



The Struggle With Evil

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All finite life is a struggle with evil. Yet from the final point of view the Whole is good. The Temporal Order contains at no one moment anything that can satisfy. Yet the Eternal Order is perfect. We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Yet in just our life, viewed in its entirety, the glory of God is completely manifest. These hard sayings are the deepest expressions of the essence of true religion. They are also the most inevitable outcome of philosophy. We have by this time laid the foundation for an understanding of the sense in which all these propositions are true. In doing so we have offered our principal contribution to the interests of Natural Religion. In the bare assertion of just these truths, that appear to our ordinary consciousness a stumbling-block and foolishness, the wisest of humanity, in India, in Greece, and in the history of Christian thought, are agreed. But the philosophical problem has always been to reconcile these doctrines with reason. An idealistic philosophy, when once understood, gives to all of them its own peculiar interpretation, but then makes them seem almost commonplaces. Yet we have still further to develop and to illustrate, in the final stage of our argument, the precise way in which these central truths are to be held and applied. Nothing in philosophy appears more discouraging than any serious theoretical misstatement of the problem of evil. Yet nothing is more opposed to the interests of the awakened soul than to refuse every attempt to understand that problem in philosophical terms. In its purely ethical aspects this problem concerned us at the last time. In its more general relations we shall now finally consider its meaning and its bearing upon the great virtues of courage, endurance, resignation, and hope. Hereby we shall be led to the view of the Union of God and Man which shall form the topic of our concluding lecture.

I

In speaking of moral evil, at the last time, we assumed, without special analysis, and as a result of ethical doctrine, the meaning of the Ought, and the sense in which the conduct of a moral agent is to be judged as good or as evil according as it does or does not conform to the standard of the Ought. Upon the present occasion, where I shall have to deal with the general problem of evil, we shall less depend upon the special doctrines of Ethics. We shall use a more general and simpler definition of evil, in terms of our Theory of Being,—a definition which has repeatedly come to our notice. An evil is, in general, a fact that sends us to some Other for its own justification, and for the satisfaction of our will. This account of what it is to be an evil, we have now repeatedly illustrated. The account, when taken strictly, obviously applies, without exception, to every finite fact, *quâ* finite, and especially

to every fact in the temporal order, when that fact is viewed in relation to its own future. Any temporal fact, as such, is essentially more or less dissatisfying, and so evil. The only question, in this regard, about any temporal event, is how great an evil it makes manifest to our experience. But that in Time there is, for the will, no conscious satisfaction, is a thesis that, according to our view, is the necessary correlative of the thesis that Time is the form of the will. The future of our experience is that region to which, in our finite dissatisfaction, we proceed, seeking therein our fuller expression. To say this is simply to affirm that Time possesses the idealistic type of Being, and no other type. If one rejects, as we do, any realistic account of Time, as of every other aspect of Being, one finds no other way than this to view; the nature of Time, or to define the relations of the present to the future. For future time exists for me, in my finite capacity, either as that to which I have a conscious relation, or as that to which I have relations whereof I am just now unconscious. In the latter sense, the future time when, for instance, I shall be sleeping, or shall be dead, appears to me indeed at this moment, as a time whose order is to go on without any reference to my will; and in so far, the law that every present has its future, and that to every instant another succeeds, seems to be capable of a purely realistic interpretation. Time, when so viewed, is regarded as the fate of the world,—as the devourer, the destroyer, of whatever now is. But the reasons that led us to abandon Realism have long since led us to declare that our conscious and not our merely fatal relations to Time, are the ones that give us our only genuine glimpses of the true nature of the temporal order. And, thus interpreted, future time is that realm of Being in which my will is yet to be expressed, or in which the other finite wills that I view, through the social contrast, or through my knowledge of Nature, as contemporaneous with mine, are also yet to be expressed. But if our will is yet to be expressed, then it certainly is not yet fully expressed in our experience. And this means that our finite will is now dissatisfied. Our original idealistic formula here recurs. Were the will satisfied with its present expression in experience, the whole of Being would now be present. No Other would be or be conceived. There would be no future; for future time would have neither meaning nor place in Being. As it is, a brief abstract and epitome of every finite conscious life in the temporal world might be given in the words, “Dissatisfied with what now is, I press on towards what is yet to come.”

It follows that dissatisfaction is the universal experience of every temporal being. How this dissatisfaction empirically appears, under what form, with what intensity,—this is a matter that the more concrete experience of life, taken in all its various aspects, has to decide. Vast ranges of finite ill, namely, those that are filled with physical suffering, have characters which we men are of course unable, at present, to explain in detail by any such abstract formula as the foregoing. Yet in those cases where our life is already largely under voluntary control, and where we are therefore more conscious of what life’s meaning is, we are able ourselves more directly to observe that the conscious ills, which, in such cases, still beset our fortune, are in a large measure due to the very magnitude and ideality of our undertakings themselves, to the very loftiness of our purposes, and even to the very presence of our active control over our deeds. For all these more ideal aspects of our consciousness mean that we set our standard high, and strive beyond the present more ardently. And in such cases our ideals actually imply our present dissatisfaction, and so contribute to our consciousness of temporal ill. In such instances, too, we see that the principal defect of these higher regions of our life is a defect of the very form of

our present consciousness, and of any consciousness which is limited to some temporal present. For the type of consciousness that we now possess, and any type of temporally limited consciousness, is too narrow for our higher purposes. It never can contain what shall adequately and finally express our present ideas. Hence the larger our ideals, the more we understand *why* it is that nothing temporal can satisfy us.

