



The Human Self

Josiah Royce

What a man means by himself is notoriously a question to which common sense gives various and ambiguous answers. That by the Self one means a real being, common sense indeed insists. But the nature of this real being forms the topic of the greatest vacillation in all popular metaphysics. The most frequently mentioned doubt is that as to whether the Self is, or at least essentially includes, the bodily organism, or whether the Self is essentially an incorporeal entity. But this is but a single instance of the doubts and hesitations of the popular doctrine concerning the Ego. And this indefiniteness of customary opinion regarding our problem most of all appears in the practical aspect of the current notions of the Self. If we ask, What is the value of the Self, and what do we gain by cultivating, by knowing, by observing, and by satisfying the Self?—common sense gives contradictory answers which at once show that the very idea of what the Self is, is subject to the most momentous changes as we alter our point of view. Ask the teacher of the people about the value and dignity of the Self at a moment when he is insisting upon the significance and the rights of individuality, and upon the duty of conscious reasonableness, and of moral independence. He will reply, perhaps, in the terms that Burns has made so familiar. “The man of independent mind” knows, asserts, expresses, preserves, glorifies the true Self, the moral individual. And the Self which he thus makes central in his moral world is an essentially honorable Self, the determiner of all true values, the despiser of mere externals, the freeman to whom fortune is nothing compared with inner dignity. When one views the moral Self thus, one conceives that the root of all evil and of all baseness must always lie without and beyond the Self. The Self sins not through self-assertion but through self-abandonment. The lost soul is the man who is the slave of fortune. Pleasure, worldly honor, external good,—these may harm the Self, just because they are foreign to its true independence. The ideal lies where the Stoics sought it, in casting off the external bondage. For such a view, every man’s Self, if you could only get at the heart of it, and get it to express itself, would appear as essentially good. What corrupts and enchains men is not their innermost selfhood, but the power of an external world of temptations. To assert the true Self, is to be saved.

But even more familiar than this ethical individualism, which so often thrills the hearts of noble youth, and which inspires so many to heroism, is another ancient and, as its history shows, profoundly religious doctrine. This latter doctrine equally appeals to the moral common sense of mankind; it is crystallized, so to speak, in some of the most familiar of our customary phrases; it inspires numerous effective moral appeals; it comes to us with all the weight of the authority of the faith of the fathers. This view is that the Self of man is precisely that which in its original nature is evil, so that it is just our salvation which must

to us come from without, and be won through self-abnegation. "By grace ye are saved, and that *not* of yourselves." Self-denial is, for this view, the cardinal virtue. Self-consciousness is even a vice. A man ought to think little of himself, and much of God, of the world, and of his own external business. The central evil of our life is selfishness. Virtue is definable as altruism, *i.e.* as forgetting ourselves in the thought of others. The best eulogy that one can make over the grave of the departed saint is: "He had no thought of Self; he served; he sacrificed himself; he gave himself as an offering for the good of mankind; he lived for others; he never even observed his own virtues; he forsook himself; he asked for nothing but bondage to his duty." And George Eliot sings in praise of the "scorn for miserable aims that end in Self."

Now the opposition just suggested between two views of the value of Self, is so familiar that common sense not only uses these apparently conflicting phrases, but has its own lore regarding various devices by which they are to be reconciled. A man has, as we sometimes learn, two Selves,—the inner and the outer, the nobler and the baser. There is the natural man, who is by his very essence evil; and the spiritual man, who is by nature good. It is to the natural man that the advice about self-abnegation is given; it is to the spiritual Self that the well-known words of Burns make their stirring appeal. The fleshly Self is the root of all evil. The spiritual Self belongs, by origin and by destiny, to a higher realm.

This dualistic way of stating the case, and of attempting to solve the practical problem here at issue, would be more nearly final were it not that in the very effort to carry it out to its consequences, the former ambiguity only arises afresh, in a slightly altered form. The higher Self, the deeper spiritual nature, the individuality which ought to be,—to whom does it originally belong? To the man who finally wins a consciousness that this has become to him his true Self? Or does this higher Self come, as Aristotle said of the *Nous*, *θύραθεν*, from without, into the natural man? Does it create for him or in him a new selfhood, so that before the higher selfhood appears in this man, it exists perhaps merely as the intent of God to save this man, or as a selfhood embodied in other men, the teachers, inspirers, guides, of the man who is to be thus brought to the possession of the higher Self in his own person? This question may indeed at first appear an idle subtlety. But as a fact, both common sense and religion, both the teacher's art and the inner consciousness of those who have in any sense passed from death unto life, give this question a very living and practical significance. Our models and our inspirations, the mysterious grace that saves us and the visible social order that moulds us,—these lie at first without the Self. Yet they in such wise determine whatever is best about us that we are all accustomed to nourish the higher selfhood by means of what we find as no creation of the original Self, but as the free gift of the world. And the two doctrines which, in European history, have most insisted upon the duality of our higher and our lower selfhood, *viz.* the ethical teaching of Plato and the Gospel of the Christian Church, have agreed in insisting that the higher Self is a resultant of influences which belong to the eternal world, and which the individual man himself is powerless to initiate. In Plato's account of the process of the soul's release from its own lower nature, the eternal Ideas appear as the supernatural source of truth and of goodness. In the mythical state of preëxistence, the Ideas guided the soul by their visible presence; and the soul's higher nature meant nothing but the contemplation of their uncreated perfection. In this foreign authority the soul found all that was good. And in the present life our higher nature means only our memory of the former presence of the all-powerful truth. This memory

