

distinction, which the Author of our moral frame hath made, between justice and truth on the one hand, and beneficence on the other. And it had been well if lawgivers had discriminated, as nature has done, between justice and humanity—although the mischief of their unfortunate deviation serves, all the more strikingly, to prove the adaptation of our moral constitution to the exigencies of human society. The law of pauperism hath assimilated beneficence to justice, by enacting the former, in the very way that it does the latter; and enforcing what it has thus enacted by penalties. Beneficence loses altogether its proper and original character—when, instead of moving on the impulse of a spontaneous kindness that operates from within, it moves on the impulse of a legal obligation from without. Should law specify the yearly sum that must pass from my hands to the destitute around me—then, it is not beneficence which has to do with the matter. What I have to surrender, law hath already ordained to be the property of another; and I, in giving it up, am doing an act of justice, and not an act of liberality. To exercise the virtue of beneficence, I must go beyond the sum that is specified by law; and thus law, in her attempts to seize upon beneficence, and to bring her under rule, hath only forced her to retire within a narrower territory, on which alone it is that she can put forth the free and native characteristics which belong to her. Law, in fact,