On the other hand, it is indeed true that the abstract formula just stated does not enable us to comprehend why, quite apart from our consciousness of our ideals, sometimes pain overwhelms, or sorrow besets, or fortune bears down heavily upon us, while at other times the conscious course of the time-stream appears relatively smooth, and we are even disposed, at some deluded moments, to say, with Othello, "My soul has found her rest so absolute." I have no intention of using our merely general formula about temporal evil as a means for predicting or for explaining in detail our special human experience of ill. I admit at once that man's Selfhood is bound by the most manifold ties to the life of universal Nature. In consequence, man constantly has fortunes that have no definite relations to his own conscious ideals. Man echoes, in his passing experiences of good and of ill, the fortunes, the interests, and the ideals of vast realms of other conscious and finite life, whose dissatisfactions become, as it were, *per accidens*, part of each individual man's life, even when the man concerned cannot himself, at present, see how or why his own ideals, or what he takes to be his own concerns, are directly such as to make these dissatisfactions his fate. And this is true, first, in so far as man, the social being, echoes the joys and sorrows of his fellow-men, without regard to whether he consciously knows how these joys and sorrows stand related to his own ideal interests. But this echoing of other finite life than ours extends, secondly, as my hypothesis about Nature supposes, to all those relations with the life of Nature upon which I earlier dwelt, when we were stating our cosmological theory. Thus, for instance, our organic pains, and our more instinctive emotions, have a depth and a manifoldness that I should hypothetically explain, in accordance with the theory of Nature earlier expounded, as due to the fact that vast strivings,—expressing the Will of the race rather than of the individual, and of Nature-Life in its wholeness rather than of the life of any one man,—strivings, that in themselves are conscious and ideal, are at any moment, in our narrow present consciousness, merely echoed and hinted, by many of our profounder, but less rational joys and sorrows, repugnances and attractions. According as these vaster interests that pervade the processes of Nature, and that constitute the various meanings of its temporal occurrences, become more or less indirectly represented in our conscious life, we have experiences of such joys, and of such griefs, of such successes and of such failures, as we ourselves cannot directly explain in ideal or conscious terms. In so far, our dissatisfactions are indeed not recognized by ourselves as due to the temporal non-fulfilment of our own plans; and, therefore, in precisely these cases, our fortunes seem unearned. And so, owing to the vast extent and to the complexity of these our relatively opaque relations to Nature, no one formula for the fortunes of life can possibly prove adequate to explain to ourselves, in our present form of consciousness, the wealth of our experiences of evil and of good, and the detail of these experiences.

And yet, apart from these endless complications, the abstract formula does hold good that all finite and temporal processes of will must inevitably involve dissatisfaction. And the truth is also verifiable that, in so far as we can consciously grasp the meaning of our own lives, we know why they not only are, but, in the temporal order, must be, and, I may

add, *ought to be* unsatisfactory, just because our ideals are so much vaster than our present form of experience, with its brief present instants, can ever adequately express, and just because the realm of finite life to which we belong is full of ideal strivings, so that the whole creation, seeking its own fulfilment, groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now.

On the other hand, for our idealistic Theory of Being, this very presence of ill in the temporal order is the condition of the perfection of the eternal order. The most general reason why this is true we have now repeatedly stated. Simple Oneness is nothingness. Simple finality, apart from the process towards finality, is equally unintelligible. Attainment of a goal means a consciousness that a certain process wins its own completion. But this process is essentially a struggle towards the goal. Where there is the aim, there is also a consciousness that includes incompleteness, and that contrasts this with the completion of the very process which itself embodies the various stages of the aim. The only way to give our view of Being rationality is to see that we long for the Absolute only in so far as in us the Absolute also longs, and seeks, through our very temporal striving, the peace that is nowhere in Time, but only, and yet absolutely, in Eternity. Were there then no longing in Time, there would be no peace in Eternity. When the prayer is uttered that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, we do well to remember that the meaning, which here appears in the form of a petition, is identical with what philosophy must report as a simple fact, directly implied by our Theory of Being. Were not God's Will in its totality, triumphant in the struggle that goes on upon the earth, it would never be done in heaven at all. For, heaven, if taken as the name for a realm where the Absolute Will is directly expressed, means simply the Eternal Order in its wholeness. While earth, taken as a region where the same Will at each instant appears as yet struggling with evil, is nothing whatever but a portion or aspect of the Temporal Order. But, as we have seen, these two orders are not divided in their Being. Realism would have sundered them. We simply cannot. The Temporal Order, taken in its wholeness, is for us identical with the Eternal Order. There are, then, not two regions sundered in their Being, in one of which the divine Will reigns supreme, while in the other the success of the divine plan is essentially doubtful. These two realms of Being are merely the same realm, viewed in one aspect as a temporal succession, wherein the particular present Being of each passing instant is contrasted with the *no longer* and *not yet* of past and future, so that fulfilment never at one present instant is to be found; while, in the other aspect, this same realm is to be viewed, in its entirety, as one life-process completely present to the Absolute consciousness, precisely as the musical succession is present at a glance to whoever appreciates a phrase of the music.