guides our awakening reason, controls our irrational passions, binds the lower Self with the might of the eternal, and conducts us back towards that renewed and direct intercourse with the ideal world wherein consists our only higher Selfhood. Christianity, in all its essential teachings, has emphasized a similar source and meaning in speaking of the higher Self. The Divine Spirit enters a man in ways that its own wisdom predetermines, and without the work of God in preparing and accomplishing the plan of salvation, in revealing the truth to man by outward means, and in preparing the heart within for the reception of the truth, the nobler Self of each man not only is unable to win control of the baser Self, but never could come effectively to exist at all. In this sense, then, it is not I who win salvation, but it is God who works in me. The higher Self is originally not myself at all, but the Spirit warring against the Flesh. This spirit is essentially from God. It comes *into* the man like Aristotle's Creative Nous, and is precisely so much of a man as is not his own, but God's.

Now this well-known ambiguity of the traditional doctrines concerning the source and meaning of the higher Self in man, is not, as some have unwisely maintained, a mere consequence of theological and philosophical speculation. On the contrary, it is an expression, in terms of faith, of empirical facts about the Self which common sense everywhere recognizes. The same problems, in other formulation, exist in Hindoo philosophy as well as in Plato's; and they are recognized by Buddhism as well as by Christianity. Every watchful parent, and every conscientious teacher, is perfectly well acquainted with facts that illustrate the doctrines of saving grace and of the apparently external source of the higher selfhood, in case of every plastic child. We all of us know, or ought to recognize, how powerless we are, or should have been, to win any higher selfhood, unless influences from without,—whether you know them as mother love, or conceive them as the promptings of the divine Spirit, or view them as the influences of friends and of country,—have brought into us a truth and an ideality that is in no ordinary sense our own private creation. And every man who knows what the wiser humility is, has sometime said: "Of myself I am nothing. It is the truth alone that, coming from without, works in me."

But if you lay aside the problem as to the source of the higher Self, and consider merely the supposed duality of the lower and the higher Self as a given fact, have you in that case even begun to solve the problem as to what the Self of a man actually is? For the Self was to be something unique and individual. But the account here in question makes of it something disintegrated and internally manifold, and threatens to cause the name Self to mean, in case of every individual, a mere general term, applicable to various groups of different facts. For by the same principle whereby you distinguish the lower and the higher Self of a man, you might distinguish, and upon occasion, even in common life, do distinguish, many various selves, all clustered together in what we call the life of a single individual.

For if we are internally in any sense more than one Self, then we consist not merely of the lower and the higher self, but have, in some sense, as many selves as we have decidedly various offices, duties, types of training and of intellectual activity, or momentous variations of mood and condition. Of the man who is once seriously ill, common sense often says that lie is no longer himself. If you ask, who then is lie, if not himself, you may get the answer that he is another,—a deeply changed,—a strange Self. And if the change has at all the character of a mental derangement, common sense, ever since the savage stage of our social life, has been disposed to conceive the alteration in question as the appearance of an actually foreign and other Self, a new and invading individuality, which the superstitious

view as a possession of the man's body by an evil spirit. Such instances are extreme; but health furnishes to us similar, if less unhappy variations, with whose mystery the popular imagination is constantly busy. Deep emotional experiences give the sense of a new or of a wavering selfhood. There are many people, of a fine social sensibility, who are conscious of a strong tendency to assume, temporarily, the behavior, the moods, and in a measure, both the bearing and the accent, both the customs and the opinions of people in whose company they spend any considerable time. I have known amongst such people those who were oppressed by a sense of insincerity in consequence of their own social plasticity. "I almost seem to have no true Self at all," such a sensitive person may say. "I am involuntarily compelled to change my whole attitude towards the most important things whenever I change my company. I find myself helplessly thinking and believing and speaking as the present company want me to do. I feel humiliated by my own lack of moral independence. But I cannot help this fickleness. And the saddest is that I do not know where my true Self lies, or what one amongst all these various selves is the genuine one."

