

problem of the Good, in all its different aspects, having many times turned over the several individual and distinct problems which together constitute that supreme inquiry. Nor had the study of these various problems in this country neglected what had been done by the great thinkers of classical antiquity or by the foremost writers among the schoolmen. The influence of Plato and Aristotle, of Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, even—though to a lesser extent—that of Descartes and Spinoza, has been active in the development of ethical doctrine in this country.¹ The criteria of morality, the nature of obligation, the question of higher or lower and of ultimate sanctions, the connection of virtue and happiness, of the utility and beauty of goodness, the problem of sin and evil, the controversies of determinism and freewill, the phenomena of conscience and moral sense; all these questions, and many others of a more practical application, had been propounded and discussed

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Compre-
hensiveness
of ethics in
England.

¹ According to Henry Sidgwick in his 'Outlines of the History of Ethics' (1st ed. 1886 and many following editions), the only two contemporary Continental thinkers who, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, had any direct influence on British ethics, were Puffendorf and Helvetius (1715-1771). The 'Law of Nature' of Puffendorf, "in which the general view of Grotius was restated with modifications—partly designed to effect a compromise with the new doctrine of Hobbes—seems to have been a good deal read at Oxford and elsewhere. Locke includes it among the books necessary to the complete education of a gentleman." Only in the derivation of Benthamism do we

find that an important element is supplied by the works of a French writer, Helvetius; as Bentham himself was fully conscious. It was from Helvetius that he learned that, men being universally and solely governed by self-love, the so-called moral judgments are really the common judgments of any society as to its common interests; that it is, therefore, futile on the one hand to propose any standard of virtue, except that of conduciveness to general happiness, and, on the other hand, useless merely to lecture men on duty and scold them for vice; that the moralist's proper function is rather to exhibit the coincidence of virtue with private happiness" (pp. 267 and 270).