II

Thus, in its most abstract aspect, we have before us our idealistic method of viewing the ills of fortune, just as, at the last time, in speaking of the Moral Order, we endeavored to set before ourselves the idealistic way of viewing the nature and place of moral ills. But herewith we are indeed led to dwell upon yet another aspect of the problem of evil. The two undertakings just mentioned are not to be sundered. Our former study here again concerns us. Every ill of human fortune, since for our view it must be regarded as the expression, in the temporal order, of some finite will, is not explicable merely in abstract terms as

due to the general nature of temporal Being. For it is also, presumably, either directly due to the magnitude and ideality of our finite plans, or else is more or less directly the expression of the morally defective intent of some human or extra-human moral agent, or of the inadequacy of such an agent to his own ideals.

In regard to the question: Whence and by whose deed or defect came just this ill-fortune?—we have indeed seldom any right to venture upon detailed speculations. For since the Internal Meaning of the processes of Nature is, in general, hidden from man, we do well, in considering our natural misfortunes, rather to observe how best to adjust our skill to the actual ways of Nature, than to waste our time in a practically vain blaming of unknown hostile agencies for their blind or intentional interference with the life of man. Man's practical business is with the direction of his own will to the service of God. And he does this most wholesomely when he least concerns himself with the misdeeds, if such there be, of extra-human finite agents. Not even in case of the consequences of human conduct is it wholesome to judge our fellows, except within the narrow range where the facts are inevitably known to us, or where our judgment can lead to the improvement of the conduct of our fellows. Still less is the search for the origin, and for the specific nature of what one might call, in traditional speech, the diabolical elements in the finite world at large, any profitable search for us mortals. The wise man contents himself, as far as possible, with the knowing, in general, that there is an indefinitely vast range of voluntary finite evil-doing which, in the temporal order, has to be endured, and for which atonement must be temporally rendered, in order that the divine will may be eternally accomplished.

On the other hand, it is indeed plain that the moral ill of any agent, when once it has to be recognized as such, is thereby seen at once to become the source of ill fortune to other finite moral agents. For just because this world is a moral order, we suffer together. Nor can it be wholly indifferent to any righteous man that his neighbor sins. In a sense the sin of every evil-doer amongst us taints all of us. For if I am a man, and if nothing human is alien to me, then, however much my individual free will may be set against any direct consent to the evil-doer's particular purpose, this my free will, by virtue of our very definition of individuality, is in no sense absolutely independent of the common human nature that I share with the sinner. All human sin is therefore indeed in some sense my own. It is at least my ill fortune, even where it is not at all my own individual choice. And in this sense every wise man, in contemplating sin and its consequences, in all cases where he must needs know of them, hears the echo of the word, *That art thou*, sounding in his own heart in a tone which is as tragic, as the assertion itself is here one-sided, but in its own partial measure, true, even for the saintliest of men. No man amongst us is wholly free from the consequences, or from the degradation, involved in the crimes of his less enlightened or less devoted neighbors; and the solidarity of mankind links the crimes of each to the sorrows of all.

Morally evil deeds, and the ill fortune of mankind, are thus inseparably linked aspects of the temporal order. To know this in the right sense is not to be predisposed to a hasty moral judgment of our fellows, nor to the wanton imputation of blame to agencies either human or extra-human; but it is rather to learn to judge our own life-task more seriously. Let an ill fortune come, in such wise that I myself can impute to my own free will no conscious share in provoking this ill fortune. In general, I shall then be entering upon a vain search, if I try, in my finitude, to discover whose guilt or whose defect it is, whereof I now suffer

the consequences. Yet since the whole temporal order is the expression of will, and since even the processes of external Nature, for our own view, embody the intent of finite agents, whose life is linked to ours by ties to us at present mysterious, I can indeed say, in general, that all ill fortune results from the defects, or at least from the defective expression, of some finite will. This finite will is in general unknown to me. I do well not to trouble myself to impute blame. Yet presumably every such defect of finite will has, like our own defects, a genuinely moral significance. I am therefore right in holding that, when I suffer an ill fortune due to external natural agencies (however meaningless that ill fortune may appear to me), I am enduring a part of the burden of the world's struggle with temporal finitude, or with sin and with its consequences. Hence my endurance becomes, to my wiser view, no merely self-centred Stoicism, intended only to show my own powers, but a willingness to cooperate, whenever I can, in the divine task of giving meaning even to the seeming chaos of our present temporal experience. My willingness to bear hardness, as a good soldier, when I possess such willingness, is therefore never content to be merely passive, or to remain a mere matter of personal pride. I shall undertake to atone for the ill that the unknown agent has done, and so to show how even the seemingly accidental natural ill can be made an element in a life of significant devotion and of positive meaning. The soul of goodness in things evil I shall not merely assume, but shall try actively to find out, through my very effort either to cooperate in removing this natural ill, or so to face it, that I shall come to work all the more serviceably and loyally because of its very presence in my life.