Now such confessions stand again for rather extreme types of variability of the mere sense of selfhood. Yet the experiences of which such less stable souls complain, exist in various degrees in many of us who are merely not sensitive enough, or perhaps not reflective enough, to notice our own actual variations of self-consciousness. I have known very obstinate men, who were full of a consciousness of their own independence and absolute stability of will and character. Yet, as a fact, they were people of very various and complex selfhood, who were, far more than they themselves supposed, the slaves of circumstances and of social influences. Only they regarded themselves as both independent and resolutely fixed in their individuality, merely because their one type of reaction in presence of any other man's opinion was to disagree with that opinion, and their one way of asserting their independence was to insist that their neighbors were wrong, while their fixed device for preserving their independence was to refuse to do whatever external authority desired them to do. But now such resolute opponents of their fellows are as much without a fixed and rational conscious principle of selfhood as their brothers, the self-accused slaves of the passing social situation. For it is as fickle to disagree with everybody as to agree with everybody. And the man who always opposes is as much the slave of external fortune as the man who always agrees. The simply obstinate man, who is said to be set in his own way, but who, in fact, is always set in the way that is opposed to the ways of whoever is just now his fellow,—such a man changes his doctrine whenever his opponent changes; and his teachings, his ideals, and his selfhood play, as it were, puss-in-the-corner with those of his neighbors.

But enough of familiar illustrations of how the mere sense of selfhood may vary, or of how its outer and inner expression may seem dual or multiple. What these facts give us, is not any decision as to the true nature of the Self, but some specification of our problem, and some explanation of the reason why common sense is so uncertain about how to define the true unity of the Self. The inconsistencies of common sense in regard to the Self are, upon their practical side, well summed up in the familiar advice which we are accustomed to give the young. "Forget yourself," we say, "all true success depends upon freedom from yourself." But to the careless youth we sternly say, "What! you *have* forgotten yourself." One sees, it is hard for the poor Self to please common sense. And the reason is that common sense does not in the least know, when it appeals to the Self, whom

it is addressing, nor, when it talks of the Self, what object it is meaning.

II

Such considerations ought once for all to give pause to those who have regarded the problem of the true nature of the Self as a matter of direct inner knowledge, or as something to be settled by an appeal to the plain man. But of course these considerations merely indicate a problem, and are by no means decisive as against any metaphysical view which insists upon a true and deeper unity of Selfhood at the basis of all these variations of the apparent Self. But wherein shall our own metaphysical doctrine seek for guidance in this world of complexities?

I reply, The concept of the human Self, like the concept of Nature, comes to us, first, as an empirical concept, founded upon a certain class of experiences. But like the concept of Nature, the concept of the human Self tends far to outrun any directly observable present facts of human experience, and to assume forms which define the Self as having a nature and destiny which no man directly observes or as yet can himself verify. If we consider first the empirical basis of the conception of the Self, and then the motives which lead us beyond our direct experience in our efforts to interpret the Self, we find, as a result of a general survey, three different kinds of conceptions of what it is that one means or ought to mean by the term Self as applied to the individual man. Each of these sorts of conception of the human Self is once more capable of a wide range of variation. Each can be used as a basis of different and, on occasion, of conflicting notions of what the Self is. But the three have their strong contrasts with one another, and each lays stress upon its own aspect of the facts.

First then, there is the more directly empirical way of conceiving the Self. In this sense, by a man's Self, you mean a certain totality of facts, viewed as more or less immediately given, and as distinguished from the rest of the world of Being. These facts may be predominantly corporeal facts, such as not only the man himself but also his neighbors may observe and comment upon. In this sense my countenance and my physical deeds, my body and my clothing,—all these may be regarded as more or less a part of myself. My neighbor so views them. I may and very generally do so view them myself. If you changed or wholly removed such facts, my view of what I am would unquestionably alter. For to my neighbor as to myself, I am this man with these acts, this body, this presence. I cannot see these facts as my neighbor does, nor can he take my view of them. But we all regard such facts, not only as belonging to the Self, but as constituting, in a measure, what we regard as the Self of the present life. In addition to the external or corporeal Self of the phenomenal world, there is the equally empirical and phenomenal Self of the inner life, the series of states of consciousness, the feelings, thoughts, desires, memories, emotions, moods. These, again, both my neighbor and myself regard as belonging to me, and as going to make up what I am. To be sure, within this inner empirical Self, we all make distinctions, now so freely illustrated, between what does and what does not essentially belong to the Self. When a man tells me a piece of interesting news, or expounds to me his opinions, I naturally regard the ideas which then arise in my mind as his and not as mine. I have to reflect in order to observe the somewhat recondite fact that the ideas which he seems to convey to me are in one sense ideas of my own, aroused in me according to laws of association. On the other

