the moral importance of letting silence intervene before speaking or acting—silence that is not vacancy, but crowded with thought—becomes particularly plain on certain occasions. For instance, when a child or a friend, or any one close to us, has done or said anything which we are disposed to resent, how infinitely precious, at such moments, is the habit of preserving silence. The mere fact that the impulse to speak is repressed allows the wave of wrathful feeling that threatens to sweep away self-control to subside. And then reflection steps in. We revolve inwardly what the cause of this offence may have been; whether we ourselves have, in any way, given provocation; where the fault of the offender lies; and thus we gain time to shape our words in such a way that they shall have a medicinal effect. Perhaps

the words we decide to speak may be stern. Sternness may be called for. But, if we do speak sternly, it is because on careful reflection we have decided that stern language will have a curative effect, we do not merely vent our passion, as a geyser vents its scalding flood. And at other times, the answer will be gentle, if, on reflection, we find that it is the genial influence that is needed. There is one feature especially that characterizes the reflective type of morality, for which I claim that it is the only true type,—namely, that the medicinal acts or words often, at first sight, seem to have no connection with the occasion that calls them forth. There appears to be a gap between the occasion and the consequent behavior; and we can only establish the connection if we succeed in supplying the intervening train of silent reflection. For instance, a child has told a falsehood; and the parent, instead of venting his feelings by vehement denunciation, after a brief reprimand, arranges that the child shall receive instruction in natural history. The parent, having come to the conclusion that the falsehood was due to redundant imagination, seeks to overcome this tendency by engaging the child's interest in the real objects which surround him, and by training his mind in accurate observation. A young criminal is brought to the Reformatory and, instead of merely being locked up in a prison-cell, is subjected to systematic physical culture, in the belief that his degenerate physique has much to do with his evil habits, and receives a thorough course of manual training, on the ground that the growth of the criminal instincts is often due to a lack of the power of consecutive thinking, and that manual training, for a certain type of mind, is the best means of developing that power. And so in other ways.

There is a decisive change that separates those who may be called "spiritually minded" from those who are not. Among Christians this is known as the "change of heart." I believe that in the moral field, too, leaving entirely out of account theological ideas, there is such a change. Those may be called "spiritually minded," in the moral sense, who do not suffer themselves merely to rebound from the occasions

of speech and action, as a ball rebounds from a wall, but who, under the blessed ministry of silence and of the meditation that accompanies it, consider the scheme of moral relationship; consider what their place in it is; consider what the place in it is of the person to whom they are to speak, or towards whom they are to act; and consider the choice of means by which they can restore the right relation between themselves and others. Any one who has undergone that change, from reacting impulsively to acting and speaking *medicinally*, has experienced the decisive change of heart, has become, in the moral sense, regenerate.

A few years ago, during a visit to the Gallery of the Brera, in Milan, I found myself in the Hall of Sculpture. The works of art surrounding me were all the products of the modern school, and bore upon them the impress of strain, vehemence, intensity, which are characteristic of that school. They seemed to me all like a glorification in marble of the merely passionate nature of man, of that side of human nature which I have just characterized as intrinsically unmoral. Not far from the Hall of Sculpture, in the Hall of Paintings, I paused before a picture of the Cinque Cento. It was by Bartolommeo Montagna, the famous Master of the School of Vicenza, and represented the enthronement of the Madonna. What peace, what beauty seemed poured out over this canvas! What a relief, after the nightmare of excited fancy, which I had just left behind me! It was not, indeed, the Madonna herself, nor the angels that seemed to play their viols so melodiously at her feet, but one of the attendant saints, St. Ursula, that particularly arrested my attention. Her face was slightly upraised. It was a face perfectly lovely to look upon. The light shone upon it from above, and another light transfigured it from within. What utter calmness and serenity had settled upon those features! You could not help noticing that, with her wide-open eyes, she saw things fair, and great, and holy, and tranquillizing to the spirit. So may those look who see spread out before them the world of the moral ideal that rises, in its purity and beauty, above this nether sphere of dust and tumult, and whose life is hallowed

by the task they set themselves,—the task of copying, under the conditions of space and time, to some slight degree, the glory of that divine original.

I have reached the limits of this address. And yet, the thought is capable of being extended and enlarged upon in many ways. Out of the silence have we come, and into the silence shall we pass. A silence not empty, but, like the star-sown canopy of night, replete with light, and power, and law. Vainly, as I think, do men seek to frame the meaning of the Universe into a word. Let us desist from such useless efforts. Let us deepen in ourselves the sense of the infinitude and the majesty of it all, and revere the radiant mystery in a silence like its own!

FELIX ADLER.

NEW YORK.

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## DISCUSSION.

### THE SOCIAL QUESTION IN THE LIGHT OF PHILOSOPHY.*

"THE battle for a new meaning of life has broken out, the point in question is the striving for a new social philosophy." These words of the preface best characterize the purport and contents of this thorough, comprehensive work. Ludwig Stein finished it last year, after having already dwelt upon its subject-matter in lectures given since 1890, whilst he was instructor at Zurich, and again as Professor at Berne.

The tone of the lecturer has been preserved throughout the book. Its freshness and vivacity have thereby been enhanced to such an extent that one readily overlooks the drawback of repetitions which are often needless.

This origin will explain why Stein allots relatively so much space (pp. 175–510) to his "Outlines of a History of Social Philosophy," in spite of the fact that he can naturally offer us little that is new on the subject. The chapter on "Original Forms of Communal and Social Life" (56–174) is also historical to a great extent,

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* "Die sociale Frage im Lichte der Philosophie." Vorlesungen über Socialphilosophie und ihre Geschichte, von Dr. Ludwig Stein, ord. Professor der Philosophie an der Universität Bern. (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1897. Pp. 792.)