On the other hand, when I inevitably am obliged to know *whose* sin it is whereof I endure the consequences when I suffer, I shall then remember, once for all, that all men are brothers, and that no man's fault can really be wholly indifferent to my Being; and I shall even rejoice, when I have the strength, that to me the opportunity is here given to join consciously in the common task of atoning for this sin.

Were I at this point a realist, I might no doubt rebel to find that my essentially independent moral entity had been, by ill fortune, somehow yoked by external and by arbitrary ties to my fellow's evil deeds, so that I seemed to myself to be dragging about with me the corpse of another man's crimes even while my deserts were wholly sundered from his. But I am no realist. I know that I have no Being whatever which can be sundered from the Being of my fellow-man. I know that I have moral individuality only in so far as I have my unique share in the identically common ideal task of endurance, and of seeking for the expression of the Eternal Will. My individuality is therefore parted by no chasm from my fellow's life. My responsibility, while not that of my fellow, is in no sense any absolutely independent fact in the universe, but is most intimately linked with my fellow's deeds and fortunes. I shall therefore indeed rejoice when, quite apart from any idle desire to impute blame, I become conscious of this, as of all other truth. And I do become conscious thereof whenever I am forced to observe that my sufferings are due to my fellow's misdeeds. I do not indeed rejoice that he did these evil deeds. But that wherein I rejoice is to have thus indicated to me the common human task of undertaking, in company with my fellows, to make good just this evil. I do not go out of my way to learn even this sort of truth. For it is, I repeat, not my human business to seek to impute blame, but to serve God however and whenever I can; and search for the source of an evil deed is in general an idle task, in a world where fortune constantly teaches me quite as much about such matters as I just now need to know. Yet to pry into the guilt of my neighbor is one matter; to rejoice that I have found a human

office is quite another. And when the knowledge of my neighbor's fault is forced upon me through my own resulting misfortune, I rejoice, if I am wise, to discover at least one case where my share in the atoning work of our common humanity is clearly laid out before me.

But further, this knowledge of the intimate, although often to us so mysterious, relation of ill fortune and sin, renders especially serious my view of my own moral task. No sin of mine is wholly indifferent to my fellows. All future life is in some wise other because of my misdeeds, whether finite beings observe the fact or not. This our whole definition of Being necessarily implies. I constantly carry about with me a genuine, if in one sense strictly limited, responsibility for the whole world's fortunes; for what is deed to me is in some sense fortune for all other Selves. My visible sphere of action cannot then be so narrow that I am wholly without influence upon the whole realm of Being, and upon every region thereof. And thus the significance of my moral existence, however petty my apparent range of influence, and however limited in one sense my powers may be, extends, in another sense, without limit, through the whole range of the future temporal order. In brief, it is with your moral efficacy as with your physical efficacy when viewed in accordance with the ideal theory of gravitation. According to that theory, when you move, you move, however little, the whole earth and the sun and the stars.

And thus we have sketched, in general terms, our idealistic view of the solidarity of the moral order, and of the interrelation between evil doing and ill fortune. All that we have herewith asserted is in strict accord with the definite, but also limited, range that our foregoing lecture gave to the moral freedom of the Individual. Our doctrine of individuality demands that every Self shall be in some respect free. Our doctrine of the unity of Being implies that all Selves are known, without any true separation, in the organism of a single world life. And so far from there being any opposition between these two aspects of our idealistic realm, they are strictly reciprocal aspects. The one World and the free Individual imply each the other. For the proof and the significance of individuality are to be found, not in any independence and separateness of soul, but in the very fact that since the Absolute life is One, every region of this life has unique relations to the whole, while uniqueness of will and meaning imply everywhere a measure of finite freedom. On the other hand, the proof of the Absolute unity is statable only in terms of the principle that whatever is, is the final expression of the fully developed internal meaning of any finite idea; so that the Absolute is needed in order to give meaning to any Self, and no Self can be wholly independent of any other.

III

The most general formula whereby the presence of ill in the temporal order is to be explained and the general relations between moral defect and ill fortune, have now been severally considered. What happens in the temporal order is always more or less evil. And on the other hand, the content of any particular evil is due to some finite will. Meanwhile, we mortals have an extremely limited power to understand in detail the connections between sin and ill fortune. Yet we can very certainly say that ill fortune is by no means always, or even predominantly, due to the sins of the sufferer. On the contrary, the very solidarity of the moral world implies that when any individual sins, all beings, in a measure, endure the evil consequences; so that, in general, the greater part of any man's suffering is due to

causes that are not in any wise identical with his own free will.

It next concerns us to consider the consequences of the foregoing view in their relations to the problems of Theodicy, and in their further practical bearings upon the spirit in which the ills of life are to be met.

The older forms of Theodicy were determined mainly either by realistic or by mystical motives. Such fashions of justifying the presence of evil in the world fall with the realistic and the mystical concepts of Being. Yet, even apart from the general metaphysical objections to such older solutions of our problem, their theoretical and practical defects, when viewed as ethically significant hypotheses, deserve here some brief attention. Let us simply summarize one or two of the principal forms of such hypotheses.