hand, when I think alone by myself, the ideas which occur to me seem to be primarily mine. I have to reflect in order to remember how largely they have been derived from books, from nature, or from conversation, and how little I can call originally my own. And everywhere in the inner life, as it flits by, I observe a constantly shifting play of what I distinguish as more truly myself, from what I regard as relatively foreign. This feeling or purpose, this mood or this choice, is my own. That other emotion or idea is alien to me. It belongs to another. I do not recognize it as mine. The distinctions, thus empirically made, have no one rational principle. They are often founded upon the most arbitrary and unstable motives. The vacillation of common sense regarding the Self is endlessly repeated in my own inner life. I am constantly sure that there exists a Self, and that there I am, present to my own consciousness as the one whose experiences all these are, and who set myself over against the foreign non-Ego at every moment. But in distinguishing my empirical non-Ego from the Ego, I follow no stateable rule in my inner life from moment to moment. I even voluntarily play with the distinctions of Self and not-Self,—dramatically address myself as if I were another, criticise and condemn myself, and upon occasion observe myself in a relatively impersonal fashion, as if I were a wholly alien personality. On the other hand, there are countless automatic processes that alter or that diminish the immediately given distinctions between Ego and non-Ego. The lover in Locksley Hall somewhat unobservantly tells us how:—

“Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self that trembling, passed in music out of sight.”

The lover admits that in the state which he thus describes, the Self, if invisible in the inner experience, was still able, most decidedly, to make itself heard. And, as a fact, one may well question whether, in view of what the lover in Locksley Hall tells us, the Self of this lover ever passed beyond his own range of vision at all, or was in the least out of sight. But the happy emotional confusion of self-consciousness here in question is familiar indeed to all who know joyous emotion. And in the sadder emotions one also has endless varieties in the intensity, clearness, and outlines which in our empirical consciousness characterize, from moment to moment, the relations of Self and not-Self.

III

But one may now ask, still dwelling upon the empirical Self, what manner of unity is left, in the midst of all these variations, as the unity that the concept of the Self can still be said to possess in our ordinary experience? And by what marks is the Self to be distinguished from the rest of the world? I reply, by pointing out a fact of central importance for the whole understanding of the empirical Ego. The variations of our experience and of our opinion concerning the empirical Self are countless in number. And no purely rational principle guides us in defining the Self from moment to moment in the world of common sense, or in distinguishing it from the not-Self. But there still does remain *one psychological principle* running through all these countless facts, and explaining, in general, both why they vary, and why yet we always suppose, despite the chaos of experiences, that the Self of our inner and outer life preserves a genuine, although to us hidden unity. This psychological

principle is the simple one that, in us men, the distinction between Self and not-Self has a predominantly *Social origin*, and implies a more or less obviously present contrast between what we at any moment view as the life of another person, a fellow-being, or, as you may for short in general call him, an Alter, and the life, which, by contrast with that of the Alter, is just then viewed as the life of the present Ego. To state the case more briefly, I affirm that our empirical self-consciousness, from moment to moment, depends upon a series of contrast-effects, whose psychological origin lies in our literal social life, and whose continuance in our present conscious life, whenever we are alone, is due to habit, to our memory of literal social relations, and to an imaginative idealization of these relations. Herein lies a large part of the explanation of those ambiguities of common sense upon which I have so far insisted.

My proof for this view I cannot here give at length. I have stated the psychological aspects of the whole case pretty extensively elsewhere. My friend, Professor Baldwin of Princeton University, has independently worked out a theory of the psychological origin of Self Consciousness, and a doctrine about the evolution of the relations of Ego and Alter,—a theory which I am on the whole prepared to accept, and which agrees with the considerations that I myself have been led to develop, and, in the places now referred to, to set forth. Here there is time only for a brief indication of what I mean by this theory of the empirical Ego, of its unity in variety, and of its distinction from the world of the non-Ego.

Nobody amongst us men comes to self-consciousness, so far as I know, except under the persistent influence of his social fellows. A child in the earlier stages of his social development,—say from the end of the first to the beginning of the fifth year of life,—shows you, as you observe him, a process of the development of self-consciousness in which, at every stage, the Self of the child grows and forms itself through Imitation, and through functions that cluster about the Imitation of others, and that are secondary thereto. In consequence, the child is in general conscious of what expresses the life of somebody else, before he is conscious of himself. And his self-consciousness, as it grows, feeds upon social models, so that at every stage of his awakening life his consciousness of the Alter is a step in advance of his consciousness of the Ego. His playmates, his nurse, or mother, or the workmen whose occupations he sees, and whose power fascinates him, appeal to his imitativeness, and set him the copies for his activities. He learns his little arts, and as he does so, he contrasts his own deeds with those of his models, and of other children. Now contrast is, in our conscious life, the mother of clearness. What the child does instinctively, and without comparison with the deeds of others, may never come to his clear consciousness as his own deed at all. What he learns imitatively, and then reproduces, perhaps in joyous obstinacy, as an act that enables him to display himself over against others,—this constitutes the beginning of his self-conscious life. And in general, thenceforth, social situations, social emotions, the process of peering into the contents of other minds during the child's questioning period, the conflicts of childish sport, the social devices for winning approval,—in brief, the whole life of social harmony and rivalry,—all these things mean an endless series of contrasts between two sets of contents, which retain, amidst all their varieties, *one* psychologically important character. Upon this character the empirical unity and the general continuity of our adult self-consciousness depend.