Mysticism, by its very nature as an ontological doctrine, involves a conscious effort to deal with the problems of evil. Such an effort is therefore an essential part of its undertaking, and every mystical theology is also a Theodicy. The mystical doctrine is, of course, that evil has no Being at all. And on the other hand, most of the numerous efforts, in the history of ethics and theology, to prove that evil is simply something illusory, rest upon a more or less explicitly mystical basis. Herein, however, lies a very sharp contrast between Mysticism and our own Idealism. For us, evil is certainly not an unreality. It is a temporal reality, and as such is included within, and present to, the eternal insight. What we have throughout asserted is that no evil is a whole or a complete instance of a being. In other words, evil, for us, is some thing explicitly finite; and the Absolute as such, in the individuality of its life, is not evil, while its life is unquestionably inclusive of evil, which it experiences, overcomes, and transcends.

But Mysticism, on the contrary, has always asserted that an experience of evil is an experience of unreality, or is, like every finite experience, an illusion, a dream, a deceit. Now, not only do such doctrines fall with the form of ontology upon which they depend; but taken in themselves, as comments upon life, and as ethical doctrines, they are at once self-contradictory and Antinomian. If evil is merely called finite error, this finite error remains none the less, as a fact of human experience, an evil. One has only changed the name. The reality remains what it was. And in escaping from such error, the mystic either escapes from nothing at all (and in that case, indeed, escapes not at all, since nothing has happened when he escapes); or else he escapes from a real ill, when he turns from error to the Absolute (and in that case, the reality of the evil from which he escapes is admitted). The whole dialectic of practical Mysticism thus depends upon condemning as worthless our finite illusions, while yet asserting that, as worthless, they have no Being whatever, and so cannot even be rightly condemned or transcended. For what you condemn or transcend has, for you, while you condemn or transcend it, a place in Being, even though, as our Idealism asserts, it is, indeed, never the whole of Being taken as a whole. But this dialectic of Mysticism, as thus stated, is obviously endless. The mystic first denies that evil is real. He is asked why then evil seems to exist. He replies that this is our finite error. The finite error itself hereupon becomes, as the source of all our woes, an evil. But no evil is real. Hence no error can be real. Hence we do not really err, even if we suppose that evil is real. Herewith we return to our starting-point, and can only hope to escape by asserting that it is an error to assert that we really err, or that we really believe error to be real. And of the dialectic process thus begun there is, indeed, no end, nor at any stage in this process is there consistency.

On the other hand, it is equally obvious that this simple denial of the reality of evil makes an end of every rational possibility of moral effort. Where there is nothing to escape, to transform, to transcend, or to make better, deeds become as illusory as the ills with which they contend. Meister Eckhart well said, of his Absolute, the Godhead “never looked upon deed,” and knows nothing of good works or of evil-doers; while the Hindoo mystics with equal right pointed out that, to the Absolute Self, there is no difference between the murderer and the saint. And Angelus Silesius stated the mystical view with a like consistency when he declared that the prayer, *Thy will be done*, is fulfilled only in so far as the true God has no will at all that can be thwarted....In consequence, the mystical Theodicy is, indeed, thoroughly Antinomian. You may do what you will. You can do no evil. For evil has no reality. How could you give to any evil deed true Being, even of the most fragmentary type?

It remains by way of comment upon the mystical Theodicy, to point out once more, and with emphasis, that our Idealism herein very sharply differs from Mysticism. For us God has and is a Will. And through all the struggles of the Temporal Order, just this will is winning its way; while, on the other hand, in the Eternal Order, just this will is finally and triumphantly expressed. Meanwhile, in the Temporal Order, there is, at every point and in every act, relative freedom. And for that very reason there is the possibility and the fact of a finite and conscious resistance of the will of the World by the will of the Individual. The consequences of such resistance are real evils,—evils that all finite beings and the whole world suffer. Such evils are justified only by the eternal worth of the life that endures and overcomes them. And they are temporally overcome through other finite wills, and not without moral conflict. The right eternally triumphs, yet not without temporal warfare. This warfare occurs, indeed, *within the divine life itself*, and not in an externally created world that is realistically an independent Being, other than God, and sundered from him. But this very view makes the conflict no less genuine, and the eternal victory no less a moral victory.

A modified form of the mystical Theodicy, in connection with the realistic elements, appears in the classic doctrine of evil in the Scholastic theology. Here evil has, as the Thomistic doctrine assures us, no positive entity; but involves imperfections whose only real basis lies in the perfections of the beings concerned. Yet this doctrine escapes from the direct consequences of Mysticism only through the addition of those realistic elements which characterize the scholastic doctrine of the created world.

IV

We may pass then, next, directly to the realistic forms of Theodicy. And of these, for the moment, we need especially mention but one,—a form especially familiar in popular theology, and by no means ignored in the classic statement of the just-mentioned scholastic theory of evil. According to this view real evil is entirely due to the free will of moral agents who are essentially Independent Beings, and who have their existence apart one from another, like all the entities of Realism. “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” This is the central thesis emphasized by such a realistic Theodicy. Any moral agent with a free will is created by God. But God’s will then leaves him quite free to choose for himself whether he will do well or ill. In so far as he chooses ill, evil enters the world. This evil is

not in any sense in God, nor yet in the world by any divine consent; but is in a being who, in his freedom, is now wholly independent of God or of any other moral agent. The divine justice hereupon indeed demands that the moral order should be vindicated by requiring the sinner to reap the consequences of his deed. As usual with Realism, a primary sundering of entities is somehow to be made good by a secondary act that annuls the sundering. And the ills of the world, thus explained as the divinely determined penalty of sin, are such that the sufferers have only their own sinfulness to blame for their woes, while God's righteous government is vindicated by their inability to escape his judgment.