In any literal social situation, namely, one is aware of ideas, designs, interests, beliefs, or judgments, whose expression is observed in the form of acts, words, looks, and the

like, belonging to the perceived organisms of one's fellow-men. In strong contrast, both in the way in which they appear in the field of our sense-perceptions, and in the current interests and feelings with which they are accompanied and blended, are the acts, words, and other expressions, of our own organism, together with the ideas, designs, and beliefs which accompany these acts. Now these two contrasting masses of mental contents simply constitute the Alter and the Ego, the neighbor and the Self, of any empirical instant of our literal social life together. That these sets of contents stand in strong contrast to each other is, for the first, a mere fact of sense and of feeling. One does not reason about this fact from instant to instant. One finds it so. Nor does one appeal to any intuition of an ultimate or of a spiritual Ego, in order to observe the presented fact that my neighbor's words, as he speaks to me, do not sound or feel as my words do when I speak to him, and that the ideas which my neighbor's words at once bring to my consciousness, stand in a strong and presented contrast to the ideas which receive expression in my words as I reply to him. Alter and Ego, in such cases, are found as facts of our direct observation. Were no difference observed between the contents which constitute the observed presence of my neighbor, and the contents which constitute my own life in the same moment, then my sense of my neighbor's presence, and my idea of myself, would blend in my consciousness, and there would be so far neither Alter nor Ego observed.

Now just such social contrast-effects have been occurring in our experience since childhood. The contrasts in question have always retained a certain general similarity, despite wide and countless differences. Just as all color contrasts are in a measure alike, so too are all social contrasts. Always the contents which constitute the Ego, at the very moment of their contrast with the remaining contents present during the social contrast-effect, have been associated with certain relatively warm and enduring organic sensations, viz. sensations coming from within our own bodies. Always the contents belonging to our consciousness of our neighbors have been relatively free from these accompaniments, and have had the characters belonging to external sense-perceptions. And there are still other empirical similarities present in all social relations. Hence, despite all other changes, the Ego and the Alter have tended to keep apart, as facts of our empirical observation, and each of the two has tended towards its own sort of organization as a mass of observed and remembered empirical facts. The Alter, viewed as a mass of experienced facts,—the words, looks, and deeds and ideas of other people,—differentiates and integrates into all that I call my experience of mankind; the Ego, centred about the relatively constant organic sensations, but receiving its type of unity especially through the social contrast-effects, stands as that totality of inner and outer experience which I recognize as my own, just because it sharply differs from my experience of any of the rest of mankind, and stands in a certain permanent sort of contrast thereto.

In origin, then, the empirical Ego is secondary to our social experience. In literal social life, the Ego is always known as in contrast to the Alter. And while the permanent character of our organic sensations aids us in identifying the empirical Ego, this character becomes of importance mainly because hereby we find ourselves always in a certain inwardly observable type of contrast to the whole of our social world.

Now what literal social life thus trains us to observe, the inner psychological processes of memory and imagination enable us indefinitely to extend and to diversify. The child soon carries over his plays into more or less ideal realms, lives in the company of imaginary persons, and thus, idealizing his social relations, idealizes also the type of his self-

consciousness. In my inner life, I in the end learn ideally to repeat, to vary, to reorganize, and to epitomize in countless ways, the situations which I first learned to observe and estimate in literal social relations. Hereby the contrast between Ego and Alter, no longer confined to the relations between my literal neighbor and myself, can be refined into the conscious contrasts between present and past Self, between my self-critical and my naïve Self, between my higher and lower Self, or between my Conscience and my impulses. My reflective life, as it empirically occurs in me from moment to moment, is a sort of abstract and epitome of my whole social life, viewed as to those aspects which I find peculiarly significant. And thus my experience of myself gets a certain provisional unity. But never do I observe my Self as any single and unambiguous fact of consciousness.

IV

The empirical Ego has now been, in outline, characterized. The source of its endless varieties has been sketched. Its unity has been found to be not, in our present form of existence, a fact that gets anywhere fully presented, as a rationally determined whole of life or of meaning. The empirical unity of the Ego depends merely upon a certain continuity of our social and of our inner life of experience and memory. The most stable feature about the empirical Ego, is that *sort of contrast in which it stands to the social world, literal and ideal, in which we live*. But precisely as here upon earth we have no abiding city, just so, in our present human form of consciousness, the Self is never presented except as a more or less imperfectly organized series of experiences, whose contrast with those of all other men fascinates us intensely, but whose final meaning can simply never be expressed in the type of experience which we men now have at our disposal. Were our life not hid in an infinitely richer and more significant life behind the veil, we who have once observed the essential fragmentariness of the empirical Ego would indeed have parted with our hope of a true Selfhood.