I call this view, in many of its popular forms, a realistic Theodicy, because its expounders usually and profoundly object to our foregoing account of the deeper unity of the Temporal and the Eternal Orders, and lay great stress upon sundering the moral agents of the universe. They do this, first, for the sake of making, as they often say, the responsibility of each moral agent something quite definite and unmistakable, and secondly, for the sake, as they often add, of entirely clearing the divine Will from any responsibility for the deeds of the finite agents, and finally, for the sake of assuring us that no true harm can come to the righteous. In its most consistent form this theory would be forced, as a consequence, to regard all the explicable and real sufferings of the world as the direct penalty of sin, and as visited upon the individual evil-doers themselves. For, as a well-known and highly realistic popular ethical view has often asserted, it would be unjust if God visited upon one moral agent the penalty of another moral agent's sins. For are not the Selves, one insists, essentially and mutually independent entities, whose salvation or damnation ought to be, and in a moral world is, their own doing? And how can God's ways be justified unless we suppose that he wishes all men,—these Independent Beings whom he has created,—to prosper and to win blessedness, if only they choose to be righteous? If they sin, theirs is the just penalty. But no ill can happen to the righteous in this justly governed world of the ethically Independent Beings.

Accordingly, in view of the complications of life, and because of the frequent appearance of ills that seem to fall upon the innocent, and because of the seeming delay of the divine justice in the visible affairs of men, this doctrine, ever since the days of Job's friends, or of the speculations of the more realistic of the early Hindoo sages regarding the source of evil, has been forced to make use of various supplementary hypotheses, which here, indeed, need not long detain us. A righteous man seems to suffer. Hereupon this realistic Theodicy appears endangered. Injustice appears to have come into the world. How shall one explain the facts? Well, with Job's friends, one may make the hypothesis that the righteous man has secretly sinned. Or, with the popular doctrine of the Hindoos, a doctrine occasionally imitated in Western thought, one may suppose that a sin done in some previous state of existence is visited upon the sufferer in the present life. Or, borrowing from the mystic as much of his lore as one needs, one may divide apparent ills into two sorts,—the one sort being merely illusory ills, blessings in disguise, or matters that the enlightened can see to be of no real moment whatever; while only the other sort of ills, namely those which are the penalties of sin, are genuine ills. To the former class are then referred those ills of mere fortune which seem to come both to the just and to the unjust. One supposes that only human illusion makes these appear to be ills at all. For God's will has wrought them, and, by hypothesis, not as penalties of sin. And God's will could mean naught but good to his righteous children. Hence of such ills we must make light. They may often seem grave.

But this sort of Theodicy calls them mere appearances. On the other hand, there are, in the world, true evils. But they are the penalties of sin. And they are always visited upon the evil-doer himself.

Seldom has such a Theodicy as this been carried out with any very rigid consistency. On the other hand, as a general tendency in doctrine, this form of the explanation and justification of evil is very well and popularly known. Yet if it were ever expressed with a thoroughgoing consistency, I hold that its consequences would be as hopeless, when viewed with reference to the interests of any ethical interpretation of the universe, as the realistic ontology upon which it is based is helpless against the attacks of a sound metaphysical analysis. This view gives us in truth no intelligible Theodicy whatever.

For, as a fact, our ethical interest in the universe is quite as inseparable from a belief in the solidarity of all human life, and in fact in the solidarity of all finite life, as this same ethical interest is also inseparable from a belief in the relative freedom and the individuality of finite agents. Moral agents must indeed possess their measure of finite freedom, if the world is to be a moral order. But in no ethically significant sense can they be Independent Beings, of any realistic type, if this same world is to possess any moral unity of meaning whatever. For what gives the moral life its whole positive significance is the fact that individuals can and do suffer, and undeservedly suffer, and, in a measure, helplessly suffer, for the wrong-doing of other individuals, while for the very same reason, moral agents can do positive good in and for the lives of other moral agents. In a moral world I, as ethical agent, must indeed be free to choose my own measure of individual and moral good and ill. But I cannot be free to suffer only for the consequences of my own sins. For if this latter were the case, and if this freedom to suffer only for my own sins were the general rule that held for all moral agents, then everybody's true inner fortune would indeed be wholly independent of the deeds of his fellows. But in that case no moral agent would have any genuinely significant task to perform. For our genuinely significant moral tasks all involve helping our fellows. And the power positively to help my fellow is necessarily correlative with my power to harm him. Where I cannot harm, I cannot help. And in a world where I cannot genuinely help another, my whole moral life becomes limited to the task of cultivating a purely vain and formal piety, as empty as it is ineffectual. It follows that this form of realistic Theodicy, in joining to its theory of free will a conception that finite Selves are sundered in their true Being, and so in their fortunes, by chasms, has unwittingly destroyed the moral universe.

This consequence of this realistic Theodicy can easily be developed by any illustration of a case where a good deed appears possible. The stranger has fallen by the wayside. Can the good Samaritan do him any service? Yes,—but only upon the hypothesis that real evils are not solely the inevitable consequences that divine justice brings upon sufferers because of their own sins. For if the real evils of the world are all of them the just penalties of the sins of those who suffer, then, according to the realistic theodicy, yonder stranger's suffering is one of two things. Perhaps, namely, it is no real evil at all, but an illusory appearance of mishap. In that case no good need or can be done by giving the stranger succor. But perhaps, on the other hand, it is a well-earned penalty for his past misdeeds,—a penalty which divine justice inflicts. But in the latter case, by the hypothesis of the realistic Theodicy here in question, the penalty has come to this stranger solely because a righteous God knew that it was earned, and that it *must* come. How then can the good Samaritan

hope to intervene between the just God and the righteous penalty? If he succeeded in relieving the sufferer, he could at best only postpone the day of God's just wrath, and of the inevitable penalty. Or, in other words, the relief would be a mere illusion. The priest and the Levite who pass the sufferer by, and who leave him to the punishments of God, are therefore following out the only consistent practice that our realistic Theodicy could counsel. At most, like Job's friends, they might have approached the sufferer to warn him of the necessity of making his peace with God. Even this warning could convey to him no real good. For the grace of repentance also he would possess, if he deserved it, and if it could avert any of the evil consequences of his deed. Meanwhile, the thieves amongst whom the stranger fell really did him no ill except just what he deserved. They too, then, were God's ministers, and in no wise evil-doers.

The result is here indeed a moral fatalism, of an unexpected, but none the less inevitable, sort. But what the illustration brings to light is, that the problem of evil indeed demands the presence of free will in the world; while, on the other hand, it is equally true that no moral world whatever can be made consistent with the realistic thesis according to which free will agents are, in fortune and in penalty, independent of the deeds of other moral agents. It follows that, in our moral world, the righteous can suffer without individually deserving their suffering, just because their lives have no independent Being, but are linked with all life.

Nor, in fact, can any realistic conception of the moral agents, as souls essentially independent, in their Being, of their creator, or of one another, be just to the solidarity upon which every explanation and justification of the ills of the world must rest. If the ills of the creatures are events external to the life of their creator, then the creator has fashioned suffering in which he himself has no share, and of which he is independent. In that case the ancient dilemma as to the limitation of his power upon the one hand, or of his benevolence upon the other, retains all its hopelessness of meaning. The ways of God cannot thus be justified.

V

I return afresh to our own idealistic view. I state again its theses and their consequences,—but this time in a directly practical form.

I suffer. Why? In general because I am an agent whose will is not now completely expressed in a present conscious life. I seek in the Beyond my fulfilment. The higher my ideals, the more far-reaching my plans, the more I am full of the longing for perfection, the more there is in me of one kind of sorrow,—namely, of sorrow that my present temporal life is not yet what I mean it to be. Moreover, the narrowness of my present form of consciousness not only limits my ideal search for the fulfilment that I conceive in the future. It also sets bounds to my conscious retention of my former attainments. What I have won, I too often forget and forsake. My past is no longer mine, just because my consciousness is of such narrow span. I lose my own past, just as I struggle in vain to win what is still my future. Thus I am beset with temporal ill behind and before. The *no longer* and the *not yet* equally baffle me.

Now is there any good in all this essential, and, nevertheless, ideally colored, misfortune that besets the best deeds and meanings of my present form of consciousness? Yes. There

is, indeed, one very great good. For in respect of this better aspect of my life, I suffer because of the very magnitude and the depth of my meanings. I am in ideal larger than my human experience permits me, in present fact, to become. My evil is the result of this my highest present good. Can I improve this my state of temporal ill? Yes, by every serious effort to live in better accord with my ideal. To be sure, there is no infallible rule for winning temporal good fortune; for my fortunes, and my actual power to attain my temporal goals, depend upon my infinitely complex natural relations with other life. No act of my finite individuality has created, or can transform, my temperament, my heredity, my environment, or can free me from the burden that I must cheerfully accept,—the burden of being this man, weighted with the presence of this organism, this inheritance of human sorrow and sin, this task in a world of cares. But one thing lies in my power. And that is, to be devoted to my life's task, namely, to the Eternal. For me the readiness is all. But I can be ready, ready to accept the dear sorrow of possessing ideals, and of taking my share of the divine task.

But in all this my own struggle with evil, wherein lies my comfort? I answer—my true comfort can never lie in my temporal attainment of my goal. For it is my first business, as a moral agent, and as a servant of God, to set before myself a goal that, in time, simply cannot be attained. Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion. Yes, woe unto them, for they are essentially self-contradictory in the blindness of their self-assertion. They assert that they win peace in their temporal doings; but temporal peace is a contradiction in terms. We approach such peace nearest of all when we have least of ideal significance in our consciousness. We attain it only in deep sleep, while the restlessly beating heart suggests that nature is even then dissatisfied with and in every present state of what men call our organism; but while we, as mere finite human individuals, will nothing, think nothing, and for just that time are nothing. Whoever is awake, is content with the present precisely in so far as the world means little to him. The more the world means, at any moment, to our consciousness, the more we go onward towards some goal. The more then are we discontent with the instant.