But the two other types of conception of the Self remain to be characterized. The one of these types, the second in our list of three, need detain us at this stage but little. The third type we shall at once so sketch as to define the momentous task that yet lies before us in our later lectures.

The second type of the conceptions of the Ego consists of all those views which regard the Self as in some metaphysical sense a real being, without defining the true Being of this Self in strictly idealistic terms. Such conceptions of the human Self as an entity are numerous in the history of philosophy. Their classification and further characterization will receive attention in the next lecture. For the moment I may exemplify them by mentioning as their most familiar examples, those views which conceive the human Self as, in some realistic sense, a distinct and independent entity. For such views the true Self is often essentially a Substance. Its individuality means that in essence it is separable, not only from the body, but from other souls. It preserves its unity despite the chaos of our experiences, just because in itself, and apart from all experience, it *is* One. It lies at the basis of our psychical life; and it must be sharply distinguished from the series of the states of consciousness, and even from their empirical organization. It is the source of all the order of our mental life; and all our self-consciousness is a more or less imperfect indication of its nature.

Such realistic views are well known to you. And you also know now why, without

showing the least disrespect to their historical dignity, I can and must simply decline to follow them into their details in these lectures. They are all founded upon the realistic conception of Being. They must therefore all fall with that conception. Their true spirit indeed is often of far deeper moment than their mere letter. What doctrines of Soul-Substance have often meant to express, namely, a respect for human individuality, and an appreciation of its eternal worth in the life of the Universe, our own theory of the human individual will ere long develop in its own fashion. But taken literally, the doctrine that beneath or behind our conscious life there is a permanent substance, itself never either presented or presentable in consciousness, but real, and real in such wise that its Being is independent of any knowledge that from without refers to it,—this whole doctrine. I say, simply perishes, for the purposes of our argument, together with Realism, and only its revised and purified inner meaning can reappear, in quite another guise, in the world of Idealism. Whatever the Self is, it is not a Thing. It is not, in Aristotle's or in Des Cartes' sense, a Substance. It is not a realistic entity of any type. Whether we men ever rightly come to know it or not, it exists only as somewhere known, and as a part of the fulfilment of meaning in the divine life. We are spared the trouble of proving this thesis here in detail, simply because our general proof of Idealism has discounted the entire issue. We are not condemning Realism unheard; but only after the most careful analysis of its claims. But with Realism passes away every view which regards the real Self as anything but what every real fact in the universe is: A Meaning embodied in a conscious life, present as a relative whole within the unity of the Absolute life.

Well, there remains the third type of conception of the Self, namely, the strictly idealistic type. And precisely this type it was that I exemplified before, when I spoke of the way in which the Self has been distinguished, even by common sense, into a higher and a lower, a nobler and a baser Self. As stated in ordinary fashion, such concepts, as we saw, remain crude, and lead to frequent inconsistency. Revised with reference to the demands of our Idealism, the concept of the Self will assume a form which will reduce to unity these apparent inconsistencies of ethical common sense, and will also escape from bondage to those empirical complexities forced upon us by the Ego of the passing moment. We shall then see that the concept of the individual Self is, in its higher forms, in large measure an essentially Ethical Conception. And the third type of conceptions of the Ego consists of definitions which have always laid stress upon just this aspect. From this point of view, the Self is not a Thing, but a Meaning embodied in a conscious life. Its individuality, in case of any human being, implies the essential uniqueness of this life. Its unity, transcending as it does what we ever find presented in our present type of consciousness, implies that the true individual Self of any man gets its final expression in some form of consciousness different from that which we men now possess. The empirical variety, complexity, ambiguity, and inconsistency of our present consciousness of the Self, is to be explained as due to the fact that, in the moral order of the universe, no individual Self is or can be isolated, or in any sense sundered from other Selves, or from the whole realm of the inner life of Nature itself. Consequently, even what is most individual about the Self never appears except in the closest connection with what transcends both the meaning and the life of the finite individual. Now, in our present form of conscious existence, we catch mere glimpses of the true meaning of the individual Self, as this meaning gets expressed in our deeds and in our ideals, and we also obtain equally fragmentary glimpses of the way in which

this Self is linked to the lives of its fellows, or is dependent for its expression upon its relations to Nature, or is subject to the general moral order of the universe. These various transient flashes of insight constitute our present type of human experience. And it is their variety, their manifoldness, and their fragmentariness, which together are responsible for all those inconsistencies in our accounts of the Self,—inconsistencies which our present discussion has been illustrating. But if you want to free yourself from hopeless bondage to such inconsistencies, you must look, not to some realistic conception of a Soul-Substance, but to some deeper account of the ethical meaning of our present life than we have yet formulated. And from this point of view we get a notion of Selfhood and of individuality which may be summarized at the present stage much as follows.

Our general idealistic theory asserts that the universe in its wholeness is the expression of a meaning in a life. What this view implies about every fragment and aspect of life that your attention may chance to select, or that your human experience may bring before you as the topic of inquiry, we have in former lectures repeatedly pointed out. Any instant of finite consciousness partially embodies a purpose, and so possesses its own Internal Meaning. Any such instant of finite consciousness also seeks, however, for other expression, for other objects, than are now present to just that instant, and so possesses what we have called its External Meaning. Our Idealism has depended, from the first, upon the thesis that the Internal and the External meaning of any finite process of experience are dependent each upon the other, so that if the whole meaning and intent of any finite instant of life is fully developed, and perfectly embodied, this Whole Meaning of the instant becomes identical with the Universe, with the Absolute, with the life of God. Even now, whatever you are or seek, the implied whole meaning of even your blindest striving is identical with the entire expression of the divine Will. And it is in this aspect of the world that we have found the unity of Being. On the other hand, as we have also seen, this unity of the world-life is no simple unity, such as the mystic sought. It is an infinitely complex unity. And of this complexity, of this wealth of life that the complete expression of even your most transient and finite glimpses of meaning implies,—the foregoing facts about the Self are merely instances. If you are in company with a friend, the whole meaning of your thoughts and of your interests while you speak with him, not only requires for its complete expression his inner life as well as yours, and not only requires the genuine and conscious unity of his life and of yours by virtue of the ties of your friendship; but this same meaning also demands that, despite this unity of your life as friends,—yes, even because of this unity, your friend and yourself shall remain also contrasted lives, whose unity includes and presupposes your variety as these two friends. For a friendship is not a simple unity of conscious life, but the unity of two conscious lives each of which contrasts itself with the other, and feels in the other's relative independence the fulfilment of its own purpose. And just so, when your meaning is not friendly but hostile, and when you stand in presence of your opponent, your rival, your enemy, your finite conscious meaning still implies, even in the midst of all its confused illusions, the demand that the very life of your enemy shall exist as the expression of your hostile intent to hold him as your real enemy, while nevertheless this life of his, other than your present conscious experience, and linked with your experience through the ties of meaning, is contrasted with your own life as the life that yours opposes and in so far seeks either to win over to your purposes, or to annul. Finite love and finite hate, and human experience of life in any form, always imply, therefore, that the will now present,

but imperfectly expressed, in this passing instant, is genuinely expressed through other conscious life that, from the Absolute point of view, is at once in conscious unity with this instant's purpose, and also in conscious contrast with this instant's purpose.

Primarily then, the contrast of Self and not-Self comes to us as the contrast between the Internal and the External meaning of this present moment's purpose. In the narrowest sense, the Self is just your own present imperfectly expressed pulsation of meaning and purpose,—this striving, this love, this hate, this hope, this fear, this inquiry, this inner speech of the instant's will, this thought, this deed, this desire,—in brief, this idea taken as an Internal Meaning. In the widest sense, the not-Self is all the rest of the divine whole of conscious life,—the Other, the outer World of expressed meaning taken as in contrast with what, just at this instant of our human form of consciousness, is observed, and, relatively speaking, possessed. Any finite idea is so far a Self; and I can, if you please, contrast my present Self with my past or my future Self, with yesterday's hopes or with to-morrow's deeds, quite as genuinely as with your inner life or with the whole society of which I am a member, or with the whole life of which our experience of Nature is a hint, or, finally, with the life of God in its entirety. In every such case, I take account of a true contrast between Self and not-Self. All such contrasts have a common character, namely, that in them an imperfectly expressed will is set over against its own richer expression, while stress is laid upon the fact,—a perfectly genuine fact of Being,—the fact that the whole expression always retains, and does not merely absorb or transmute, the very contrast between the finite Self and its desired or presupposed Other,—its world of External Meanings. But if you ask how many such contrasts can be made, I reply, An infinite number. In countless ways can the Self of this instant's glimpse of conscious meaning be set into contrast with the not-Self, whose content may be the life of past and future, of friends and of enemies, of the social order and of Nature, of finite life in general, and of God's life in its wholeness.