Our comfort cannot, therefore, be at once significant, and yet a matter of purely temporal experience. Wherein, then, can comfort truly be found? I reply, In the consciousness, first, that the ideal sorrows of our finitude are identically God's own sorrows, and have their purpose and meaning in the divine life as such significant sorrows; and in the assurance, secondly, that God's fulfilment in the eternal order—a fulfilment in which we too, as finally and eternally fulfilled individuals, share,—is to be won, not as the mystic supposed, without finitude and sorrow, but through the very bitterness of tribulation, and through overcoming the world. In being faithful to our task we, too, are temporally expressing the triumph whereby God overcomes in eternity the temporal world and its tribulations.

I say, our sorrows are identically God's own sorrows. This consequence flows directly from our Idealism. And we accept this consequence heartily. It contains the only ground for a genuine Theodicy. The Absolute knows all that we know, and knows it just as we know it. For not one instant can we suppose our finite experience first "absorbed" or "transmuted" and then reduced, in an ineffable fashion, to its unity in the divine life. The eternal fulfilment is not won by ignoring what we find present to ourselves when we sorrow, but by including this our experience of sorrow in a richer life. And, on the other hand, nothing in our life is external to the divine life. As the Absolute is identically our whole Will expressed, our

experience brought to finality, our life individuated, so, on the other hand, we are the divine as it expresses itself here and now; and no item of what we are is other than an occurrence within the whole of the divine existence. In our more ideal sorrows we may become more clearly aware *how* our intention, our plan, our meaning, is one with the divine intent, and *how* our experience is a part of the life through which God wins in eternity his own. And the comfort of this clearer insight lies precisely here:—I sorrow. But the sorrow is not only mine. This same sorrow, just as it is for me, is God's sorrow. And yet, since my will is here also, and consciously, one with the divine Will, God who here, in me, aims at what I now temporally miss, not only possesses, in the eternal world, the goal after which I strive, but comes to possess it even through and because of my sorrow. Through this my tribulation the Absolute triumph, then, is won. Moreover, this triumph is also eternally mine. In the Absolute I am fulfilled. Yet my very fulfilment, and God's, implies, includes, demands, and therefore can transcend, this very sorrow.

For now, secondly, I assert, even in all this, that the divine fulfilment in eternity can be won only through the sorrows of time. For, as a fact, we ourselves, even in our finitude, know that the most significant perfections include, as a part of themselves, struggle, whereby opposing elements, set by this very struggle into contrast with one another, become clearly conscious. Such perfections also include suffering, because in the conquest over suffering all the nobler gifts of the Spirit, all the richer experiences of life, consist. As there is no courage without a dread included and transcended, so in the life of endurance there is no conscious heroism without the present tribulations in whose overcoming heroism consists. There is no consciousness of strength without the presence of that resistance which strength alone can master. Even love shows its glory as love only by its conquest over the doubts and estrangements, the absences and the misunderstandings, the griefs and the loneliness, that love glorifies with its light amidst all their tragedy. In a world where there was no such consciousness as death suggests to us mortals, love would never consciously know the wealth and the faithfulness of its own deathless meaning. Whoever has not at some time profoundly despaired, knows not the blessed agony of rising from despair and of being more than the demonic powers that are wrecking his life. Art, which in its own way often gives us our brief glimpses of the eternal order, delights to display to us all this dignity of sorrow. The experience of life, amidst all the chaos of our present form of consciousness, brings home to us this great truth that the perfection of the Spirit is a perfection through the including and transcending of sorrow,—and brings it home in a form that leaves us no doubt that unless God knows sorrow, he knows not the highest good, which consists in the overcoming of sorrow.

So much then for our sorrows, so far as they have to us, as we are, a consciously ideal meaning. But, you may say, much of sorrow, such as mere physical pain, and such as our more degrading ill fortune, has not this quality. To us as we are such sorrow seems in no wise ennobling. What comfort have we for ills that seem not to have, for our present consciousness, any ideal meaning? Do they link us with the divine? Do they help us onwards in the task of life? Do they not rather tend to drive us to forget our goals, and to lose sight of life's meaning? Can such sorrows thus be justified?

I have already, in substance, replied to this objection. Man, as he is, lives not only his more consciously ideal human life. Linked as he is to countless processes of nature, and of his fellows, he echoes, in his passing experiences, the sorrows of the world. He cannot now

know the ideal meaning of the vast realms of finite life in whose fortunes he is at present mysteriously doomed to share. His comfort here lies in knowing that in all this life ideals are sought, and meanings temporally expressed,—with incompleteness at every instant, with the sorrow of finitude in every movement of the natural world, but with the assurance of the divine triumph in Eternity lighting up the whole.

In brief, then, nowhere in Time is perfection to be found. Our comfort lies in the knowledge of the Eternal. Strengthened by that knowledge, we can win the most enduring of temporal joys, the consciousness that makes us delight to share the world's grave glories and to take part in its divine sorrows,—sure that these sorrows are the means of the eternal triumph, and that these glories are the treasures of the house of God. When once this comfort comes home to us, we can run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. For our temporal life is the very expression of the eternal triumph.

Josiah Royce. *The World and the Individual*. Vol. 2. New York: Macmillan, 1901.

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