But if the contrast of Self and not-Self can thus be defined with an infinite variety of emphasis, the unity of each of the two, Self and not-Self, can be emphasized in an equally infinite number of ways, whose depth and whose extent of meaning will vary with the range of life of which one takes account, and with the sort of contrast between Self and not-Self which one leaves still prominent over against the unity. Thus, in the familiar case of our ordinary social self-consciousness, I first view a certain realm of past and future experience as so bound up with the internal meaning of this instant's conscious experience, that I call this temporal whole of life the life of my own human Self, while I contrast this private existence of mine with that of my friends, my opponents, or of my other fellows, or with that of human society in general. The motives that lead to such an identification of the Self of the instant with a certain portion of that which is the instant's not-Self, namely, with a certain portion of past and future experience, are, as we have seen, extremely various, and in our empirical existence, both fickle and transitory. Whoever believes that he has any one rational principle for his usual identification of his past and future with the Self of this instant, has only to consider the psychological variations of self-consciousness before enumerated to discover his error. What will remain, after such an examination of the Self of common sense, will be the really deep and important persuasion that he *ought to possess* or to create for himself, despite this chaos, some one principle, some finally significant contrast, whereby he should be able, with an united and permanent meaning, to identify that portion of the world's life which is to be, in the larger sense, his own, and whereby he

should become able to contrast with this, his larger Self, all the rest of the world of life.

And now this very consideration, this fact that one *ought to be able* to select from all the universe a certain portion of remembered and expected, of conceived and of intended life as that of his own true and individual Self, and that one ought to contrast with this whole of life, with this one's larger or truer individuality, the life of all other individual Selves, and the life of the Absolute in its wholeness,—this consideration, I say, shows us at once the sense in which the Self is an Ethical Category. At this instant, as I have said, you can indeed identify the Self, if you please, with just the instant's passing glimpse of Internal Meaning; and in that case you can call all else the not-Self. To do this is to leave the Self a mere thrill of transient life,—a fragment whose deeper meaning is wholly external to itself. But you can, and in general you do, first identify a remembered past, and an intended future, with the Self whose individuality is just now hinted to you; and this enlarged self of memory and purpose you then oppose to a not-Self whose content is first the world of your fellow-men, and then the world of Nature and of the Absolute in its wholeness. Now what justification have you for this view of your larger Self? Apart from the capricious and shifting views of common sense, you can have, I reply, but one justification, namely this: You regard this present moment's life and striving as a glimpse of a certain task now assigned to you, the task of your life as friend, as worker, as loyal citizen, or in general as man, *i.e.* as one of God's expressions in human form. You conceive that, however far you might proceed towards the fulfilment of this task, however rich this individual life of yours might become, it would always remain, despite its unity with the world-life, in some true sense contrasted with the lives of your fellows, and with the life of God, just as now you stand in contrast to both. While your whole meaning is now, and will always remain one with the entire life of God, you conceive that this whole meaning expresses itself in the form of an articulate system of contrasting and coöperating lives, of which one, namely your own individual life, is more closely linked, in purpose, in task, in meaning, with the life of this instant, than is the life of any other individual. Or as you can say: "At this instant I am indeed one with God, in the sense that in him my own absolute Selfhood is expressed. But God's will is expressed in a manifold life. And this life is a system of contrasted lives that are various even by virtue of their significant union. For true unity of meaning is best manifested in variety, just as the most intimate and wealthy friendship is that of strongly contrasting friends. And in the manifold lives that the world in its unity embodies, there is one, and only one, whose task is here hinted to me as my task, my life-plan,—an ideal whose expression needs indeed the coöperation of countless other Selves, of a social order, of Nature, and of the whole universe, but whose individual significance remains contrasted with all other individual significance. If this is my task, if this is what my past life has meant, if this is what my future is to fulfil, if it is in this way that I do God's work, if my true relation to the Absolute is only to be won through the realization of this life-plan, and through the accomplishment of this unique task, then indeed I am a Self, and a Self who is nobody else, just precisely in so far as my life has this purpose and no other. *By this meaning of my life-plan, by this possession of an ideal, by this Intent always to remain another than my fellows despite my divinely planned unity with them,—by this, and not by the possession of any Soul-Substance, I am defined and created a Self.*"

Such, I say, will be your confession, if once you come to define the Self in the only genuine terms,—namely, in ethical terms. If once you choose this definition, then the

endless empirical varieties of self-consciousness, and the caprices of common sense, will not confuse you. You will know that since now we see through a glass darkly, you cannot expect at present to experience your human selfhood in any one consistent and final expression. But, too, you will know that you are a Self precisely in so far as you intend to accomplish God's will by becoming one; and that you are an individual precisely in so far as you purpose to do your Father's business in unique fashion, so that in this instant shall begin a work that can be finished only in eternity,—a work that, however closely bound up it may be with all the rest of the divine life, still remains in its expression distinguishable from all this other life. You will indeed recognize that at every moment you receive from without, and from other Selves, the very experiences that give your Selfhood a chance to possess its meaning. You will know that of yourself alone you would be nothing. You will also know that as co-worker with your fellows, and as servant of God, you have a destiny of which our present life gives us but the dimmest hint.

This is in outline, the doctrine of the ethical Self, to whose development and defence our later lectures shall be devoted.

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

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